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Department of Marketing

Online Fashion Shopping Experiences: Web Atmospherics and Consumer's Emotions

By

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This work is dedicated to the soul of my dad. You were gone long before I could make your dream come true.

But here it is today, your daughter has grown into the strong person you wanted her to be.

I love you.

You're off to Great Places! You're off and away! You have brains in your head You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your OWN. And you know what you know. And YOU decide where to go. And then things start to happen, don't worry. Don't stew. Just go right along. You'll start happening too. And will you succeed? Yes! You will, indeed! 98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed. KID, YOU'LL MOVE MOUNTAINS! You're off to Great Places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So...get on your way!

Acknowledgments

I suppose writing this marks the beginning of an end to a journey that has changed me forever. When I left my hometown heading to the United Kingdom, my plan was a three-year project. I thought it will be over in no time, and I would be back in my home country in no time. I could even remember the worries about how things would be when I returned home. Little did I know that the land I left would never be the same again, and that there would come a day when, if asked 'do you miss home?' I would only stare into the void thinking 'what home?'

This PhD was not a three-year project as I expected, it was a life-changing journey involving the good, the bad and the ugly. Perhaps it is wise to let go of the bad and the ugly on this page; those of you who care enough know exactly the days I am talking about. But hey, in the end, this is a journey to acquire the top qualification; no one said it would be easy but it has definitely been worth it.

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Table of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACR	Association for Consumer Research
ASOS	Name of high street fashion retailer
CATPCA	Categorical Principal Component Analysis
CCT	Consumer Culture Theory
CES	Consumption Emotion Set
EMAC	European Marketing Academy
H&M	Name of high street clothing retailer
HCI	Human-computer Interaction
IE	Internet Explorer
PA	Pleasure, Arousal
PAD	Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance
PANAS	Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale
PCT	Personal Construct Theory
QR Code	Quick Response Code
SOR	Stimulus-Organism-Response
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
VMD	Visual Merchandising Elements

Abstract

The notion of 'experience' marks a shift in consumer research from focusing on the rational consumer to focusing on emotions (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). This research studies consumer experiences in the specific context of online fashion shopping. It contributes to the field of atmospherics and consumption emotions and experiences, thus bridging a gap that has been highlighted in the literature (e.g. Turley & Milliman, 2000). This thesis aims to study the online fashion-shopping experience as the consumer lives and constructs it. The research conducted two studies that are underpinned by the philosophical stance of pragmatism.

First, Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory (PCT) is adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of consumers' shopping experience using their own words and construction. The study conducted 25 repertory grid interviews, analysed first with Jankowicz's (2005) method of initial eyeball and process analyses. Next, following Lemke, Clark, and Wilson (2011), qualitative construct coding was performed by multi-coders for inter-reliability checks.

This study contributes to our understanding of the online fashion-shopping experience by (1) introducing the construction of the experience as emotional, perceptual, situational and behavioural, (2) highlighting how individuality in such experiences often changes the meaning of such constructs, and (3) arguing that situational constructs provide a context that shapes the whole experience.

Second, screencast videography is introduced as a novel method that captures the shoppers' live experiences. Critical incident analysis of ten videos allowed the experience journey to be mapped, highlighting the main critical incidents and the contexts (e.g. purposeful vs. purposeless browsing) that shape the experience.

In addition to its methodological contribution, this study provides great insights into an otherwise unobservable phenomenon. Furthermore, it presents the 'fashionscape' as a concept tailored especially to understanding the online fashion-shopping environment in its visual, verbal, social and educational dimensions.

(94,607 words, excluding references and appendices)

Chapter 1 Thesis Introduction

This introductory chapter presents an overview of the thesis. It explicitly sets the conceptual domain of the study along with the substantive domain that defines the scope of this research and draws its boundaries. Later in the chapter, the methodological domain briefly discusses the approach this research takes. Finally, the structure of the thesis is presented with a brief description of the content of each chapter. The structure of this chapter is presented in figure 1.1 below.

The Conceptual Domain

What are the central ideas, concepts, frameworks and theories of the research?

The Substantive Domain

What is the context in which the research will take place? What is the scope of the thesis?

The Methodological Domain

What research approach will be adopted in order to meet the thesis' aims and objectives?

Thesis Overview

How is the thesis structured? What is the main content of each chapter?

Figure 1-1 Overview of chapter 1

1.1   The Conceptual Domain

In consumer research, it is difficult to avoid mother disciplines such as psychology and sociology. This research is set within the paradigm of consumer psychology, a field that aims to understand consumer behaviour using theories of psychology. The conceptual domain of this work can be defined as the domain of studying human experiences in their surrounding environments. The origin of this work is in environmental psychology (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989).

The basic concept of environmental psychology is that the surrounding environment that human beings find themselves in influences their behaviour. Although the

Kaplans' work focuses on the natural environment and the experience of nature (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982), the concept of their work has been extended to the built environment such as store environments (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). Consequently, various endeavours were made in the literature to understand the effect of the buying environment (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982,1994), and the servicescape (Bitner, 1990, 1992; Booms & Bitner, 1982) on the shopping experience.

Accordingly, the concept of customer experience and the shopping experience have been discussed by scholars such as Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007), Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), Meyer and Schwager (2007), Pine and Gilmore (1998), Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013), and Schmitt (1999). The role of the environment has been specifically highlighted in the literature of studying consumer's experiences, emotions and behaviour.

The very early writings initially proposed a direct cause and effect between the stimuli and the response or behaviour of the human being. Known as the stimuli-response psychology, it was later criticised by many scholars (e.g. Lazarus, 1991, 1998; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). As a result, the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Russell & Mehrabian, 1978) emerged to acknowledge that the cognitive and emotional states of the individual, which are caused by such stimuli exposure, occur prior to making a response or engaging in a behaviour.

SOR has dominated consumer behaviour literature and has been widely employed in marketing studies (Arora, 1982; Buckley, 1991; Donovan & Rossiter, 1994). The influence of the buying environment, or similarly of the servicescape, on customers' expectations, cognition and emotion has been studied using the SOR framework (Aubert-Gamet, 1997; Bitner, 1992; Reimer & Kuehn, 2005). Despite attempts to make the SOR framework account for the nature of human behaviour and the inner psychological processes, such endeavours fall short in explaining the complex nature of human experiences, emotions and behaviour as well as the dynamics of lived experiences.

This criticism is apparent in the concluding statement of Holbrook and Hirschman's introduction to experiential marketing (1982, p.139):

One cannot reduce the explanation of human behavior to any narrowly circumscribed and simplistic model, whether that model be behavioristic or psychoanalytic, ethological or anthropomorphic, cognitive or motivational: the behavior of people in general and of consumers in particular is the fascinating and endlessly complex result of a multifaceted interaction between organism and environment. In this dynamic process, neither problem-directed nor experiential components can safely be ignored. By focusing single mindedly on the consumer as information processor, recent consumer research has tended to neglect the equally important experiential aspects of consumption, thereby limiting our understanding of consumer behavior.

Therefore, in accord with Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) comment, this thesis aims to provide a more coherent understanding of the complex dynamics of the shopping experience.

1.2   The Substantive Domain

As the conceptual domain of this research is identified in studying consumers' experience in the buying environment, the substantive domain is identified in the context of online fashion shopping. The rationale for this focus is multifaceted, and my reasons for this focus is explained and justified in this section.

1.2.1   Online shopping

As the Internet becomes a major sales channel for many retailers, the importance of studying online-shopping experiences derives from the nature of the online buying environment. This environment is technology based, and usually lacks human-to-human contact, and this lack can be a disadvantage especially in the case of 'pure-play' or solely Internet-based retailers (Ashman & Vazquez, 2012).

What consumers experience in online shopping is hugely influenced and shaped by the online buying environment, or what the literature refers to as web atmospherics (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001; Manganari, Siomkos, & Vrechopoulos, 2009; Sautter, Hyman, & Lukosius, 2004) or the online servicescape (Harris & Goode, 2010; Williams & Dargel, 2004).

Most literature about the online customer experience may, in essence, link to the SOR framework in which the experience is a result of exposure to stimuli. Indeed, endeavours have been made to customise the SOR model to fit the online-shopping context. For example, Eroglu et al. (2001) suggest that there is a need to develop systematically a comprehensive taxonomy of online atmospheric cues, similar to that done in studying the traditional retail store environment.

My focus on the online environment is driven not only by the nature of such built environment that lacks the human presence, but also by my belief that a single SOR model is an oversimplification of the experience. This belief is in line with Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) stance on consumption experiences.

In focusing on online-shopping experiences, I choose to narrow the scope of the research to the context of fashion shopping. This is explained in the following section.

1.2.2 Fashion shopping

There is no doubt that some products and services are more likely to be bought online. For example, it is very common for many consumers to buy travel tickets online without hesitation, whereas this is not exactly the case for buying a wedding dress, for instance. Bellman, Lohse, and Johnson (1999, p.32) comment, *'Some market sectors, including insurance, financial services, computer hardware and software, travel, books, music, video, flowers, and automobiles, are experiencing rapid growth in online sales'*.

On the other hand, the literature proposes that fashion shopping is a social experience (Ashman & Vazquez, 2012; Kang & Park-Poaps, 2011). Ashman and Vazquez (2012, p.975) comment on online fashion shopping:

> *Clothing is an experience product, with features that can only be evaluated by trying on or inspection, dependent on an individual and their own personal requirements. For retailers selling clothing online, technology and communications techniques are therefore instrumental in encouraging consumers to buy goods before they carry out their own physical evaluation.*

Fashion shopping is not *'simply limited to the spending of money on products; rather, shopping is also an important socializing and engaging exercise that provides opportunities to see and be with others'* (Kang, 2009, p. 1).

The dramatic shift of fashion shopping from its social traditional context to a web context suggests high prominence of the online environment in which the shopping experience occurs. Because of the unique nature of fashion, the online-shopping environment becomes central to a successful experience. Moreover, the importance of product-specific atmospherics is undeniable in online fashion-shopping environments. Because the usual desire to touch and try on garments cannot be met online, product presentations in the online buying environment become essential part of the experience to at least enhance a visualisation of the garments.

To conclude, the conceptual and substantive domains of this thesis focus on studying online fashion-shopping experiences. However, this thesis argues for the central role of the individuals in their own experiences and in approaching the online fashion-shopping environment itself. This leads to a discussion of how this thesis approaches the study of the online fashion-shopping experience. This is developed in the following section.

1.3   The Methodological Domain

This thesis mainly aims to study the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by consumers. My mission in this research is twofold. First, I will move away from all models of representation of the experience and the underpinning emotional and cognitive stances. Instead, I will focus on exploring the online fashion shopping experience using the consumer's words and constructions.

To achieve this, I use PCT (Kelly, 1955) as the basis for understanding what such experiences mean to each and every individual. I will show throughout the thesis that this approach is more effective, than imposing readymade frameworks or scales on the participants.

The use of Kelly's theory helps in the vital task of giving the consumers a voice in their own experiences. In fact, this theory was born in response to the need for a humanistic approach in clinical psychology. An approach that accounts for the role

of the person in the study, accounts for the person as a whole—a person who is capable of learning through their experiences and constructions of the world (Carroll & Carroll, 1981). Kelly's PCT and its companion, the repertory grid technique, have been employed in marketing and consumer research, but on a limited scale (Coshall, 2000; Lemke, Clark, & Wilson, 2011; Pike, 2003; Tagg & Wilson, 2011; Wilson & Tagg, 2010; Yassim, 2011; Zinkhan & Biswas, 1988).

My second mission is to capture live experiences in their natural settings within the scope of this research, which will be discussed next. My rationale for this is the need to account for the multiple dynamic processes that become apparent only in observing such experiences.

To do this, I adapt a form of videography as means of visualising the shopping experience in its natural setting. Videography is used more and more in consumer research as can be seen in the Association of Consumer Research (ACR) film festival (Belk & Kozinets, 2005). Using videography allows the researcher to capture natural data or 'very close to natural data' and offers greater ability to explore the finest details of the experience. In addition, it allows us to capture the multiple dynamic interactions between the consumers and the environment.

1.4   <u>Thesis Overview</u>

This chapter introduced the thesis by briefly setting its theoretical and methodological stances in the specific context of online fashion shopping environments and experiences. The following section outlines an overview of remaining chapters of the thesis.

<u>Section One: Theoretical Background</u>

Chapter Two is the first chapter of the literature review section. It discusses the theoretical concept of the online-shopping experience and highlights the main approaches to its study. These approaches are the popular SOR model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) which has been employed to study the online-shopping experience (e.g. Éthier, Hadaya, Talbot, & Cadieux, 2006; Mummalaneni, 2005; Rose, Clark, Samouel, & Hair, 2012), the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Koufaris, 2003), and the theory of flow (Hoffman & Novak, 2009; Hoffman & Novak, 1996).

Chapter Three reviews the theories of emotions and discusses the most noteworthy approaches to studying emotions in consumer research. The chapter addresses the nature of emotion and the different definitions of the term. The interrelationship between emotion and cognition is discussed and the concept of rationality and its relevance to emotions is presented. The chapter reviews the main three approaches to studying emotions (categorical, dimensional, and cognitive appraisal theories). Criticisms of such approaches follow to highlight a need for an alternative approach to studying emotions.

Chapter Four focuses on atmospherics research. The literature associated with studying the buying environment both in online and offline contexts is discussed. The shift from offline to online environment is addressed by highlighting the various attempts in the literature to study the new evolving environment. The exclusivity of online fashion shopping is explained by the unique nature of fashion (Kang, 2009; Li & Gery, 2000; McCracken, 1986) and the challenges this poses in the online buying environment.

Section Two: Philosophy, Methodology, and Fieldwork

Chapter Five addresses the main aim of this thesis, which is *to study the nature and the processes of the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumer.* Three research questions are identified in this chapter's main objective. The philosophical stance of pragmatism is adopted and rationalised in this chapter, then a brief overview of the choices of method is introduced here because the following two chapters are dedicated to discussing the two studies carried out in an attempt to answer the research questions. The reason for separating the studies in two chapters is the unique nature of each study. It is important that the theoretical background and assumptions of each approach be considered carefully, what implications each approach has, and how the data is collected and analysed. Therefore, the decision was made to present the two studies separately.

Chapter Six presents the first data collection phase in the form of repertory grid interviews. The theoretical underpinnings of Kelly's PCT are discussed. A detailed account of the pilot interviews is presented. The pilot interviews place high importance on grid design because, as the chapter shows, slight design modifications result in dramatic shifts in the grid's focus. Consequently, using the modified design, the chapter discusses the repertory grid interviews that were conducted for this research. Finally, different methods of analysis are discussed and details of the analysis techniques employed are explicitly identified.

Chapter Seven presents the second study of my thesis, videography. It begins by introducing visual research in general and videography in particular as a method of business and consumer research. A pilot study of videos is presented and initial analysis and implications are discussed. After the pilot videos have been evaluated, Camtasia software is used to record the final screencast videos. Subsequently, various possible approaches to analysis are evaluated highlighting how messy the process can be. The analysis is then carried out in two phases: (1) Timespan segmentation analysis and (2) critical incident analysis.

Section Three: Findings and Discussion

Chapter Eight is the first findings chapter. It addresses the first research question on how consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment. The chapter introduces the concepts of purposeless and purposeful browsing to differentiate between two different types of experiences. Accordingly, interactions with certain elements of the environment become critical in each of these experiences.

Chapter Nine is the second findings chapter and is dedicated to answering the second research question on what is the online fashion-shopping environment and what is its role in the experience. The 'fashionscape' is introduced as a term that addresses the unique nature of the online environment of fashion shopping. The fashionscape refers to all the visual, verbal, social and educational atmospherics on fashion websites. This, therefore, provides answers to the second research question on the nature and the role of this environment in the shopping experience.

Chapter Ten is the third and final findings chapter and is dedicated to answering the third research question on the *construction of the experience* as lived and constructed by the consumers and using their own words. Situational, emotional, perceptual and behavioural constructs are identified as the main groups of constructs that relate to the online fashion-shopping experience. Following the identification of these common groups of constructs, the chapter details the individualistic nature of the experience by showing a number of differences in each of these construct groups. The chapter concludes, with reference to PCT, the importance in showing that the nature of such experience is highly personal and variable instead of being universal to all shoppers.

Chapter Eleven brings together the findings of this thesis' chapters to discuss the concluding thoughts on each of them. The purpose of this thesis is revisited to highlight the answers this research brings to the previously addressed research questions. The chapter clearly shows how this thesis contributes to knowledge in bridging the gap in the understanding of consumer's experiences. The methodological and theoretical contributions are presented and their implications are fully discussed. Furthermore, the chapter identifies the limitations of this research and the opportunities for future research that could build upon this thesis.

Section One: Theoretical Background

<u>**Section Introduction**</u>

The first section of this thesis presents its theoretical background in three chapters. The section reviews the literature associated with the shopping experience in general, and atmospherics and emotions in particular. The structure of this section is highlighted in figure S1 below and is further explained in the following pages.

Chapter 2: The Shopping Experience

What is 'experience'? What are the existing perspectives on experience in marketing and consumer research? What are the popular approaches to studying the online shopping experience?

Chapter 3: Theories of Emotion

What is our current theoretical understanding of emotions? What is the relation between emotion and cognition? Is rationality relevant to the concept of emotions? What are the current approaches to studying emotions?

Chapter 4: Theories of Atmospherics

What are the current theoretical concepts relating to the buying environment? What are the main differences between the online/offline buying environments? Is the fashion-buying environment different from other environments? Should it be different? What is our current understanding of fashion-specific atmospherics?

Figure S0-1 Structure of the literature review section

The first chapter of this literature review (chapter 2) discusses the theoretical concept of the experience (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013; Schmitt, 1999). Further, it highlights the approaches to studying the online-shopping experience. These are the popular SOR model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) which has been employed to study the online-shopping experience (e.g. Éthier, Hadaya,

Talbot, & Cadieux, 2006; Mummalaneni, 2005; Rose, Clark, Samouel, & Hair, 2012), TAM (Koufaris, 2003) and the theory of flow (Hoffman & Novak, 2009; Hoffman & Novak, 1996).

The second chapter of this literature review (chapter 3) presents the theories of emotions and discusses the most notable approaches to studying emotions in consumer research. The chapter begins by addressing the nature of emotion and the various definitions of the term. The interrelationship between emotion and cognition is discussed and the concept of rationality and its relevance to emotions is presented. The chapter reviews the three main approaches to the study of emotion: categorical (Plutchik, 1980), dimensional (Russell & Mehrabian, 1977), and cognitive appraisal (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Lazarus, 1998). The chapter ends by some criticism of the current approaches and introduces the need for a more personal theory to address emotions with.

The final chapter of this section (chapter 4) focuses on the literature on both online and offline buying environments. The chapter begins by addressing the origins of the person-environment concept (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989;1982) and how it has been integrated in marketing and consumer research. The concepts of environmental cues and store atmospherics (Kotler, 1973), as well as the servicescape (Bitner, 1992; 2000), are discussed as the basis for understanding traditional (brick-and-mortar) shopping environments (Donovan & Rossiter, 1994). The chapter then addresses the shift to the online environment and the evolution of new concepts such as web atmospherics (Dailey, 2004; Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001; Manganari, Siomkos, & Vrechopoulos, 2009) and e-servicescape (Harris & Goode, 2010; Hopkins, Grove, Raymond, & LaForge, 2009; Rosenbaum, 2005; Williams & Dargel, 2004). Finally, the chapter discusses fashion's unique nature, the exclusivity of online fashion shopping (Kang, 2009; Li & Gery, 2000; McCracken, 1986) and the challenges this poses on the online buying environment.

Chapter 2 The Shopping Experience

The notion of 'experience' marks a shift in consumer research from focusing on the rational consumer to focusing on emotions. The economic assumption of the rational consumer translates into consumer research in the theory of information processing in which the consumer processes information and makes decisions that result in the optimal level of utility or benefit (Bettman, 1979).

Experience in consumer research is most notably apparent in Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) experiential marketing intitative which contrasted the classical information processing model with an experiential view that focuses on the symbolic, hedonic and aesthetic nature of consumption. They view *'the consumption experience as a phenomenon directed toward the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun'* (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, p.132). Thus, arguing that by consuming a certain product (e.g. perfume), a person does not only consume the scent but also engages in creating imagery sights, sounds and sensations that are 'experienced' as a result (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982).

The body of literature discussing the concept of experience shows that, despite the treatment of Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982) as the central reference point for experience in consumer research, the roots of this concept are traceable to the work of early philosophers, such as the pragmatists William James (1907) and John Dewey (1958). In fact, as Holbrook himself acknowledges, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) did not "invent" the concept that goes back to the early works of "*Sid Levy at Northwestern in the 1960s, Wroe Alderson at Wharton in the 1950s, and the economists Lawrence Abbott in the 1950s or Alfred Marshall in the early 1900s…*" (2006, p.715)

Such early roots to the concept of experience enrich its multidisciplinary nature, but, arguably it does not always serve a positive purpose in experience research as it deter from any unity on the very essence of what an experience is (Petermans, et al., 2013). Indeed, as Carù and Cova (2003) assert, in marketing and consumer research, definitions of experience are not unitary, as each perspective has relied on one of the varying roots of experience from philosophy to psychology to sociology and anthropology. Consequently, the following section presents a review of the term, its

theorisation, and the most noteworthy perspectives that have been proposed to conceptualise customer experience within the scope of this research.

2.1   Theorising 'Experience'

In Marketing and consumer research, following on from Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) concept of experiential consumption, a number of endeavour were made to conceptialise and theorise the term experience. This section reviews the key scholarly endeavours in the field.

With the rise of experiential marketing, Schmitt (1999) developed a model that suggests the possibility of tailoring different types of experience—'SENSE', 'FEEL', 'THINK', and 'ACT' experiences — and that different marketing offerings or stimuli would create one or another of these types of experience. This model has served as a guide for experience design in organisations. However, it is perhaps notable how problematic it is to distinguish between experiences of 'feel', or 'think'. Perhaps what was proposed by Schmitt (1999) is an approach in which an experience is not necessarily only emotional (as in Holbrook and Hirschman's conceptualisation) but also rational (allowing for thinking experiences not just feeling related ones).

Schmitt's model, despite its interesting categorisation of the experience, is also problematic, as it seems to suggest 'ready-made recipes' of different types of experiences that are almost impossible to achieve or predict. Indeed, this stance does not only ignore the role of the individual by tackling experience from a design perspective, but it also assumes that a stimulus could possibly work in isolation from all other stimuli and create one or another type of experience—if that is even possible. Dennis, Brakus, Gupta, and Alamanos's argue *little information is known about the type of specific experiences that are evoked by atmospheric in-store elements and how these experiences affect consumers' affective and cognitive reactions as well as their approach behavior*" (2014, p.2250).

Additionally, it is worth noting that from an empirical perspective, this separation between emotional and rational experiences and between hedonism and information processing has not been supported. For instance, Penaloza's work on 'Nike Town'

(1998) argues clearly against this separation, *'unlike previous conceptualizations of consumption separating hedonic from informational processing and decision making (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), this study of spectacular consumption at Nike Town emphasizes their nexus'* (Penaloza, 1998, p.386). Separating the emotional and cognitive experiences is deeply problematic, as Penaloza (1998) suggests there is no empirical evidence for such separation. In practice, it is impossible to draw clear distinctive boundaries between such types of experiences. However, it is perhaps only natural for such issues to arise when the outlook on experience has been predominated by positivistic thinking that has long emphasised the cause of the environment rather than the individualistic role of the person.

In accordance with this criticism, an alternative stream of research has presented an evolved concept of experience in which "*...experiences are inherently personal, existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level. Thus, no two people can have the same experience, because each experience derives from the interactions between the staged event (like a theatrical play) and the individual's state of mind.*" (Pine & Gilmore, 1998)

In this perspective, scholars have clearly highlighted the importance of key characteristics of customer experience such as being personal and subjective, and being psychological and existing in the mind of the consumer. For instance, Meyer and Schwager (2007, p.2) define customer experience as, *'the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company'*. Additionally, Rose, Clark, Samouel, and Hair (2012, p.309) comment, *'customer experience is conceptualized as a psychological construct, which is a holistic, subjective response resulting from customer contact with the retailer and which may involve different levels of customer involvement'*.

This perspective is also manifested in Pine & Gilmore's (1998) 4Es realms of experience (See figure 2-1 below). The four realms of experience are usually identified by whether the customer is active or passive and whether or not he or she is immersed in the educational, escapist, aesthetic or entertainment realms of experience. Accordingly, in Pine and Gilmore's (1998) categorisation, one can

identify the dimensions of four different types of experiences based on the individual's immersion or absorption levels within the environment, thus accounting for, albeit limited, a role of the individual within the experience.
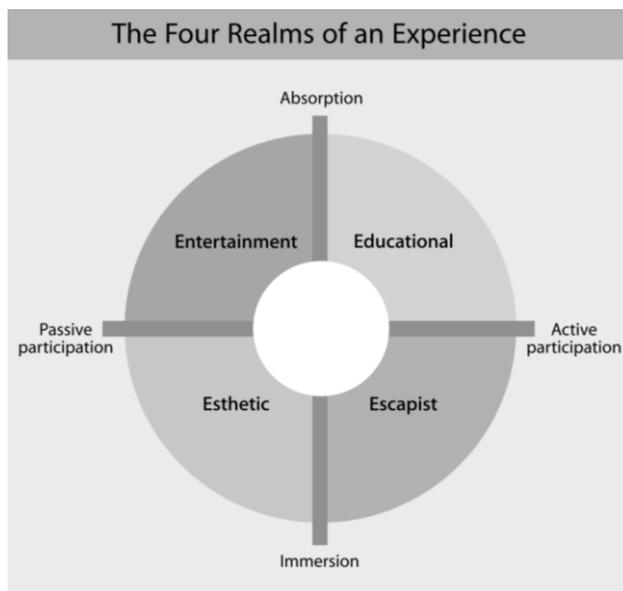
Figure 2-1 Pine and Gilmore's four realms of experience

Furthermore, Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007, p.397) offer a more comprehensive definition of experience:

> *The Customer Experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial physical and spiritual). Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer's expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touch-points.*

By this latter conceptualisation, Gentile, et al. (2007) emphasise the shift in experience research from focusing on a positivistic approach to a more personal one in which the individual plays a key role in his/her own experience.

Furthermore, recent research has highlighted the importance of a holistic outlook on the experience rather than a fractured one (Verhoef, et al., 2009). Indeed, such development in studying the experience is a must when arguably the whole is greater

than the sum of the parts together. An approach this thesis aims to adopt in studying the online fashion shopping experience.

In addition to the evolved outlook of experience as holistic and subjective, recent research on the topic has argued for the importance of studying the experience in its dynamic rather than static form thus focusing on the journey of the experience. For instance, Richardson (2010) asserts that mapping the customer journey is very important to improve the customer experience and that activities, motivations, questions and barriers can all be employed to map this journey.

Similarly, Rawson et al. highlight the importance of customer journeys within the management of the experience. They argue: *"...companies that perfect customer journeys reap enormous rewards including enhanced customer and employee satisfaction, reduced churn, increased revenues, lowered costs, and improved collaboration across the organisation"* (2013, p.5)

Rather than treating experience as a static construct, researchers such as Rawson et al. (2013) and Richardson (2010) argue in favour of a dynamic approach in which the journey of the experience is captured and studied in detail. However, such research endeavours only offer conceptual ideas rather than methodological approaches to studying dynamic experiences per se.

In fact, as Verhoef, et al. (2009) note, most experience research in Marketing is essentially found in practitioner-oriented marketing and management magazines and journals rather than in academic outlets. This, therefore, in addition to the abovementioned critics of current experience theories and conceptualisations, emphasise the need for an academic approach to studying experience in Marketing and consumer research.

To this point, this chapter presented a review of the literature associated with the consumption experience highlighting how this concept has evolved by (1) shifting from the traditional focus on rational consumer to emotional and experiential aspects of consumption, (2) moving from offering recipes of experience design in a positivistic fashion to a more subjective and personal outlook, (3) focusing on the dynamic rather than static form of experience, and (4) placing high emphasis on a holistic approach to experience rather than an attempt to sum its parts.

Following the focus of this thesis on the experience within online shopping environments, the section below presents a literature review of studies of the online-shopping experience highlighting the current approaches to studying the online fashion shopping experience.

2.2 The Experience in Online Environments

With the shift toward digital environments, various experiences have partially or fully evolved into online practices. In addition, businesses are witnessing the evolution of click-and-mortar environments either as complementary channels or as substitutes for brick-and-mortar retailing (i.e., pure players). As a result, increasing attention is being paid to researching online customer experiences. Several scholars have investigated the shopping experience in online-shopping environments: Anteblian, Filser, and Roederer (2013); Jeong, Fiore, Niehm, and Lorenz (2009); Jin and Park (2006); Koufaris (2003), Lee and Jeong (2012); Lin, Gregor, and Ewing (2008); Machleit and Eroglu (2000); Novak, Hoffman, and Yung (2000); Pace, 2004; Rose, Hair, and Clark (2011); Rose, Clark, Samouel, and Hair (2012).

One noteworthy approach to studying online-shopping experiences, as in studies of the offline context, is based on the stimuli-organism-response paradigm (see section 2.3 for details), or an adapted version of it (e.g. Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001).

Another approach is studying the 'flow' in the shopping experience using the psychological theory of flow (Lee & Jeong, 2012; Novak et al., 2000; O'Cass & Carlson, 2010; Pace, 2004).

A last approach that does not focus particularly on experience, but rather on the acceptance of technology, is the technology acceptance model (TAM). 'Perceived usefulness' and 'perceived ease of use' are the two factors that TAM considers, which measure the consumer's acceptance of the technology (Ha & Stoel, 2009; King & He, 2006; Koufaris, 2003; Lee, Kozar, & Larsen, 2003). TAM is not an immediate approach to the study of the online-shopping experience, but the relevance of its constructs is discussed in the findings of this thesis.

Following, the two most relevant concepts, the SOR paradigm, and the theory of flow, are discussed below.

2.3   The SOR Paradigm

This section presents a historical overview of the SOR paradigm as it appears in consumer research. It begins by identifying the roots of the framework in environmental psychology. Discussion of the theoretical underpinnings and further adaptations to this framework are presented and discussed.

Since its conception, the field of environmental psychology has acknowledged the influence of the environment on human behaviour (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Initially, this was evident in the stimuli-response psychology that postulates a direct and immediate cause-and-effect relationship between the stimuli and the human being's response or behaviour.

Criticism of the stimuli-response relationship suggests that, as a behavioural psychology, it falls short of acknowledging the role of the human being in this process. For instance, Lazarus (1998, p.xviii) comments that *'the person in this interchange is a passive creature, reacting to an environment that stimulates him or her, and that person's influence on the environment is ignored'*.

In response, the stimuli-organism-response (SOR) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Russell & Mehrabian, 1978) emerged to acknowledge the role of the individual's internal states in this relationship. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) suggest that the stimuli (e.g. colour, heat, light, and sound) in the environment link to the person's behavioural responses by the primary emotional responses of arousal, pleasure, and dominance. This sequence of events fits in a systematic framework of stimuli-organism-response.

SOR has dominated that part of consumer behaviour literature that focuses on the role of the shopping environment. This is highlighted in the recent meta-analytic review presented by Vieira (2013). He suggests that *'the seminal conceptualization of Mehrabian and Russell (1974) is the basis of most marketing research studying the impact of internal store environmental on shopping behavior'* (p.1420).

Early scholarly endeavours were made to build, validate, or adapt the SOR framework to a particular context (e.g. Arora, 1982; Buckley, 1991; Donovan & Rossiter, 1994; Eroglu et al., 2001). Specifically, research has investigated the influence of the traditional store environment or the servicescape on customers'

expectations, cognition and emotion (Aubert-Gamet, 1997; Bitner, 1990, 1992; Booms & Bitner, 1982; Reimer & Kuehn, 2005; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). This is discussed in detail in chapter 4 (Theories of Atmospherics).

With the rise of the Internet, various attempts were made to study the shopping experience in this new digital and dynamic environment. Online shopping experiences, therefore, were studied using the same SOR framework that had been widely used to study offline shopping experiences.

In certain cases, the SOR framework was adapted to suit the study of digital experiences. The reason for this adaptation is usually attributed to the unique nature of online shopping. For example, Rose et al. (2011) highlight that the main differences between online and offline experiences are personal contact (i.e. in-store face-to-face contact is not available online), the richness of information (much higher online than offline), the time period (the ability to shop online 24/7 as opposed to restricted store opening hours offline), and brand presentation:

> *Online, the brand is presented in a predominantly audiovisual way, whereas offline opportunities exist for the brand to be experienced via a range of artefacts such as staff and their presentation, buildings and facilities, vehicles, livery and other tangible elements.* (Rose et al., 2011, p.27)

This study by Rose et al. (2011), and other empirical work such as Rose et al. (2012), apply a simple SOR model in online contexts. Therefore, using essentially the same theoretical foundation, such work argues that like offline stimuli, online environmental stimuli influence the organism inner emotional and cognitive states resulting in an observable behaviour of approach or avoidance.

To the contrary of this approach, certain endeavours were made to adapt the SOR framework to the study of online experiences by acknowledging the differences between the online and the offline environments. One of the most remarkable endeavours here is the adaptation of SOR to the online context by Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis (2001) which suggests the need to systematically develop a comprehensive taxonomy of online atmospheric cues and to identify their major dimensions similarly to what has been done within the traditional retail store environment. (See figure 2-2 below)

Stimulus

Online Environmental Cues

•High Task Relevant

•Low Task Relevant

Involvement

Atmospheric
Responsiveness

Organism

Internal States

•Affect

•Cognition

Response

Shopping Outcomes

•Approach

•Avoidance
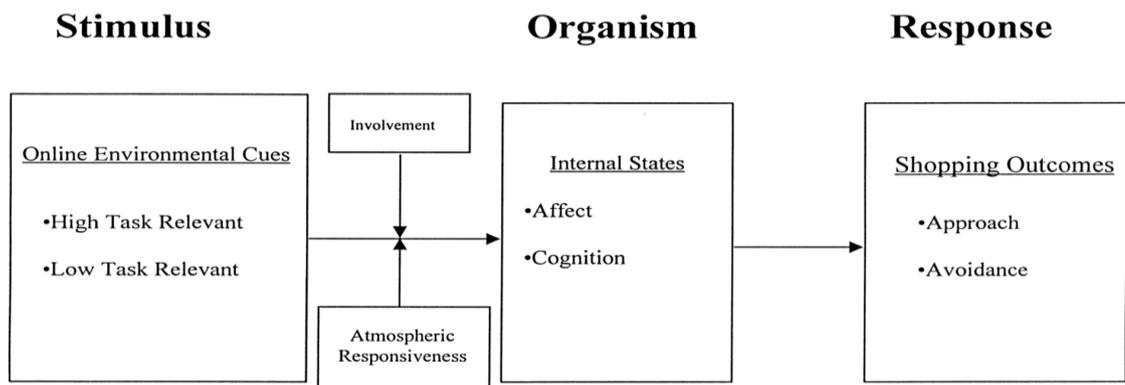
Figure 2-2 An SOR model of consumer response to online shopping (Eroglu et al., 2001, p.179)

In this adaptation, Eroglu et al. (2001) place high emphasis on conceptualising online environmental cues by suggesting a taxonomy of cues in which stimuli are essentially defined by their task relevance. Thus, high task relevant cues are then arguably studied as a separate group to low task relevant cues. Indeed, this conceptualisation is important as it seems to acknowledge the unique nature of the digital environment compared to a brick and mortar environment.

In addition to the abovementioned adaptation to the SOR framework in a digital context, Jeong et al. (2009) employs a different approach to adapting the SOR to online shopping experience research by incorporating Pine and Gilmore's (1998) 4Es model of experience (entertainment, educational, escapist, and aesthetic experiences) within SOR. The model is highlighted in figure 2-3 below.

22
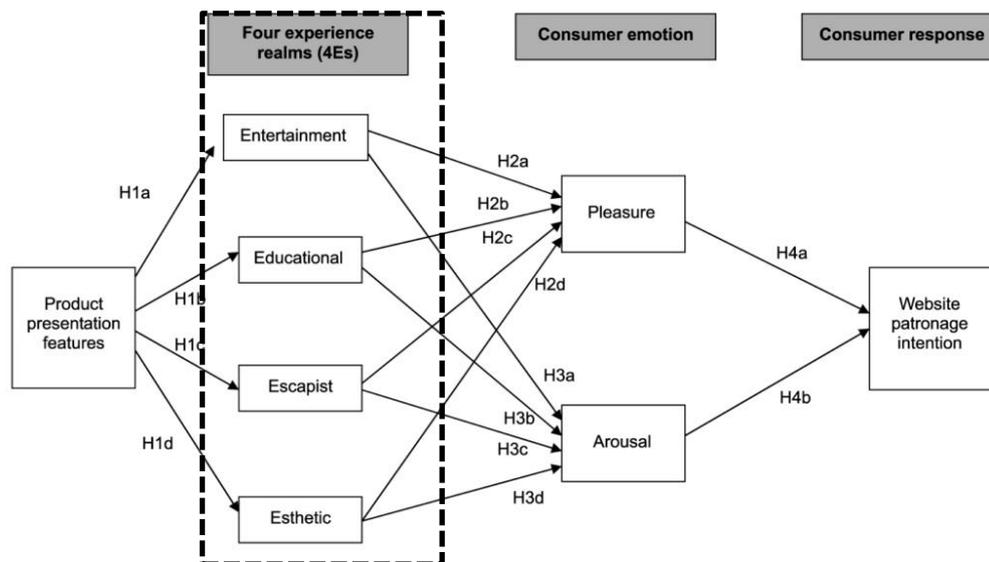
Figure 2-3 Integration of Pine & Gilmore 4Es in the SOR framework in online-shopping experiences by Jeong et al. (2009)

Unlike Eroglu et al. (2001), Jeong et al. (2009) assert that within the online shopping environment, product specific atmospherics can be conceptualised based on the four different types of experience (i.e. Pine and Gilmore's (1998) 4Es). Thus, instead of classifying the stimuli themselves, this work attempts to study stimuli by their effect on certain types of experiences. Indeed, both Eroglu et al. (2001) and Jeong et al. (2009) are invaluable advancement in our understanding of the online environmental stimuli. However, both papers also fall short in addressing the important role of the individual within this environment. As aforementioned, there is a high emphasis in such work on adapting the stimuli construct and less on the 'organism' and 'behaviour' constructs of SOR. This criticism is also manifested in empirical work employing the SOR such as Turley and Milliman (2000) and Vieira (2013).

Further investigation of the nature of empirical work adopting the SOR in online environments was made in this thesis in order to fully establish the scope and nature of the work and its strength and shortcomings.

A systematic review of SOR in the online-shopping environment was conducted (Kawaf & Tagg, 2012). This review carried out content analysis of the most relevant articles that have used the framework in an online-shopping context. A database of 250 articles was established over a 12-month period. Keywords used include: online environment, shopping atmosphere, web atmospherics, servicescape, online

servicescape, shopping experience, web design, emotion, cognition, stimulus-organism-response (SOR), pleasure-arousal-dominance (PAD), fashion shopping, clothes, apparel website, avatar and online consumer behaviour.

In order to provide a detailed insight into the use of SOR in this context, a number of articles were coded and analysed (See appendix 1 for coded articles). The articles selected met the following criteria; (a) articles employing SOR or a modified SOR model, (b) articles studying the buying environment or any of its features (c) articles must be studying (a and b) in the online-shopping context and not in traditional purchase settings.

This review shows that, unsurprisingly, research on online-shopping experience is still in its infancy. Most of the reviewed papers seem to be lacking any theoretical depth, instead, such papers are only engaged with a simple application of the model for testing within a new context. Accordingly, it is concluded that most of the reviewed papers that seem to be dominant in using SOR are 'experimental' papers concerned with testing the influence of stimuli changes.

The extensive use of experimental design could also be attributed to the need to control the setting in which the experience takes place in order to assess how one atmospheric influences the consumer. This is especially true for online fashion-shopping research, as the review shows that over 77% of online apparel research used experiments and that most of them used simulated websites.

The implication of these findings is that SOR has been employed for testing stimuli changes in an experiment in which the role of the individual is reduced to only reacting to changes rather than engaging in a meaningful experience. This is indeed problematic and a hindrance to an in-depth understanding of experience.

Although the review shows that the use of the SOR has been successful in testing certain stimuli-organism relations, it is concluded that SOR falls short of providing a comprehensive view of the effect of the individual on the environment and on the shopping experience itself. As Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) argue, reducing the rich experiences of human being in limiting models is bound to give rise to a misconception of these experiences.

Specifically, Jacoby (2002) criticises the SOR sequence saying:

The failure to grasp or accommodate for the fact that certain phenomena may be both stimuli and responses. For example, are phenomena such as beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and satisfaction stimulus inputs, aspects of the organism or some form of response? (Jacoby, 2002, p.52)

Consequently, he suggests a reconceptualisation of SOR, which, instead of displaying (S>O>R) in a sequential manner, represents them as overlapping circles forming a Venn diagram that depicts the seven-sector framework (See figure 2-4 below).
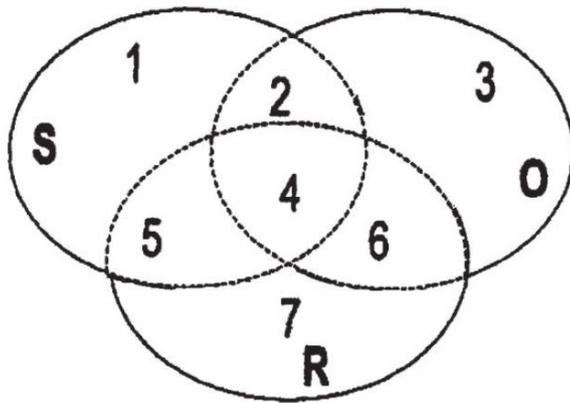
FIGURE 1   Toward reconceptualizing Stimulus–Organism–Response: A temporally bound two-dimensional representation. Sectors of the psychological system: 1 = Encountered Environment; 2 = Automatic Processing; 3 = Experiential Storehouse; 4 = Consciousness; 5 = Nontrace Stimulus–Response Events; 6 = Internal Responses; 7 = External Responses.

Figure 2-4 Reconceptualisation of SOR (Jacoby, 2002, p.54)

Even though Jacoby presents his criticism of current models clearly, he does not seem to offer any rationale for his three dimensional model of SOR in overlaying circles and temporality factors. Although, his work is invaluable in explaining the problematic issues with the current linear SOR model, it seems that Jacoby's rationale throughout his paper is based, as he states, on his 'own thinking' (Jacoby, 2002) of how this model should be visually presented.

It is apparent that most criticism of the SOR framework is not of the essential fact that the environment has an effect on consumer experiences. In fact, Vieira (2013, p.1425) suggest that *'stimulus, emotion, and response are strongly associated'*.

However, most of the current criticism relates to the sequence and presentations of relationships in a linear manner.

Thus, there is no argument as to whether stimuli influence emotions and behaviour. However, there is a clear gap in our understanding of this phenomenon. This gap can be identified as a lack of consideration of the individual's role in this environment, and to the sequence identified as stimuli-organism-response.

Current research seems to treat the consumer as a passive recepient of marketing stimuli. This research argues, on the other hand, that the role of the individual in approaching the stimuli in the first place is not addressed properly. If we take into account how different individuals approach different stimuli, what is considered as the buying environment (stimuli) is therefore different from one individual to another.

To conclude, this section discussed the theoretical and impirical evidence of SOR use as a framework for studying consumer experiences and emotions in an online shopping environment. Criticism of the SOR were highlighted and a conclusion was made to include a more individualistic approach to studying the experience in which the role of the individual is fully considered. The next section discusses another major theoretical approach to studying online experience, that is, the theory of flow.

2.4   Flow Theory

Flow, another psychological term, coined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) who refers to 'optimal experiences' which is defined by Pace (2004, p.327) as *'a state of consciousness that is sometimes experienced by individuals who are deeply involved in an enjoyable activity'*.

One of the first initiatives to studying 'flow' in the context of online experiences is the work by Hoffman and Novak (1996) in which they developed a conceptual model that attempted to explain the relationship between flow and the behaviour of online consumers. They defined flow as:

> *...the state occurring during network navigation which is: (1) characterized by a seamless sequence of responses facilitated by machine interactivity, (2)*

intrinsically enjoyable, (3) accompanied by a loss of self-consciousness, and (4) self-reinforcing. (1996, p.57)

This cognitive state of flow experienced during online navigation is, '*determined by: 1) high levels of skill and control; 2) high levels of challenge and arousal; 3) focused attention; and is 4) enhanced by interactivity and telepresence*' (Novak et al., 2000, p.4). Moreover, a perception of balance between the user's skills and the challenges of the interaction is essential to the experience of flow (Pace, 2004).

The importance of the concept is argued as '*flow underlies what makes a compelling online experience*' (Novak et al., 2000, p.2). Supporting evidence for 'flow' can be found in the empirical testing of the concept by Novak et al. (2000) and in further theory building such as in Pace, (2004).

One of the main criticisms of Novak and Hoffman's (1996) handling of flow on the web is linked to the rich interactive environment of the web that facilitates many different 'creative, communicative and collaborative activities' (Pace, 2004, p.331). Thus, suggesting that flow is a condition that depends on the content of each activity more than the environment itself. Accordingly, studying flow experiences then depends on what goes on in the communicative activities rather than the environment itself.

In line with this argument, Chen, Wigand and Nilan (1999, p.590) assert that the web is a 'multi-activity medium' in which the meaning of flow characteristics – challenge and skill – '*is necessarily situated in time and space, dependent on what it is that the user is doing and the goal(s) that s/he us pursuing*'. For instance, the activity of replying to emails is different every time based on the content and type of emails (e.g. replying to debates, arguments, etc.). Whether a state of flow is reached is then, arguably, based on the content of the communication received within the digital environment and not on the environment itself.

Equally important, flow theory assert that a state of pleasurable flow is reached under certain conditions, one of which is complete immersion within the experience and the environment in which the experience is taking place. Therefore, one important shortcoming of the theory of flow is that it is only concerned with experiences of

flow and not with all different types of experiences where flow might not actually happen.

This issue then becomes apparent when flow theory is assessed as a fit approach to studying Pine and Gilmore's (1998) 4E experiences for instance. As aforementioned earlier in the chapter, the 4Es (educational, escapist, aesthetic and entertainment) experiences are classified on two spectrums: (1) active-passive consumer, and (2) immersion-absorption in the environment. Hence, aesthetic and escapist experiences are the types of experiences that happen during a state of complete immersion in the environment; whereas, experiences such as education and entertainment usually occur in a state of absorption. Accordingly, within the scope of flow theory where the condition of immersion is a must, it is not possible to study experiences of absorption rather than immersion within the environment.

Flow theory, therefore, limits Pine and Gilmore's model, and our understanding of other types of experiences where immersion is not evident. In online shopping, it is very natural that absorption of information of atmospherics occurs. Indeed, a state of immersion could happen, yet other states when a user is not immersed or in a state of flow also naturally happen.

Thus, using flow theory may be very valuable in studying flow experience but this also means neglecting other types of experiences that are not necessarily flow experiences. The approach of studying flow experiences is indeed useful in understanding one type of experience, the kind that flow scholars refer to as 'compelling' experiences of highly enjoyable activities. The theory neglects various other forms of experience that could be equally, if not more, important. Therefore, although flow is an important approach to studying these states of complete, enjoyable involvement, this concept is not suitable for studying the nature of experience in its generic meaning to the individual whether positive or negative.

2.5   Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the literature associated with the shopping experience. It highlighted the different perspectives on the experience from the original concept of experiential marketing as a phenomenon that involves emotions,

fun and fantasies (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) to Schmitt's (1999) and Pine and Gilmore's (1998) conceptualisations of the experience.

The experience of online-shopping environments was then discussed in two main approaches, the SOR framework, and the theory of flow. Discussion and criticism of these approaches were presented and their suitability to the study of experience was highlighted.

The conclusion of this chapter is best highlighted by Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) remarks on studying experience and their criticism of existing frameworks and models that limit our understanding of the term. Therefore, this thesis mainly aims to provide a more coherent understanding of the complex dynamics of the shopping experience.

Similarly, Jacoby's (2002, p.52) comment advocates against the linear models:

> *When the phenomena to be modeled are admittedly nonlinear and not necessarily logical, but psychological, fluid, dynamic, and recursive, having enough feedback loops to literally make one's head spin, then linear depictions likely do them limited justice.*

This criticism applies to the SOR sequence in its linear form and does not apply to the environmental psychology concept that the environment influences the experience. The dominance of SOR and the experimental nature of most articles in this area is highlighted and is in line with Turley and Milliman's (2000) review. It is understandable that such research would focus on the SOR relationships and so using experiments is important in controlling specific variables in order to assess and measure the influence of specific environmental cues.

Despite the SOR framework's attempts to account for the nature of human behaviour and the inner psychological processes, such endeavours fall short in explaining the complex nature of human experiences, emotions and behaviour as well as the dynamics of lived experiences.

Finally, the popularity of the flow theory was discussed and criticised. The suitability of this concept was argued using different scholarly inputs such as Chen et al. (1999); Hoffman & Novak (1996); Pace (2004). Using Pine and Gilmore's (1998)

model, the chapter shows how flow theory restricts our understanding of the holistic experience and, instead, focuses on the immersion states in a compelling experience. This results in neglecting other types of experience that are not a state of complete immersion.

Even outside the theory of flow, emotions are highlighted as an important part of the experience and essential to the experiential view of consumption (Havlena & Holbrook, 1986). Therefore, the following chapter presents a comprehensive account of the literature's various perspectives on emotion. This following chapter addresses the nature of emotion, the various approaches to studying emotion, and their relevance to one's experiences and behaviour.

Chapter 3 Theories of Emotion

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical concept of experience (Gentile et al., 2007; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013; Schmitt, 1999). Experience has been defined as a series of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organisation, and that it requires the involvement of the consumer on various levels, such as physical, emotional, and cognitive (Gentile et al., 2007). Emotion as an important property of the consumption experience was mentioned briefly in the previous chapter.

This chapter deals with the various concepts and theories of emotion to provide a solid theoretical background to the study of the experience. It begins by addressing the nature of emotions and the different definitions of the term before discussing the relationships between emotion and cognition, and emotion and rationality. The most noteworthy approaches to studying emotions are presented.

3.1   What an Emotion Is

Everyone knows what an emotion is, until asked to give a definition.
Then, it seems, no one knows. (Fehr & Russell, 1984, p.464)

What an emotion is − is an age-old question that could be traced back at least as far as Plato and Aristotle (Fehr & Russell, 1984). Various theoretical perspectives on emotion are found particularly in the field of psychology.

Among these, most notable are the psychophysiological, neurological, and cognitive perspectives on emotion. The James-Lange theory, which suggests that emotions are the result of physiological bodily changes, was strongly criticised later by Cannon (1987) who proposed the neurological approach.

The neurological approach suggested that emotions are the result of stimulated subcortical receptors, thus attributing emotions to the way in which the brain works.

This theory was then criticised by cognitive appraisal theory (emotions are the results of cognitive appraisals) (Lazarus, 1991; 1998), in that trying to explain a enigmatic concept with a rather mysterious process does not add to the understanding of either of them.

Cognitive appraisal theory considers an emotion *'a mental state of readiness that arises from appraisals of events or of one's thoughts'* (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999, p.184). This conception does not consider the neuroscience of the brain in understanding the nature of emotions.

Emotions in the field of marketing and consumer research are often mingled with mood, affect, and feelings. Therefore, the relationship between affect, emotion, feeling and mood are highlighted in figure 3-1 below.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, an emotion is *'a strong feeling deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others'* (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014a).
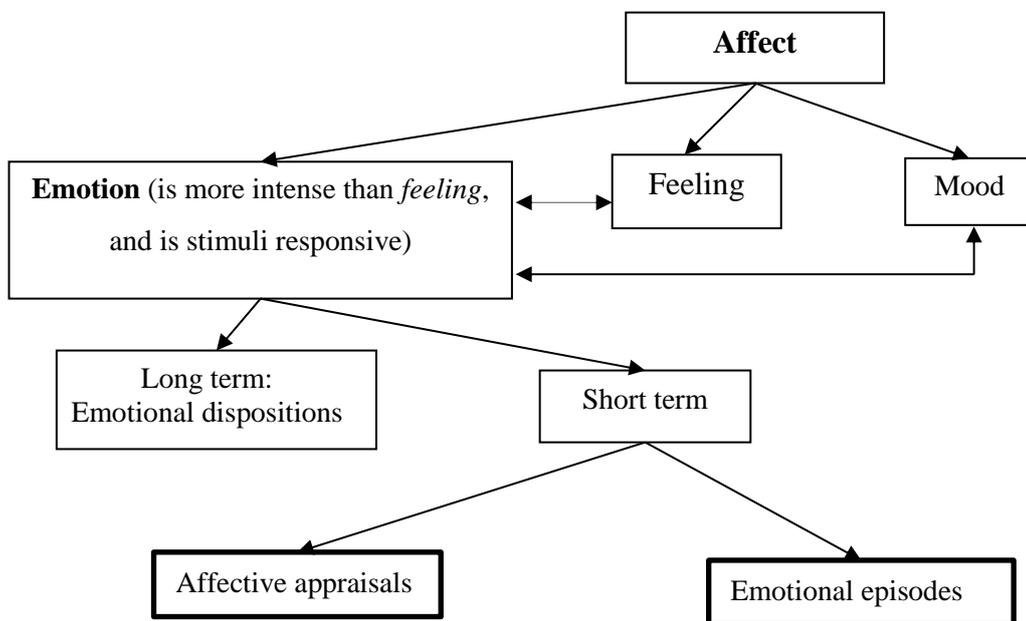
Figure 3-1 A map of the interrelations between affect, feeling, emotion and mood as they appear in the literature

Éthier et al. (2006, p.628) refer to affect as *'a set of specific mental processes, including feelings, moods, and emotions'*. Cohen, Pham, & Andrade (2008) argue in favour of this outlook on affect, saying that 'affect' arises from evaluative judgement. Moreover, Jones, Spence, & Vallaster (2008) define emotion and mood as specific examples of affect, whereas emotion is more intensive, stimulus specific, and of shorter duration. Mood, on the other hand, is of milder intensity, more persistent and might be felt without our conscious awareness.

Furthermore, emotions are also categorised into long and short term (Russell & Snodgrass, 1987). An example of long-term emotional disposition is feeling for our parents, which exists even though we do not think about it or feel it all the time. On the other hand, short-term emotional states evolve as affective appraisals and emotional episodes. Short-term emotion is the type that is of interest when studying the experience of shopping.

3.2   Emotion and Cognition

The distinctive stances in consumer research as discussed in the second chapter are the emotional consumer and the rational one. As mentioned above, traditionally the concept of the rational consumer had preoccupied consumer research with a focus on the cognitive rational consumer that fits in information processing theory (Bettman, 1979; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995).

Cognitive theory suggests that:

> *…to understand people one needs to understand what leads them to act as they do, and to understand what leads them to act as they do one needs to know their goals, and to understand their goals one must understand their overall interpretive system, part of which constitutes and interrelates these goals, and to understand their interpretive system-their schemas-one must understand something about the hierarchical relations among these schemas.*

> (D'Andrade, 1992, p.31)

On the other hand, and contrary to D'Andrade (1992) stance, the alternative perspective is the recognition of emotions as a way of understanding people (Bagozzi, 2009; Izard, 1977; Mandler, 1990). This stance of studying emotions as a means to understand people is adopted in consumer research such as the experiential and hedonic consumption research (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

Such either/or positions with regard to emotion and cognition are still evident in the field; yet the acceptance of a unity of emotion and cognition, in which the two do not separate, is also evident in works such as cognitive appraisal theory and in specific field studies that highlight their nexus (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Penaloza, 1998).

On the emotion-cognition relationship, Bagozzi et al. (1999, p.202) comment: *'emotions are ubiquitous throughout marketing. They influence information processing, mediate responses to persuasive appeals, measure the effects of marketing stimuli, initiate goal setting, enact goal-directed behaviours, and serve as ends and measures of consumer welfare'*.

Both emotion and cognition are thought to be the internal states that mediate the influence of the environment on human behaviour. Chang and Chen (2008, p.820) suggest that 'the organism is represented by cognitive and affective intermediary states and processes that mediate the relationships between the stimulus and the individual's responses'.

Some scholars choose to address the interrelationship between cognition and emotion by studying the influence of emotions on both cognition and behaviour (Griskevicius, Shiota, & Neufeld, 2010; Griskevicius, Shiota, & Nowlis, 2010; López & Ruiz, 2010). Even traditionally, research had produced impressive and consistent results on the influence of affect on cognition (Russell & Snodgrass, 1987).

On the other hand, one theme in the literature seems to propose the reverse of this relationship, i.e. stimuli have no direct effect on emotion. Instead, a customer evaluates stimuli first and then specific emotions emerge (Desmet, 2009; Massara, et al., 2009; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). This theme is in line with cognitive appraisal theory, as it suggests that cognition influences emotions.

About online environments, Demangeot and Broderick (2007, p.880) comment:

> *...while affect appears to play a role, online-shopping environments are perceived in a more cognitive manner than offline environments. This could be the case because of the higher cognitive effort necessary for a computer-mediated activity which is less intuitive than the activity of offline shopping.*

3.3 *Emotion and Rationality*

Izard (1977) explains two major stances in life in relation to these concepts. One is in favour of rationality and cognition, which denies a role for emotions in the life of a rational person. The other that acknowledges the role of emotions, which sometimes

may be defended in consumer research as in opposition to rationality. This stance argues that we are not always rational and, that we can be emotional at times. There are several points of view between these extremes. However, what is important is to address the meaning of rationality, and whether emotions have a place here.

William James argues, in his work 'the sentiment of rationality', that actually rationality is a state that we reach emotionally. He comments:

> *They [philosophers] desire to attain a conception of the frame of things which shall on the whole be more rational than the rather fragmentary and chaotic one which everyone by gift of nature carries with him under his hat. But suppose this rational conception attained by the philosopher, how is he to recognise it for what it is, and not let slip through ignorance? The only answer can be that he will recognise its rationality as he recognises everything else, by certain subjective marks with which it affects him. When he gets the marks he may know that he has got the rationality. What then are the marks? A strong feeling of ease, peace, rest, is one of them. The transition from a state of puzzle and perplexity to rational comprehension is full of lively relief and pleasure.* (James, 1884, p.317)

The balanced approach is an approach that does not separate emotions from rationality, an approach that consumer research calls 'experiential', in which the experience accounts for the individual as a whole and not as separate mind and body, or separate emotion and reason. Yassim (2011) shows the evolution of this approach in marketing (See figure 3-2 below).
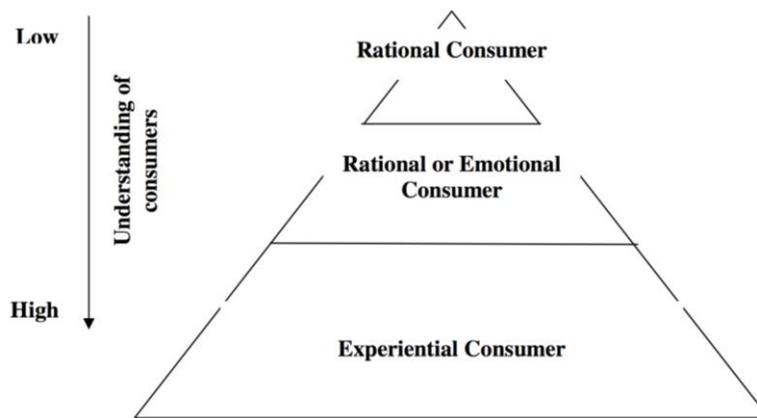
Figure 2.2 - Evolvement of the nature of consumer in marketing and consumer behaviour.

Figure 3-2 Rational, emotional and experiential Consumer

In this view, the experiential consumer is rational and emotional (Yassim, 2011). This section argues that rationality and emotions can peacefully coexist, which is supported by great thinkers in the field of emotions such as William James, and is adopted and expanded in this thesis.

3.4   Research Approaches to Emotion

In marketing and consumer research, the approaches to studying emotions are summarised by Watson and Spence (2007) as, the categories approach, the dimension approach, and the cognitive appraisal approach. These approaches are discussed in this section together with the personal construct theory approach of studying emotions.

3.4.1   *The categorical approach*

The traditional categories approach is evident in work such as Plutchik's (1980) wheel of emotions (eight basic emotional categories) and Richins (1997) consumption emotion set (CES). These scholars suggest basic groups of emotions, which supposedly have similar attributes and consequences for behaviour.

Although Plutchik's (1980) and Richins's (1997) work on categorising emotion is helpful in naming and defining a number of emotional states, their approach is limiting to our understanding of emotional intensity and importance. This is evident in Laros and Steenkamp's (2005) criticisms of these approaches as they suggested a hierarchical approach to emotions that includes superordinate and subordinate

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emotions. Therefore, what Laros and Steenkamp (2005) bring to the literature of emotion is an argument that not all emotions are of the same importance or significance. As a result, using the same categorical approach, identifying superordinate and subordinate emotions is an important step in the recognition of the downfalls of Plutchik's and Richin's approaches.

Additional categorical approaches include the positive affect negative affect scale (PANAS), which identifies emotions in one of two groups, positive and negative, but also studies subordinate emotions in the two groups (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The PANAS scale, however, falls short in explaining the differences between a variety of emotional states claiming that emotions can be grouped in distinctive positive and negative groups.

The categorical outlook on emotion asserts the universality of emotions. Thus, it suggests that an emotion defined as 'happiness' for instance, is essentially experienced exactly the same by any individual. This outlook is problematic as it neglects simple characteristics of individuality, level of intensity, and dimensions of emotions.

Accordingly, the next approach of studying emotion attempts to overcome the shortcomings of the categorical approach by endeavouring to define emotions based on dimensions. This approach is discussed below.

3.4.2 The dimensional approach

The dimensional approach to emotion is a very popular one. This approach includes the famous three-dimensional model of emotions introduced to study the affective states in the SOR framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). To measure the affective states of the organism, Russell and Mehrabian (1977) introduced the dimensional pleasure, arousal, dominance (PAD) model of emotions.

According to PAD, emotions can be measured dimensionally on the basis of pleasure/displeasure, arousal/nonarousal, dominance/ submissiveness resulting in either positive or negative emotions. The PAD model of dimentional emotions, much studied in consumer reseach, was intially applied in a retail setting by Donovan and Rossiter (1994), and many examples of the use of the scale can be found in the literature review of SOR studies (Kawaf & Tagg, 2012) summarised in appendix 1.

However, it is worth noting that most recent studies have dropped the 'Dominance' dimension of the model, arguing its irrelevance in online retail contexts (e.g. Ballantine & Fortin, 2009; Mummalaneni, 2005)

Both the categorical and the dimensional approaches are similar in their assumption of the universality of emotions, in the ability to group emotions into a number of categories (Plutchik, 1980) or even further reduce them to two or three dimensions (Russell & Mehrabian, 1977). In both cases, a category of emotions will have the same influence on behaviour.

For example, according to the theory of approach-avoidance, positive emotions are likely to cause the positive behaviour of approach; whereas negative emotions are likely to cause the negative behaviour of avoidance (Kenhove & Desrumaux, 2001; Russell & Mehrabian, 1978; Sweeney & Wyber, 2002). Further research, however, argues for the possibility of mixed emotions to coexist peacefully, thus making the relationship between emotion and behaviour even more complex (Wadhwa, 2007; Williams & Aaker, 2002). Categories of emotions may therefore overlap in a state of mixed emotions.

Criticism to the main concept of positive emotion–positive behaviour, negative emotion–negative behaviour is highlighted by Griskevicius, Shiota, and Neufeld (2010) and Griskevicius, Shiota, and Nowlis (2010). These scholars researched the effect of two emotions from one category and showed how the influence of two positive emotions on behaviour is noticeably different. For instance, their work shows how two positive emotions, pride and contentment, vary enormously in their effects on behaviour. Specifically, they suggest that pride enhances a product's desirability for show on public display, whereas contentment enhances desirability to buy a product for private/home use. This acknowledges the importance of studying emotions (such as enjoyment, mentioned by Lin et al., 2008) separately(A. Lin et al., 2008) instead of grouping them in order to better understand their relevance in the experience.

In response to these approaches, the cognitive appraisal theory of emotions offer a more comprehensive understanding of emotions based on the individual's appraisals. This approach is discussed in the following section.

3.4.3   The cognitive appraisal approach

Unlike the two aforementioned approaches which posit the universality of groups of emotions, this theory links emotions to the cognitive activities of the individual. Emotion in this approach is defined as 'the product of reason' (Lazarus, 1991), or, as Bagozzi et al. (1999) defined it, a mental state of readiness. Watson and Spence (2007, p.488) suggest that cognitive appraisal theory addresses three issues:

> *(1) To elucidate what are the underlying characteristics inherent in events that are evaluated or appraised; (2) What, if any, emotions are experienced as a result of this appraisal process; and (3) What are the behavioural responses to the experienced emotions?*

Lazarus (1991) states that in appraisal theory, emotions are associated with a person's goals and motivations, and that emotions are important in understanding the individual's coping strategies (Lazarus & Launier, 1978; Lazarus, 1993). In this view, emotions are also part of person-environment relationships, and so the factors in the environment do not cause certain emotions in the individual, but emotions result from the relationship between the person and the environment.

Cognitive appraisal theory *'offers a more in-depth way to explain the subtle nuances of emotions'* (Watson & Spence, 2007, p.490). It proposes that, when exposed to stimuli, a person first evaluates the situation and makes a cognitive appraisal. Then, emotions evolve because of this appraisal and lead to a particular response.

The cognitive appraisal theory of emotion has been very popular in consumer behaviour research and highly recommended by Bagozzi et al. (1999) and Watson and Spence (2007). Particularly in online-shopping behaviour, cognitive appraisal theory has been applied in various studies, often integrated with the SOR paradigm and replacing the PAD model (Éthier et al., 2006; and Jones et al., 2008). Éthier, et al. (2006) argue that this theory is appropriate for online-shopping research, where information processing is an important aspect, and because it has predictive capability and can be used to develop research models.

This approach argues for the relativity of emotions in accord with the person-environment relationships as opposed to the universality of emotions of the previous

approaches in which the environment supposedly causes the same emotions in individuals.

However, cognitive appraisal theory is criticised for not accounting for any commonality of emotions between individuals. The concept of appraisal itself in the sequence suggested by the theory (event > appraisal > emotions) is criticised by many scholars such as Yassim (2011) who defends an ongoing process in which the person is engaged in continuous appraisals that are influenced by their emotions.

Yassim (2011) offers an alternative approach of using Kelly's (1955) PCT to studying emotions in the experience of watching a game. This approach promotes ongoing appraisal of one's experiences, and is discussed in the following section.

3.4.4   Personal Construct Theory, PCT approach

Kelly (1955) introduced personal construct theory as a more humanistic approach to understanding human experiences. He proposes:

> "A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events." (Kelly 1963, p.46)

Thus, in PCT one could study emotion as an active psychological anticipation of events. Similar to cognitive appraisal theory, in this approach, emotions are individualistic and are construed by the individual. Kelly (1955) referred to man as a 'scientist' and as an expert in his/her own feelings and experiences. Equally important, PCT also offers a stance of commonality as well as individuality in that it allows an understanding of commonality between individuals.

Although Kelly did not wish to highlight 'emotion', 'drive' or 'motivation' as concepts in order to avoid dealing with such dualisms, he did identify specific emotions such as threat, fear, guilt and anxiety (Kelly, 1955) to which he referred as *'awareness of transitional states'* (Bannister & Fransella, 1986, p.35). Given that the person is a dynamic process, Kelly defines emotions as states of transition that may result from a mismatch between the anticipation of events (constructs) and the events themselves.

Various attempts were made to further integrate emotions in PCT or to study the emotional states of the individual from this perspective. McCoy (1977), and Lester

(2009) and Raskin, (2013) have incoporated a number of emotions within PCT concluding that *"the full range of human emotion can be explained using the concepts of PCT."* (Lester, 2009, p.97). Moreover, PCT has been used as a theoretical underpinnings for understanding human consumption experiences in marketing. For example, Yassim (2011) successfully adopts the theory to reveal the nature of emotion in the consumption experience of sport spectating.

Unlike cognitive appraisal theory, PCT allows for exploring both individuality and commonality of emotions as emotions are viewed as transitional states rather than solid entities. This approach is invaluable in studying the nature of emotion in the online fashion shopping experience given that this type of experience is not distinctively as emotional as other experiences such as the experience of graduation for instance (Koenig-Lewis & Palmer, 2008).

This thesis adopts PCT as an appropriate approach to studying emotion and lived experiences. Chapter 6 is dedicated to explaining this theory and its companion method, the repertory grid technique, employed in the fieldwork for this thesis.

3.5   Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the literature associated with studying emotion. The chapter highlighted the positions taken by the literature on the roles of emotion and cognition in our experiences concluding that emotion and cognition are inseparable and that they both are two names of one process.

The chapter also showed the complex nature of emotions and its relation to rationality and reason. As it has been discussed in the chapter, rationality has been used by some as an opposing state of emotions claiming that emotions are a form of irrationality. However, the chapter criticised this myopic outlook and discussed the relevance of emotion to rationality and how the two do not contradict each other.

Additionally, the chapter discussed and evaluated the key approaches to studying emotions.

The categorical approach in which emotions are defined in pre existing categories, in addition to the dimensional approach in which emotions are explained on two or three dimensions were evaluated. Criticism drawn to these approaches include the

over simplification of human emotion and the unhelpful universality of emotions that neglect any degree of individuality.

Then, the approach of cognitive appraisal of emotions was discussed as a better approach to studying emotions as it accounts for variations and individuality of emotional states as experienced by the individual. However, the downfall of this approach was discussed, as it seems to establish clear dualism between cognition and emotion. This goes against the stance adopted in this thesis in which emotion and cognition are inseparable.

Finally, personal construct theory is presented as an alternative approach for studying emotion. The chapter emphasised how this approach overcome many of the shortcomings of the previously discussed categorical, dimensional and cognitive appraisal approaches in its outlook at emotion as transitional states that are inseparable of cognition. This approach is discussed in great detail in chapter 6 where the discussion of PCT and the repertory grid technique is further developed.

To conclude, this chapter presented a review of existing literature approaches to studying emotion. The next chapter discusses the theories of atmospherics, both in online and offline contexts as well as discussing fashion specific atmospherics.

Chapter 4 Theories of Atmospherics

The first two chapters in this literature review were dedicated to presenting the theoretical perspectives on the shopping experience and consumer emotions. This thesis specifically studies the online fashion-shopping experience, to which an understanding of the online-shopping environment is central.

This chapter reviews the literature associated with the buying environment and atmospherics in online and offline contexts. The chapter begins by presenting a review of the literature associated with environmental cues, atmospherics and the servicescape concept.

The chapter then addresses the shift toward e-commerce and online shopping. Therefore, a review of the literature associated with how the original concepts of atmospherics, cues and servicescape have evolved in this new context, thus, concepts such as the online environment, web atmospherics and e-servicescape are discussed.

Finally, the chapter discusses the exclusivity of online fashion shopping and highlights the unique nature of fashion and the challenges it imposes on the online buying environment.

4.1   Environmental Cues, Atmospherics, and Servicescape

The roots of studying the environment and its influence on behaviour appear in environmental psychology research such as that by the Kaplans (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). The Kaplans' approach to environmental psychology focused on the natural environment and the experience of nature (e.g. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982). However, the concept of their work has been extended in various directions to include not only natural environments but also built environments. For instance, the built environment appears in organisational studies as 'the workspace and aesthetics' (e.g. Warren, 2002, 2005), in service research as 'the servicescape' (Bitner, 1990, 1992; Booms & Bitner, 1982), in marketing as 'environmental atmospherics' (e.g. Kotler, 1973) and in consumer research, as 'the buying/store environment' (e.g. Donovan & Rossiter, 1982, 1994).

The focus of this research is on consumer behaviour, so this chapter will review only literature associated with the influence of the environment on consumers (thereby excluding the influence on employees). Consequently, literature on workspaces is not discussed in this review, and neither is the influence of the servicescape on employees. Accordingly, the rest of this section discusses the concepts relating to the environment from marketing research and service research perspectives.

One of the earliest attempts to study the role of the environment in the field of Marketing is Kotler's (1973) work. He asserts that environmental cues and atmospherics can be used as marketing tools for the purposes of 'attention creating', 'message creating' and 'affect creating'. Therefore, it is the role of the marketer to design these environmental cues within the shopping/service environment to achieve any of these purposes.

Although Kotler's endeavours were helpful in bringing to light the role of the environment in marketing research, his stance is simplistic, as it does not account for the complexity of environmental cues and their influence on the consumer experience. Furthermore, Kotler's approach falls short of giving credit to the role of the individual in this environment. He suggests, *'just as the sound of a bell caused Pavlov's dog to think of food, various components of the atmosphere may trigger sensations in the buyers that create or heighten an appetite for certain goods, services, or experiences'* (Kotler, 1973, p.54).

This behaviouristic perspective was limiting in its assumption that a human react to marketing stimuli just as Pavlov's dog reacted to a bell. Indeed, scholars have already discussed how limiting this outlook is and have attempted to advance our understanding of the relationships between the person and the environment. For instance, Donovan & Rossiter (1982), inspired by the Kaplans approach, suggest that the 'environmental load' is an important concept in studying the influence of the environment on consumer behaviour. The environmental load is the amount of environmental novelty (familiarity with the environment) and complexity (the number of elements, features and changes in the environment). This accounted for variations in individuals' familiarity with the environment.

Not only that the role of the individual has been considered in the work of Donovan and Rossiter (1982), but also increasing attention has been paid to the role of all humans within this environment (e.g. Grewal, Roggeveen, Puccinelli, & Spence, 2014; Turley & Milliman, 2000). Therefore, the shopping environment is conceptualised in the literature as a combination of both physical and human variables.

Physical variables were studied extensively in the literature, for example, exterior and interior design, store layout, and displays (e.g. themed flagship stores (Kozinets, et al. 2002; Penaloza, 1998) and organisation aesthetics (Bell, Warren, & Schroeder, 2014; Warren, 2002). Similarly, human variables have recently been the centre of attention of research in the area. For instance, Grewal et al. (2014) asserts the central role of in-store non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and perceived similarity in the environment, thus arguing the role of humans within the environment is essential in understanding the customer experience.

The human variables, in addition to the physical variables and the environmental characteristics, appear as the major approaches to the concept of environmental cues and atmospherics. These are summarised in Figure 4-1 below in order to help the reader to establish how such literature is interrelated.
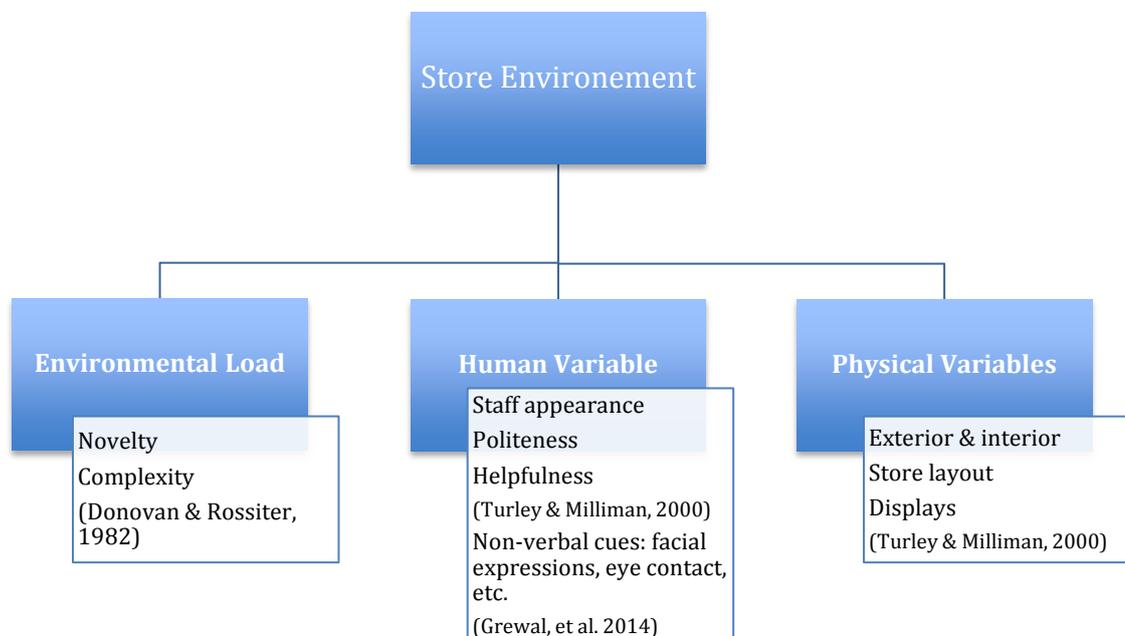
Figure 4-1 Store environment

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Figure 4-1 summarises the main areas of atmospherics as they appear in the relevant literature. The content of this figure is in line with Turley and Milliman's (2000) review of the literature on atmospherics in which they suggest that atmospherics can be divided into five categories (1) exterior, (2) general interior, (3) store layout, (4) interior display, and (5) human variables. Indeed, an understanding of these five categories is a must for research on environment atmospherics. Current research have attempted to study one or more of these categories in separation to the other categories via an experimental research design. However, the need to study the influence of all the coponents of the environment simultaneously has not been addresses. Scholars such as Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, and Voss (2002) claim that it is vital to study the simultaneous impact on the consumers of multiple store environmental cues – social, design, and ambient.

In addition to the aforementioned conceptualisation of environmental atmospherics and cues, the servicescape is a similar term that has appeared in service research; a term that refers to the shopping environment but within a service context. Coined by Bitner (1992), the 'servicescape' refers to *all of the objective physical factors that can be controlled by the firm to enhance (or constrain) employee and customer actions'* (Bitner, 1992, p.65), suggesting that human beings in the service encounter are affected by the surrounding physical environment.

It is worth noting that servicescape literature goes beyond the context of 'pure' service providers such as restaurants and tourism agencies and extends to the selling of tangible products in stores. This is justified by the principle that a customer in a retailer store is receiving 'a service' when buying the products.

As a result, there is an interchangeable use of the terms servicescape, store environments and atmospherics evident in various published reviews on literature in the area (for example, Mari & Poggesi, 2013; Turley & Milliman, 2000).

According to Bitner's original definition, the servicescape has an impact on both employees and consumers. According to Kaminakis, Karantinou, Gounaris, and Koritos (2014), research on the impact of servicescape on employees has not progressed as much as that done on consumers. However, much work has been done

on the role of the workspace and organisational aesthetics (Bell, Warren, & Schroeder, 2014; Warren, 2002).

In consumer research these attempts are apparent in linking servicescape to consumers' cognition and emotion (Lin, 2004), quality perception (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005), loyalty intentions (Harris & Ezeh, 2008) and behavioural intentions (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Various endeavours were made to identify the components of the servicescape. For example, Bitner (2000) suggests that ambience, function, and design are the dimensions of the built environments or the servicescape.

Further research suggests another non-physical dimension to this concept, which is the 'social servicescape'. Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003) posit that the role of the human being in the servicescape is an important dimension that influences consumer's emotions and behavioural intentions. They argue that customers' behaviours become part of the servicescape's atmosphere, an environmental stimulus that may facilitate or hinder the customer's enjoyment of the experience.

This social dimension has also been discussed by Ezeh and Harris (2007) who conclude that the servicescape comprises ambient factors, design factors and social factors. The social factors, or the social dimension, of the servicescape seems to attract growing interest in the literature. According to Mari and Poggesi (2013, p.184):

> *A common thread relating to interest in the social dimension, mostly omitted by classical studies on the topic. From our in-depth review, this seems one of the most promising topic as it allows to consider the servicescape not only in terms of physical attributes.*

The social dimension of the servicescape is more apparent in culture-driven servicescape research. For example, from a consumer culture theory stance, Arnould, Price, and Tierney (1998) provide a cultural perspective on servicescape literature in which they directly compare their view with the original Bitner model. In this perspective, Arnould et al. (1998) suggest that the communicative properties of the environment and their cultural and symbolic meaning are essential to a successful

experience, especially in complex servicescapes. Similarly, Rosenbaum & Massiah argue:

> *A servicescape comprises not only objective, measureable, and managerially controllable stimuli but also subjective, immeasurable, and often managerially uncontrollable social, symbolic, and natural stimuli, which all influence customer approach/avoidance decisions and social interaction behaviors. (2011, p.471)*

This perspective, unlike the mainstream quantitative work on servicescapes, seems to account for the individual's role in the experience by suggesting the importance of understanding the social and cultural construction of the experience.

Another example of studying the consumption environment from a consumer culture theory (CCT) perspective is the study of the market space, for example, the experience of Burning Man (Kozinets, 2002), and the consumption of spectacles such as Nike Town (Penaloza, 1998). Figure 4-2 below summarises the various factors associated with the servicescape as they appear in the review of literature presented in this section.
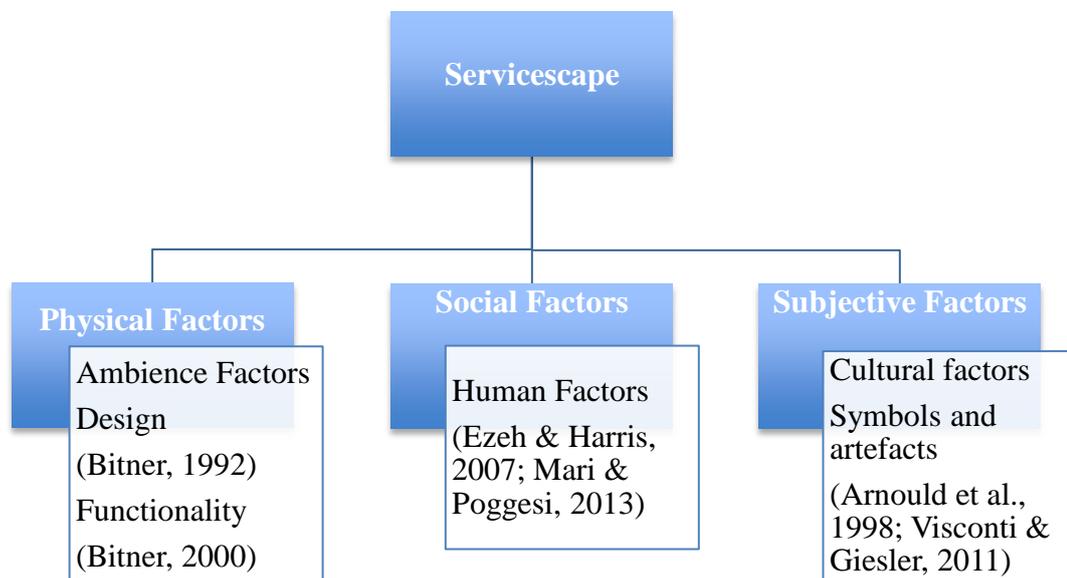
Figure 4-2 The servicescape

The servicescape, environmental cues, and atmospherics therefore appear interchangeably to refer to physical and human variables within the environment in which shopping takes place within the context of shopping experience. Indeed, as

shopping experiences have been shifting to online shopping experiences, such concepts of environmental cues, atmospherics and servicescape have evolved to suit this new context; thus, terms such as web atmospherics and e-servicescape appear within the online environment literature. Accordingly, the following section discusses the shift to the online environment and the newly evolved terms that characterise it.

4.2   The Shift toward the Online Environment

The evolution of click-and-mortar environments either as a complementary channel or a substitute for brick-and-mortar retailing (i.e. pure-play, according to Ashman, 2012) has been successful in winning the attention of research (Mari & Poggesi, 2013) and practice (Birchall, 2010; Costa, 2010) in online fashion marketing. Indeed, various endeavours have been made to 'apply' or 'adapt' the theories of environmental psychology such as the SOR framework to the online environment.

These terms for the buying environment (e.g. environmental cues, atmospherics, servicescape and store environment) appear in the online context as: web atmospherics and environmental cues (Kim & Lennon, 2010; Manganari, Siomkos, & Vrechopoulos, 2009; Sautter et al., 2004), online servicescape or e-servicescape (Harris & Goode, 2010; Hopkins et al., 2009; Jeon & Jeong, 2009; Lee & Park, 2013; Lee & Jeong, 2012), cyberscape (Rosenbaum, 2005; Williams & Dargel, 2004), and the virtual environment (Papadopoulou & Andreou, 2001), among others.

For online-shopping environments, Eroglu et al. (2001) suggest that there is a need to systematically develop a comprehensive taxonomy of online atmospheric cues and to identify their major dimensions similarly to what has been done for the traditional retail store environment. They divide online environmental cues into high task-/low task-relevant cues. Eroglu et al. (2001, p.179) explain:

> *…a high task-relevant environment is defined as all the site descriptors (verbal or pictorial) that appear on the screen which facilitate and enable the consumer's shopping goal attainment, while a low task-relevant environment represents site information that is relatively inconsequential to completion of the shopping task.*

In this case, Eroglu et al. (2001) seem to suggest that we distinguish between cues that relate to shopping and others that relate to the overall environment. This emphasises the importance of product presentation cues, especially in the case of online shopping.

On the other hand, Manganari et al. (2009) support their inclusion of the social presence dimension by citing the concept by Eroglu et al. (2001) of the web encounter and visitors' comments.

The literature's position on web atmospherics is ever changing, from being considered as a part of the environmental cues (Manganari et al., 2009) to being the exact same term as the environment, or, as Eroglu et al. (2001) prefer to divide it, into high/low task-relevant cues. The most comprehensive view of web atmospherics is defined by Dailey (2004) as:

> *…the conscious designing of web environments to create positive effects in users in order to increase favorable consumer responses. […] A web atmospheric cue is comparable to a brick-and-mortar atmospheric cue and can be defined as any web interface component within an individual's perceptual field that stimulates one's senses. (p.796*).

In this sense, the terms web atmospherics and environmental cues can be used interchangeably without a difference in meaning.

A unique characteristic of online-shopping environments, as suggested by Häubl & Trifts (2000, p.4), is that:

> *…they allow vendors to create retail interfaces with highly interactive features. One desirable form of interactivity from a consumer perspective is the implementation of sophisticated tools to assist shoppers in their purchase decisions by customizing the electronic shopping environment to their individual preferences.*

Additionally, Demangeot and Broderick (2007, p.881) link environmental cues to exploration and sense making. They suggest that:

> *…online-shopping environments can be conceptualised as entities, which are used by consumers to make sense of or further explore the site's content and*

products. For example, such cues as navigation buttons, the overall clarity or clutter of screens, product information, transactions and shipping information enable consumers to make sense of the environment, its products and the transactions they are engaged in. On the other hand, cues such as the visual attractiveness of the pages, icons and layouts which convey the feeling of shopping, hyperlinks to additional product information, or user reviews, encourage consumers to further explore the environment.

Examples of online environmental cues in the literature include the generic variables such as web site quality (Éthier et al., 2006), web site brand (Chang & Chen, 2008) and web design (Mummalaneni, 2005). In addition to web design (graphic and colours) and layout (links and menus) (Koo & Ju, 2009). Furthermore, product presentation atmospherics appear in the literature as important environmental cues.

Product presentation variables in this thesis are fashion-specific and so the last section (section 4.5) of this chapter will discuss them.

Another stream of literature in the online buying environment worth highlighting is the online servicescape literature. The evolution of the e-servicescape concept came to correspond to the term servicescape in service encounters. The servicescape context appears in click-and-mortar retailing as online/e-servicescape/e-scape (Harris & Goode, 2010; Hopkins et al., 2009; Jeon & Jeong, 2009; Lee & Park, 2013; Lee & Jeong, 2012) or cyberscape (Rosenbaum, 2005; Williams & Dargel, 2004). The rationale for using e-servicescape in reference to the online environment is explained by Williams & Dargel (2004, p.310) as:

E-businesses, whether offering products or services, ultimately share many service characteristics. For example, the benefits consumed are often not solely in the products purchased, which could have been purchased elsewhere, but rather in the intangible benefits of interaction with the website, i.e. saved time, convenience, and a reduced risk of dissatisfaction with an enhanced availability of information.

One of the remarkable attempts at conceptualising the servicescape framework into the online servicescape, by Hopkins, et al. (2009), suggests that the e-servicescape is a combination of ambient conditions, spatial layout and functionality, and signs,

symbols and artefacts. Their model links the e-servicescape to attitude and purchase intention.

On the other hand, the model by Harris and Goode (2010) posits aesthetic appeal, layout and functionality, and financial security as the components of the online servicescape. The proposition that 'financial security' (i.e. to the security of online transactions) is part of the servicescape (see figure 4-3 below) may be justified because Harris and Goode link the servicescape to trust. However, it could be argued that perceived security is not a component of a website but rather it is customers' perception of security that may or may not relate to the e-servicescape.
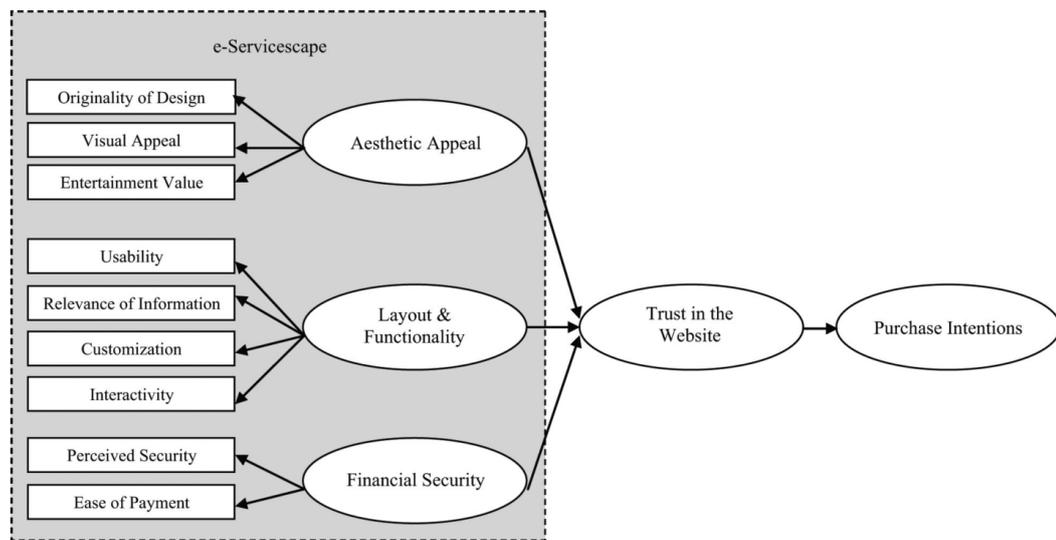
Figure 4-3 The hypothesized model linking e-servicescape, web site trust, and purchase intentions (Harris & Goode, 2010)

Online servicescapes have attracted much and growing attention in the literature recently. According to Mari & Poggesi (2013, p.185):

> *One of the most promising research streams concerns the virtual servicescape. Although online atmospherics studies have only appeared during the past 12 years, the topic is receiving great attention by academics eager to transfer the classical Bitner model to this new kind of service encounter.*

Seen from a methodological point of view, most of these endeavours are quantitative and experimental (Mari & Poggesi, 2013; Turley & Milliman, 2000). However, it is worth noting that the published literature reviews in the field of servicescape and

enrionmental atmospherics (e.g. Mari & Poggesi, 2013; Turley & Milliman, 2000) seem to focus predominantly on such quantitative work. There is an obvious neglect of any qualitative work such as that by Arnould et al. (1998), Kozinets et al. (2002), and Penaloza (1998). The rationale for the absence of such leading articles in atmospherics reviews may relate to the cultural perspective that such research adopts as opposed to the psychological focus of mainstream research in this area.

A more holistic approach to studying atmospherics is called for in the literature, and Turley and Milliman (2000, p.208) suggest that:

> *The need for a 'macro' level theory that would explain how consumers process the entire atmosphere, which can often send competing or deviant signals, and form some evaluation of it. Although the research to date has isolated the effects of particular environmental stimuli, there is not much understanding of which elements in the retail atmosphere are most salient to consumers when forming an approach-avoidance evaluation.* Arguably, a qualitative exploratory approach may offer a clearer perspective on this environment as a whole, rather than limiting it to pre-conceptualised set of scales.

Finally, it is important that to study such environments in the specific context of a particular industry. Mari and Poggesi (2013, p.181) conclude that *'an understudied research area concerns how physical environments can influence customers in certain service industries'*.

The importance of studying the environment in specific industries is manifested in this research as it focuses on the fashion industry. Therefore, the following section discusses the uniqueness of fashion purchasing and the implications it imposes on the online buying environment.

4.3   Online Fashion Shopping

4.3.1   The nature of fashion

Research has long asserted the importance of understanding the emotional, experiential and cultural aspects to fashion consumption. For example, Levy (1959)

suggests that fashion is associated with high emotional involvement as it may carry strong symbolic meaning that relates to the persons identity and social status in addition to its use as a commodity of core value. Indeed, due to this symbolic meaning associated with fashion, it is understandable that fashion-shopping behaviour appears in the literature as deeply rooted in emotional and psychological motivations (Jackson & Shaw, 2009; Kang & Park-Poaps, 2010).

The rationale for this notion of fashion as an emotional experience is the highly symbolic and cultural meaning that fashion carries (Levy, 1959; McCracken, 1986; Solomon & Douglas, 1987). For example, McCracken's (1986) movement of meaning model suggests that fashion serves a vehicle of transferring cultural meaning to the consumer. (See figure 4-4 below).
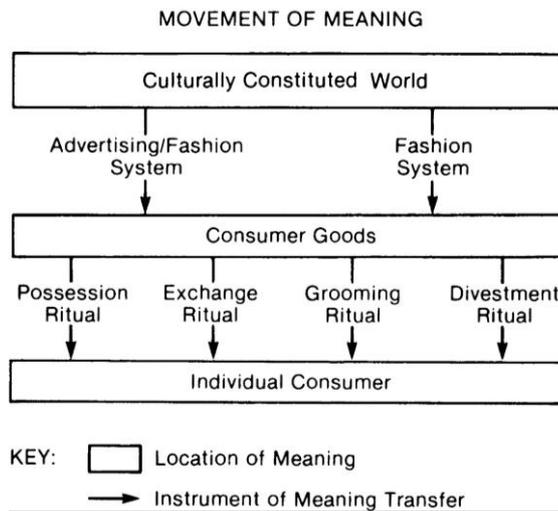
Figure 4-4 Movement of Meaning-Fashion System (McCracken, 1986)

Accordingly, figure 4-4 suggests how the consumption of clothes is influenced by the fashion system that transfers deeply rooted cultural and symbolic meanings to the individual. As such, arguably the shopping for fashion items (including but not limited to clothing) is an activity of high involvement in comparison to the consumption of other commodity products that may not necessarily carry an equally significant meaning. This emotional and psychological roots of fashion consumption is therefore linked to culture as well as identity formation and self-presentation (Belk, 1988).

Equally important, fashion shopping is a social activity as suggested in the relevant literature (e.g. Ashman & Vazquez, 2012; Kang, 2009; Kang & Park-Poaps, 2011). Kang (2009, p.1) suggests, *'shopping is not simply limited to the spending of money on products; rather, shopping is also an important socializing and engaging exercise that provides opportunities to see and be with others'*.

Taking fashion to the online environment imposes a dramatic shift in this social and cultural fashion system. On one hand, the online environment forms a social barrier to this experience as it no longer allows people to 'go shopping together'—one of the main hedonic motivations for going shopping (Arnold, Reynolds, Ponder, & Lueg, 2005; Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). Indeed, the online environment has challenged this social dimension of the fashion-shopping experience.

However, contemporary advances in fashion retail systems and information technologies made the social shopping experience possible but more complex (Kang, 2009). Contemporary technologies could mark a new era for online fashion shopping only if it meets consumer's needs and offers ways to overcome the obstacles to online shopping.

4.3.2 *The obstacles to online fashion shopping*

The main obstacle to online fashion shopping remains being unable to touch or try items before buying them (Ashman, 2012). The absence of helpful staff can also challenge this experience. Rose, Hair, and Clark (2011) suggest that the reduction of personal contact to 'none' in online environments changes the nature of the shopping experience from brick-and-mortar to online settings. This is especially critical in the case of fashion shopping because fashion products are heterogeneous in nature (Li & Gery, 2000).

Unlike standardised books, CDs, or airline tickets that can be bought online or offline with hardly any variation in the product itself, clothing may have variations in different attributes such as style, colour, texture, or size when presented on a website and when they are finally in the hands of the customer.

Li and Gery (2000) argued that homogeneous products would be more successful sellers online as opposed to heterogeneous products. However, even early reports following the recession suggest that clothes are the second most popular of online

purchases (Birchall, 2010). In spite of this popularity, investigations and advancements in technology have been evident in both research (e.g. Perry, Blazquez, & Padilla, 2013) and industry (e.g. Birchall, 2010; Cordero, 2010) in order to tackle the aforementioned obstacles.

4.3.3   *Fashion-specific web atmospherics*

Various endeavours were made to study, understand and test the effectiveness of one or another technological advancement in the online environment to serve the needs and requirements for a successful fashion-shopping experience.

In addition to generic web atmospherics, layout and aesthetic enhancements, product presentation atmospherics play a central role in online fashion-shopping experiences (Ha, Kwon, & Lennon, 2007). This reflects the discussion above on the nature of fashion shopping and the obstacles it may face in an online context. It not only facilitates the experience from a cognitive information processing perspective, but also enhances it as a positive emotional experience.

For instance, of these product-specific atmospherics, Lee, Kim, and Fiore (2010) suggest that image interactivity—namely image zooming and 360 degree rotation—increase shopping enjoyment and reduce perceived risk toward the online retailer.

Similarly, Kim and Lennon (2010) investigated the influence of further product presentation features such as the use of a model (as opposed to flat display) and colour swapping on clothing in addition to image zooming. Such endeavours have often followed an experimental design, and thus they have 'controlled' the environment in order to assess the influence of one or more of these atmospherics.

Ha et al. (2007) took a different approach when conducting a content analysis of 100 apparel websites. Although their analysis does not focus on the experience of the customers, it provides a categorisation of web atmospherics, or what they call visual merchandising features. This includes (a) online path finding assistance (search engines, site maps, and categorisation), (b) environment atmospherics including music, videos, display, background colours and colours surrounding the products, and (c) the manner of product presentation such as product view and display method, colour and methods of presentation. With a greater emphasis on the last, Ha et al.

(2007) make a case for the importance of studying product presentation atmospherics on apparel websites.

Two streams of research on the dimension of social shopping for fashion have come to light in recent years. One is focused on the social media presence in online fashion-shopping experiences such as friends' recommendation on Facebook and Twitter (Rigby, 2011) and fashion communities and fashion haulers[1] (Jeffries, 2011; Keats, 2012; Sykes & Zimmerman, 2014).

The second stream of research focuses on specific social atmospherics that are integrated on fashion-shopping websites. For example, Holzwarth, Janiszewski, and Neumann (2006) suggest that an avatar—a pictorial representation of a human in a chat environment—can enhance the effectiveness of a web-based sales channel. That is, having the choice to chat with an adviser may result in a more successful apparel websites.

This emphasises the importance of contemporary technologies in advancing the online-shopping environment for fashion sites. Hence, the social dimension of fashion shopping might be accommodated through technology. In a methodological context, Ashman, Salazar, and Solomon (2014) comment on the importance of these technologies by saying:

> *Social shopping technologies provide low hanging digital fruit for researchers in gaining consumer insight not previously available through research in the field of the high street. If social shopping technologies are approached by researchers in an appropriate and authentic way, methodologies which gain natural access to the consumer can successfully produce nuanced consumer insight.*

4.4   Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature associated with the buying environment both in physical and virtual settings. Environment cues and atmospherics were discussed from an initial behaviouristic approach (Kotler, 1977) to a more developed approach

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[1] A fashion hauler is someone who displays their purchases online, e.g. in videos

in which various issues are considered such as the characteristics of the environment and the role of the individual (Donovan & Rossiter, 1994; Grewal, et al., 2014). The shift toward a digital environment was then discussed and specific concepts such as web atmospherics and e-servicescapes were presented. The importance of technological advances in web design, atmospherics and product presentation was highlighted.

Furthermore, the chapter has highlighted the main gaps in the literature on shopping environments. For example, the need for a holistic understanding of the experience of the online-shopping environment as a whole was suggested by Turley and Milliman (2000). Additionally, the importance of studying industry-specific environments was highlighted by Mari and Poggesi (2013) as an understudied area in the literature. The case of the specific context of fashion was then discussed by linking fashion to its social (Kang, 2009; Levy, 1959) and cultural (McCracken, 1986) dimensions and by acknowledging its heterogeneous nature (Li & Gery, 2000).

These issues, together with the need for a more exploratory approach to studying the essence of experience (as highlighted in chapter 2), and the importance of studying emotions from the personal perspectives of the individual using his or her own appraisal system (as highlighted in chapter 3), are the basis for the mission of this thesis: *to study the nature and the processes of the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumer.* This is further emphasised in the following conclusion of the first section of this thesis that has presented the theoretical underpinnings of this research.

Section Conclusion

This section has presented the theoretical background. The section discussed the current scholarly endeavours in theorising experience as a concept. The discussion began with Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) concept of experiential consumption and moved on to work of scholars such as Gentile, Spiller, & Noci (2007), Meyer & Schwager (2007); Pine & Gilmore (1998); Schmitt and Zarantonello, (2013) and Schmitt (1999).

Analysis of the current literature on the study of experience showed that there is still no unified approach to what an experience is. The multidisciplinary nature of the term produces a variety of different perspectives for defining the experience of online shopping.

The studies use mainly the SOR framework or flow theory. As chapter two highlighted, there are a number of issues with these two approaches. First, the SOR paradigm seems to address the role of the individual only in the inner states of emotion and cognition he/she experiences and behaviours he/she displays. This indeed limits our understanding of the individual and the environment as part of a holistic experience. This criticism agrees with Jacoby's (2002) criticism of the paradigm and his reformatting of the SOR as a Venn diagram.

Flow theory is invaluable in explaining some types of experineces where complete immersion of the individual in the environment is achieved. However, as discussed in this section, flow theory limits our understanding to only one type of experience, one that includes complete immersion. This thesis argues therefore for a more holistic perspective in approaching the online fashion-shopping experience.

Moreover, since the introduction of Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) experiential consumption concept, emotions have played a central part in the study of experience and experiential consumption. The theories of emotion discussed in the second chapter of this section are Plutchik's categorical wheel of emotions (1980), Russell & Mehrabian's dimensional PAD model (1977), and Lazarus's cognitive appraisal (1998).

Chapter 3 criticises them by pointing out that grouping emotions, whether by category or by dimension, does not allow for understanding the specific nature of

each type of these emotions. This is in line with literature such as Griskevicius, et al. (2010a, 2010b). Therefore, the chapter concluded that there is a need for an approach that allows for the study of each type of emotion that maybe experienced in the context of online fashion shopping. Additionally, there is a need to address the individualistic nature of the experience and emotions of each individual.

The final chapter of this section (chapter 4) reviewed studies of the buying environments both in online and offline contexts. The chapter reviewed the various attempts made to adapt existing theories and frameworks such as environmental cues and store atmospherics (Kotler, 1973) and the servicescape (Bitner, 1992; 2000) to fit the online environment. Examples of these attempts are web atmospherics (Dailey, 2004; Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001; Manganari, Siomkos, & Vrechopoulos, 2009) and e-servicescape (Harris & Goode, 2010; Hopkins, Grove, Raymond, & LaForge, 2009; Rosenbaum, 2005; Williams & Dargel, 2004).

The chapter draws attention to criticism of these approaches, invaluable as they are in building our understanding of the online environment. Attention has been drawn also to the need for a macro level theory that addresses the whole atmosphere and not only parts of it (e.g. Turley & Milliman, 2000).

Additionally, the importance of studying these environments in industry-specific contexts has been highlighted (e.g. Mari & Poggesi, 2013). In the discussion of the fashion industry, the point has been made that fashion shopping is unique because of its cultural, identity, and experiential associations (Kang, 2009; Levy, 1959; Li & Gery, 2000; McCracken, 1986).

Based on the aforementioned criticism of current approaches to studying the online fashion-shopping experience and its environment, the thesis identifies the need to address this issue holistically by accounting for the role of the individuals in their own experiences.

Therefore, the following section will define the main aim of this thesis and it will identify the research questions proposed to address existing gaps in our understanding of the online fashion-shopping experience.

Section Two: Philosophy, Methodology, and Fieldwork

Section Introduction

The second section of this thesis sets the aims and objectives of this work. It presents and justifies my philosophical stance as a pragmatist and the methodological choices made to address the research questions. The structure of this section is highlighted and summarised in figure S2.

Chapter 5: Research Methodology

What are the aims and objectives of this thesis? What are the research questions? What is the philosophical stance adopted by the researcher? How does it fit this research, and what consequences does it impose? What methodological approach is adopted?

Chapter 6: Repertory Grid Interviews

What is the theoretical underpinning of the repertory grid technique? What is the rationale for this approach? How is data collected? What protocol is followed for grid completion (choice of elements, construct elicitation, etc.)? How are the data analysed?

Chapter 7: Screencast Videography

What is the theoretical underpinning of videography? What is the rationale for this approach? How is data collection done? What protocol is followed for capturing the screencast videos? How are the data analysed?

Figure S2 Structure of the methodology and fieldwork section

As figure S2 shows, this section is in three chapters that discuss the research methodology and fieldwork of this thesis. Chapter 5 is the general chapter that addresses the philosophical underpinning of the research. This chapter sets the research questions and very briefly explains the methods employed in answering these questions.

The other two chapters of this section explain the details of the methods. Each method is discussed separately to acknowledge its distinctive qualities and make for easier reading.

Indeed, the methodological choices made in this thesis are not the common approaches of data collection (such as interviews, questionnaires and focus groups). Instead, the repertory grid technique was used along with the new method of screencast videography. Because these methods are not common, they need explanations of their techniques, theoretical underpinnings, and the protocols followed.

Chapter 5 Research Methodology

5.1   Introduction

The previous section discussed the existing literature on the shopping experience, emotions and the buying environment. This chapter identifies the gaps in the literature and clarifies why it is important to bridge these gaps.

It begins by acknowledging the limitations of research on the nature and construction of the shopping experience. Then, the research questions are set to achieve the main aim of this thesis: **to study the nature and the processes of the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumer**.

From a 'pragmatic' philosophical stance, my ontological, epistemological, and methodological choices are discussed and justified. Consequently, my choice of method is declared – this will be detailed in the chapters that follow. Finally, the chapter discussed the research population and the characteristics of the chosen sample.

The research aims and objectives
What is the main aim of this thesis? What are the research questions?

Research philosophy
What is the researcher's philosophical stance? How does it fit with this thesis? And what are the consequences?

Methodological choices
What are the methodological choices made in this thesis? How does the researcher intend to collect the data needed to answer the research questions?

Research population and sample
What is the research population for this project? How are the participants recruited? What issues were encountered?

Figure 5-1 Overview of Chapter 5

5.2   Research Aims and Objectives

The theoretical section of this thesis has reviewed the criticism of existing approaches to the study of the shopping experience and environment. Although terms

such as customer experience are widely used in the literature, existing research on the nature of this experience is extremely limited. Because the term is so popular and because the online-shopping experience should be studied as a unique experience, this thesis explores the concept further.

Criticism of our current understanding of the online-shopping experience stems from the oversimplification of such rich and complex phenomena in simple, often sequential, frameworks and models. Furthermore, studies of the 'shopping experience' have often taken the term for granted. Whether experience is hedonic, utilitarian, emotional, cognitive, or a combination of all, has remained unanswered.

In fact, there is much confusion on the place of emotion in the experience. For instance, emotions are studied as factors that influence the experience (Menon & Kahn, 2002), as responses to the experience (Machleit & Eroglu, 2000), or as a component of the experience (Havlena & Holbrook, 1986).

Moreover, the role of the environment in which the experience is taking place remains unclear. As acknowledged in the literature review, environment stimuli are often studied as external factors that may or may not influence the individual (Kawaf & Tagg, 2012). My argument is that there is no separation between the stimuli and the experience itself. Therefore, within the context of this thesis, the online fashion-shopping environment is not external to the online fashion-shopping experience but is a sub-entity of it.

The main objective of this thesis is to **study the nature and the processes of the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumer.** This broad aim was set to explore and construct what the online fashion-shopping experience is, because the literature review identified this as a knowledge gap.

Precisely, the research seeks to answer the following <u>sub-questions</u> of this broad aim:

- How do consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment? (Mapping the process/journey)
- What is the composition and role of the environment in the online fashion-shopping experience?
- How do consumers construct their online fashion-shopping experiences?

The first research question, *'How do consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment?'* is about mapping the process(es) in the shopping experience. Therefore, this question seeks to capture the dynamics of the online fashion shopping experience and the various interactions between the consumer and the online fashion-shopping environment.

Previous research has been unable to capture the dynamics of the journey of online fashion shopping. As online shopping usually takes place in the shopper's private space, research has scarcely any knowledge of the types of behaviours in this experience.

Answering this question not only bridges the gap in our theoretical understanding of the interactions, but also offers immediate value for practitioners, web designers and fashion retailers in highlighting how a shopper may approach their websites and why they would approach it in one or another manner.

The second question, *'What is the composition and role of the environment in the online fashion-shopping experience?'* is a basis for understanding what the online fashion-shopping environment is and its role in the experience. The importance of this question is highlighted by the need to understand fashion-specific atmospherics where greater emphasis may be placed on product presentation rather than web design. Indeed, such a question is highly related to the first question and it does form one important part in understanding it.

Finally, the third question brings a more holistic yet individualistic take on the experience. The rationale for the third research question, *'How do consumers construct their online fashion-shopping experiences?'* is the lack of a solid foundation in the research of what the 'experience' is.

My aim in answering this question is to contribute to the understanding of the shopping experience which has been initiated by research on experiential consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Schmitt, 1999).

Additionally, as outlined in the previous section, the nature of fashion shopping and the dramatic shift in fashion-shopping experiences from the physical store to the online environment adds to the importance of understanding this complex

experience. Indeed, the nature of fashion shopping dictates a unique online-shopping environment.

It is essential to mention that my philosophical stances, beliefs, and experience as a researcher influence my approach to answering the research questions. Therefore, before I move onto any discussions of research methods, it is important to declare my philosophical stance, which is presented and justified in the following section.

5.3   **Philosophical Overview**

'Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?'

'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,' said the Cat.

'I don't much care where,' said Alice.

'Then it doesn't matter which way you go,' said the Cat.

'So long as I get SOMEWHERE,' Alice added as an explanation.

'Oh, you're sure to do that,' said the Cat, 'if you only walk long enough.'

Alice's Adventure in Wonderland

When setting sail, one should know what the destination is as well as being able to sail the boat. Getting on a particular boat means compliance with its rules and acceptance of its destination. Philosophical paradigms and the research voyage are alike. If you believe the reality is out there, you surely must take the boat that gets you 'out there'. However, how do we know if there is 'out there'? Or what boat we should 'hop on'. Easterby-Smith, et al. (2008) emphasise the importance of understanding the various philosophical approaches as they often influence the direction of the research, its design and method.

My aim as a researcher is to understand online fashion-shopping experiences as lived by the consumers by referring to their own words and constructions. Further, I believe that every individual is an expert in his or her own emotions and experiences. The 'way I ought to go from here' depends a good deal on my aims and beliefs. In other words, the 'paradigm' I choose to attach my research to should be one that accounts for my aims and blends with my beliefs.

5.3.1   Ontology, epistemology and methodology

The assumptions that underpin philosophical paradigms are identified as ontological, epistemological and methodological. This work adopts pragmatism as its philosophical underpinnings. Therefore, the ontological, epistemological and methodological choices (defined in figure 5-2 below) made in this thesis are inspired by the philosophy of pragmatism.

Ontology	The study of reality—a set of assumptions about the nature of reality
Epistemology	The study of knowledge construction

Methodology	The best approach to inquire about the nature of reality

Figure 5-2 Ontology, epistemology and methodology

My ontological stance, on whether truth is external or internal, hard or soft, objective or subjective, is a 'pragmatic' one. The following section discusses and justifies the choice of pragmatism.

5.3.2 *Pragmatism*

William James coined the term pragmatism in his popular lectures in philosophy; *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (James, 1907). Far from the extremes of either objective or subjective reality, pragmatism emerged with a comfortably practical way of looking at the social world and the nature of reality with a main interest in human experience.

In his second lecture, James (1907, p.21) illustrated the essence of pragmatism with a short scenario about a squirrel and a man:

> *'The corpus of the dispute was a squirrel--a live squirrel supposed to be clinging to one side of a tree-trunk; while over against the tree's opposite side a human being was imagined to stand. This human witness tries to get sight of the squirrel by moving rapidly round the tree, but no matter how fast he goes, the squirrel moves as fast in the opposite direction, and always keeps the tree between himself and the man, so that never a glimpse of him is caught. The resultant metaphysical problem now is this: Does the man go round the squirrel or not?'*

Pragmatically, James announced that the answer depends on what 'go round' means practically. Whether 'go around' meant traversing north>east>south>west or traversing left>right>in front>behind the squirrel. This concept of accepting multiple realities based on the practicalities of how we see something is the essence of pragmatism.

Pragmatism puts it simply, 'if it works, then it is true enough for practical purposes' (James, 1907). Pragmatism is open to multiple realities and the acceptance of a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods. More important,

pragmatism is concerned with how we can understand the unfolding meanings of lived experiences. Simpson and Marshall (2010, p.354) comment:

> *'Pragmatism has developed since the late 19th century as a practical philosophy of human action that is less concerned with what is, than with how we can understand the continuously unfolding flow of experience [...] it admits multiple possible interpretations of any given event.'*

Prior to James, Charles Sanders Peirce planted the seed of pragmatism by his popular saying that is often referred to in the literature as the 'pragmatism maxim':

> *'Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.'* (Peirce, 1878)

The pragmatism maxim offers an invaluable insight on how abstract terms of complex human beings' lived experiences can be understood. We may develop our conception of abstract terms such as emotion through our conception of its effect. Phrases such as happy, sad, guilty are nothing but translation into language from the abstract emotions that are understood by their effects, and are often translated into such phrases.

This perspective offers a more humanistic, more naturalistic approach to understanding the complexity of human beings than the positivist approach. In fact, John Dewey, another key figure in pragmatism, rejected *'the possibility of understanding human conduct as a mechanistic sequences of sensation, idea and response, which contrives to separate thinking from doing rather than taking both as functional elements in a division of labor which together constitutes a whole'* (Elkjaer & Simpson, 2010, p.64).

- *The rationale for pragmatism as opposed to critical realism*

As a researcher, I am open to multiple meanings of reality, and of the many differences in how human beings go about living and making sense of their experiences.

I am interested in understanding the holistic online fashion-shopping experience, how consumers live it and sense it, how they interact with the fashionscape, how it could be more relevant and more enjoyable, and hence of practical value. This stance is pragmatic and is compatible with the ontological and epistemological stances of pragmatism.

The experience in itself, in my view, is a continuous period of consciousness, of interaction and intergration between the individual and the environment. This very notion forms the essence of the experience from a pragmatist perspective, which is evident in the work of James (1907a, 1975) and Dewey (1958).

The pragmatism maxim, abovementioned, offers a softer conception of the reality of abstracts such as emotions and lived experiences. Additionally, online shoppers construct their experience as they interact with the fashionscape and create meanings.

The notion of experience as *'the continuous confrontation of our body-mind with the surrounding world shifts the focus from the object or the person to the relation between them—and the interactions are what we most easily can observe'* (Rylander, 2012, p.24).

I accept no separation between the shoppers and the environment; I treat it as a one big entity. The concept of integration in the experience is very well known in pragmatism. Furthermore, I am against the separation of emotion and cognition; I treat the two as different names of the same process.

Therefore, my stance is to reject the dualism of human beings and technology, and of emotion and cognition. It could be argued that the separation between the consumers and technology on the micro level could partially make sense. However, on the macro level, a holistic pragmatic approach offers more fruitful insight about the transaction (Cohen, 2007).

This stance of antidualism is pragmatic. Dewey notes that 'experience', like 'life' and 'history', is a 'double-barrelled' word in that it recognises no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalysed totality (Dewey, 1958). This notion reflects *'the pragmatic ambition to reconcile the dualisms of reason and emotion, thinking and doing, theory and practice, and fundamentally, between body and mind'* (Rylander, 2012, p.15). Simpson and

Marshall (2010, p.354) comment that, *'John Dewey railed against the Cartesian dualism that separates thinking and feeling, arguing that these are two names for a single process, that of making our way as best we can in a universe shot through with contingency'*.

Another important aspect of pragmatism is antifoundationalism. Accordingly, the experience flows in a continuity between the consumer and the environment, and it is not the linear process of SOR. This stance is in line with James's notion of experience as a continuous single stream within which everything that we experience is included (Rylander, 2012).

In approaching research philosophy and learning about the various paradigms, I considered both pragmatism and critical realism appropriate for this research. Both pragmatism and critical realism accept the constructed nature of knowledge, and acknowledge deduction, induction and abduction as valid forms of reasoning (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

However, critical realism, founded by Bhaskar (1998), is different from pragmatism mainly in its acceptance of dualism. Jefferies (2011, p.2), in reviewing this philosophy, comments, 'At its root Critical Realism is a contemporary re-application of Kant's dualist method, which divides Pure Reason from empirical reality'.

Because I reject the notion of dualism and prefer to see experience as a stream of continuity, this approach was not appropriate. Therefore, my philosophical position rules out critical realism for my research.

- *The consequences of a pragmatic approach*

In addition to the ontological and epistemological discussion on the stance of pragmatism, it is important to highlight the consequences of such an approach on the research process, design, and methodology. Pragmatism is pluralistic and is based on a rejection of the forced choice between post-positivism and constructivism (Creswell, 2009).

Pragmatism views experience, consciousness and emotions differently and influences the approach to the research accordingly. Similarly, it influences the role of the researcher and the participants. In a practical sense of studying the experience as 'a continuous stream of consciousness' (James, 1907a), Rylander (2012) argues:

> *'We tend to overlook the continuity of the stream of thought because we typically focus on the substantive parts rather than the transitive parts. Although we cannot express the qualities of the latter in words, it does not mean they are not important.'*

Therefore, because it is difficult to capture this continuity of the experience in words, I recognised the need for a different approach to the research. This influenced my choice of research methods that could be appropriate for capturing the continuity of the experience.

The pragmatist view of emotion in the experience also influences how it is studied in this research and what role it has taken. James (2011) argues that emotions guide us through the steam of experience. This emotional 'guiding function', Rylander (2012) argues, is central to thinking and doing as we are not 'passive clay, upon which 'experience' rains down, but active participants that selectively engage with the world with intentionality.'

Furthermore, the concept of engaging with intentionality influences my views of what the experience is and what it is made of. Rylander (2012, p.11) comments:

> *'The vast majority of potential impressions to the senses never enter into experience. 'Why? Because they have no interest for me'. My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items which I notice shape my mind – without selective interest, experience is an utter chaos.'*

The implication of this intentionality is also addressed in my research design and the methods I chose to adopt and create for this research. My research design and the choice of methods will be discussed in the following section. The methods I employed will also be explained extensively in the following chapters.

5.4   Methodological Choices

The consequences of pragmatism as a philosophical underpinning usually translate into adopting a mixed method design (Creswell, 2009). However, most importantly, the methodological choices are immediately relevant to the research questions set by the thesis.

With the main aim of this thesis being to study the nature of online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumer, a flexible research design is a must. The research design needs to be flexible to allow modifications based on the individuals and their preferences when it comes to discussing their own experiences. Thus, a naturalistic research design is needed for this thesis to explore the experience from the perspective of the individual. Feilzer (2009) suggests pragmatism is in itself a naturalistic research design as it is open to multiple realities and is driven by practical consequences.

My approach to answering these questions centres on the consumer as the best person to talk about her/his experiences. This approach is inspired by George Kelly's (1955) PCT, which states that a human being is a scientist and is the expert in his or her own experiences.

Accordingly, the first study is conducted using the repertory grid technique (suggested by Kelly) to help the participant in revealing his or her constructs of the world. This is instead of imposing my constructs on them. The philosophy behind this method and the assumptions and consequences of such approach are very important and constitute one unit of understanding the consumer's inner systems, perception and construction.

This approach is unique in its theoretical underpinnings and the protocol of data collection via the repertory grid technique. The following chapter (chapter 6) discusses this method and explains in detail the stages of data collection and analysis.

Furthermore, I adopted videography as a method that allows for capturing the journey of the experience. Videos offer a clear dynamic view of the experience, and they can be replayed and examined in depth. Recording screencast videos of online fashion-shopping experiences as they occur is invaluable in highlighting critical issues in such a naturalistic approach.

Visual research in general, and videography in particular, are invaluable in gaining a depth of understanding of a particular phenomenon. Therefore, the novel introduction of screencast videography as a research method is thought to bring such invaluable insights about the online fashion-shopping experience.

Chapter seven discusses in detail the introduction of this method, its relations to visual research and its fit to answering the research question. The protocol of this method along with the analysis is also explained in this chapter.

5.5   <u>Research Population and Sampling</u>

An important stage in the research process is research sampling; it is "*the stage in which the researcher determines who is to be sampled, how large a sample is needed, and how sampling units will be selected.*" (Zikmund & Babin, 2007, p.27)

Sampling techniques are classified into two distinctive types; probability and non-probability samples (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Whilst the former relies on probability theory, it is the latter that is widely used in qualitative research mostly in the form of purposive or judgemental sampling (Creswell, 2009; Goulding, 2005). In purposive sampling, members are chosen based on the judgement of the researcher and in relation to the research problem.

Based on the aforementioned research, this thesis employs purposive sampling techniques in which specific criterion for selection applies. In line with the thesis' main objective (*to study the nature and the processes of the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumer*), the criterion of selection is discussed in this section.

In order for a person to qualify for selection in the sample, they must have recurrent experiences of online fashion shopping including not only browsing but also payment and delivery of products. Those who browse online, but have never completed a purchase of a fashion item online, were not included in the study. The rationale for this is that those who browse for fashion but never buy online will live the experience differently as they already know they are not making buying decisions when they interact with websites. Contrary to those who browse for inspiration, online fashion buyers face some risk, such as monetary risk, in buying a fashion item without trying it on. Therefore, the selection criterion states that a person must have experienced online fashion shopping including purchase and post purchase experiences in order to participate.

Within the scope of this research, no distinction is made between the different types of fashion such as fast fashion, vintage or luxury. Instead, the focus is on online shoppers and their experiences with their chosen fashion websites without any other limits. Thus, the criterion for selection does not include specific types of fashion, however, it does state fashion as a unique selection criterion, for a person who has

purchased other types of products online (e.g. books, grocery, etc.) is not a relevant example for the understanding of online fashion shopping experiences. This, indeed, is in line with the stance of this thesis that distinguishes fashion from other types of products and services and addresses its uniqueness (Ashman et al., 2014; J Kang, 2009)

The criterion sampling method used in this research is in line with current research recommendations. For instance, Goulding suggests that is this type of research "*the participants are selected because they have 'lived' the experience under study, and therefore sampling is planned and purposive.*" (1999, p.868)

In addition to the criterion of prior lived experiences of online fashion shopping, other conditions that applied are, being aged 18+ (for ethical considerations) and being willing to talk about their experiences within the scope of this research.

Accordingly, the invitation to participate in this research clearly highlighted participating conditions and offered a prize draw of £50 cash to one lucky winner. This was offered to attract more participants to the study.

5.5.1 *Profiles of the participants*

The following table summarises brief information about the participants of the two studies. These items of information were collected only in the form of brief introductory questions at the beginning of the interviews. These should not be treated as questionnaire type questions. They represent only the participant's perception of their own expertise in online fashion shopping. This is apparent in the variety of responses and the types of responses made.

For data protection purposes, all names used in this thesis are fictional.

Table 5-1 Participants' profiles

No.	Participant[2]	Demographics	Browse for clothes	Shop for clothes	Familiar fashion websites	Interview	Video

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[2] To protect the identity of the participants, all the names used in this thesis are fictional. None of the names used in this thesis is the real name of any participant.

3	Helen	Female (18-24) year old	Very! Once a week!	Very often!! I love shopping online	Many!! Rather all.	Yes	No
4	Sara	Female (18-24) year old	Everyday	Once/twice a month	5–6	Yes	No
5	Rachel	Female (18-24) year old	2–3 times a week	At least once a week	10	Yes	No
6	Joe	Male (>50) year old	3–4 times a month	6–8 times a year	3–4	Yes	No
7	Ben	Male (18–24)	Once a week (sometimes even more)	Once every 1 or 2 months	10–12	Yes	No
8	Lin	Female (18–24) year old	Almost everyday	5–10 times a year	8	Yes	No
9	Eva	Female (18–24) year old	Around once a month	It depends how much money I have	4–5	Yes	No
10	Emma	Female (18–24) year old	Once a week or more	3–4 times a month	15 or more	Yes	No
11	Julie	Female (25–35) year old	Everyday	Every week	20+	Yes	No
12	Jill	Female (25–35) year old	Regularly	Rarely	6-7	Yes	No
13	Tom	Male	2–3 times a	Once a month	6	Yes	No

		(18-24) year old	week				
14	Clara	Female (18-24) year old	2–3 times a week	Once a month	10	Yes	No
15	Liz	Female (18–24) year old	Everyday	Once a week	20	Yes	Yes
16	Steph	Female (18–24) year old	Once/twice a week	Once a month	5-10	Yes	Yes
17	Paul	Male (18–24) year old	1–2 times a week	1–2 times every 2–3 months	10	Yes	Yes
18	Linda	Female (18–24) year old	Once or twice per day	Once a week	10	Yes	Yes
19	Hannah	Female (18–24) year old	3 times a week	Once a month	7	Yes	Yes
20	Jennifer	Female (36–50) year old	Almost every week	Every month	Too many (over 30)	Yes	No
21	Max	Male (18–24) year old	3 Times a week	Once a month	9	Yes	Yes
22	Jack	Male (18–24) year old	Weekly	Every few months	15	Yes	Yes

23	Anna	Female (18–24) year old	Once every 2–3 weeks (less or more depending on my needs)	Every 1–2 months	3–4	Yes	Yes
24	Isla	Female (18–24) year old	Daily	Fortnightly	At least three	Yes	Yes
25	Kat	Female (25–35) year old	Once a week	Once every (~3) months	10	Yes	Yes

Using a combination of purposive and convenient sampling techniques, the 25 participants mentioned in the table above were selected within the local area where this research was carried out (The University of Strathclyde).

The majority of the participants were undergraduate students and a few were postgraduates and/or in employment. This also means that the dominant age group was 18-24 years although a couple of participants were 50+ years old.

Before taking part in the research, participants were asked to sign a consent form (see appendix 2) and to answer a few basic questions in the interview guide (see appendix 3). The consent form introduced the research to the participants, explained the purpose of the study, and assured them of its anonymity and the confidentiality of their data.

The interview guide also consisted of questions aimed at generally assessing the participant's level of involvement in online fashion shopping. The first question asked the participants to indicate roughly how many times they browse fashion websites. The second question asked them how many times they shop for fashion online. Then they were asked to indicate roughly how many websites they were familiar with.

The answers to these three questions serves as a guide to evaluate whether or not a participant was highly involved in online fashion shopping. Most participants were

highly competent in online fashion shopping. Surprisingly, a few participants admitted that they browse fashion websites as much as once or twice a day. However, the majority of the participants browse several times a week, and they shop at least once a month or once every couple of months. Additionally, the majority were familiar with more than ten websites. In a few cases, they were familiar with 20–30 websites, and in a few other cases, they were familiar with only fewer than five sites (See table 5-1 for details).

5.5.2 *Sampling Challenges*

On reflection of the sampling process, it was apparent that recruiting female participants for this kind of research was much easier than recruiting male participants. Women showed greater interest in discussing and participating in an online fashion shopping experience research. Consequently, an uneven gender distribution in the sample is evident. In total, 17 women and 6 men participated in the study. Although gender distribution in the sample is not even, it is deemed an acceptable representation of the male vs. female online fashion-shopping market within the time period of data collection. Recent reports (e.g. Mintel, 2014) suggests that only by 2014 that male online fashion shopping has begun its growth.

The challenging recruitment of male participants in this study were evident in instances where male prospects replied to the invitation of participation in this research by 'sorry, I am not a fashion guy', 'oh, I though fashion was for female', or 'I am not emotional'. One participant replied to the invitation with the following email in response to inviting him to participate in my research:

> *'I went online, and clicked buy without experiencing any feelings and without looking around […] you should rather find more emotional male…'*

To overcome this challenge, simple modifications were made and proved effective. First, the invitation clearly addressed male and female participants. And then, a focus on the functionality of online shopping for clothes was placed rather than a highlight of words such as fashion and emotion. Consequently, I was successful in recruiting an acceptable proportion of male participants that is in line with the market status at the time.

Indeed, this approach to sampling and sampling related issues, as well as the role I played in this process as a researcher must be discussed and accounted for in order to maintain quality and establish rigour.

5.6   Verifying Data and Establishing Rigour

It has been argued that establishing trustworthiness is central to the quality and rigour of qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability have been identified in helping to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Koch (2006) asserts that credibility could be established in two ways. First, by the researcher's self awareness of their own influence on the research and second, by consulting with the participants themselves to verify results.

In the first study of this thesis, as the following chapter (Chapter 6) explains, adopting Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955) further emphasises the importance of self awareness in research especially as constructs are elicited. Thus, in preparing and practicing constructs elicitation for over six months, I have excelled the ability to elicit the participant's constructs by using their own words, expressions, and descriptions by only facilitating the discussion as advised by Jankowicz (2005) to assist in these cases. Furthermore, as constructs were elicited and rated, I have used Koch's (2006) suggestion of consulting the participants to establish their agreement with the results and the exact wordings of constructs.

The second criterion of establishing trustworthiness as discussed above is transferability (i.e. fittingness of the research and its findings in other contexts) (Koch, 2006). Transferability could be achieved by proving enough contextual information about the research so that other could make a judgement of its fittingness in other contexts. Accordingly, I attempt in this research to provide as much information as possible of the context of the study, its focus and even its challenges and shortcomings. Moreover, I provide actual data of screencast evidence in support of the findings throughout chapter 8 and chapter 9. Such data does not only enhances the credibility of the research, but it also facilitates the reader's judgement of the research, its context and the degree of its transferability to other contexts.

The third criterion of establishing trustworthiness is dependability, which may be established by auditing the process of the research (Koch, 2006). To meet this criterion the following two chapters discuss at length the process of data collection, design of studies, failures and modifications all in a voice of reflection throughout in order to assist the reader in making a judgement of the processes as well as the outcomes of this thesis.

Finally, confirmability is the way of showing how interpretations have been arrived at; this is usually established by ensuring the previous three criteria are met. Interpretation of data is discussed in the following two chapters. To establish confirmability, I have used multi-coder analysis in which four different researchers are engaged in the analysis independently of the research in order to enhance the interpretation of the results.

In discussing how this thesis meets the criteria of establishing trustworthiness, I hope this section highlights how I approached verifying the data and maintaining quality and rigour throughout. In addition, it is worth noting that the use of more than one method in qualitative research is a popular approach that, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest, allows for an in-depth understanding, richness and complexity, as well as rigour.

In this thesis, the repertory grid interviews and the screencast videography were employed as two distinctive research methods in order to reach the required depth of understanding the online fashion shopping experience. This use of methods also allowed for synchronising between the results of each method, thus, establishing a degree of credibility by using more than one method of inquiry in line with Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) argument.

5.7   Conclusion

This chapter, the first chapter of the methodology section, presented the philosophical underpinnings of the thesis and the methodological choices employed as a result.

As discussed throughout this chapter, the thesis main aim is to study the nature and the processes of the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by

the consumer. Three research questions are identified at the beginning of the chapter. These questions are:

- How do consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment?
- What is the composition and role of the environment in the online fashion-shopping experience?
- How do consumers construct their online fashion-shopping experiences?

The chapter then moved to address the philosophical stance this thesis takes. Pragmatism (James, 1907) has been adopted as philosophical perspective that is invaluable in studying lived experiences (Simpson & Marshall, 2010).

Consequently, a brief discussion on the methodological choices was presented. However, as explained previously, the next two chapters are dedicated to discussing in detail the two studies that were conducted to address the thesis's research questions.

The chapter finally discussed the research population as online fashion shoppers who have previous experience of not only browsing but also purchasing fashion items from online fashion websites. A discussion on recruiting the participants and the challenges encountered were presented; and a table of the participants' profiles was included.

The next chapter (chapter 6) discusses the first study conducted as a part of this thesis; the repertory grid interviews. The method's theoretical underpinnings as well as the rationale for using it are discussed. Furthermore, detailed explanation of the technique of data collection and analysis is explained.

Chapter 6 Repertory Grid Interviews

6.1 <u>Introduction</u>

The aim of this chapter is to introduce personal construct theory (PCT) and the repertory grid as an appropriate method for getting responses to my research questions. The question asked to provide answers for understanding the nature of experience as consumers constructed it was: *how do consumers construct their online fashion-shopping experiences?*

This chapter addresses four main areas. First is the theoretical underpinning of this method in which I discuss PCT, its assumptions and corollaries, and its relevance to the study of emotions. In this part of the chapter, I justify my choice and rationale for using this method for understanding consumers' experiences in addition to referring to various scholarly examples of the use of the repertory grid method in consumer research.

The second part of this chapter presents the repertory grid pilot interviews. Here, I thoroughly discuss grid design as it changes throughout the four pilot interviews that were carried out. The pilot interview phase draws an important conclusion for the design of the grids. Specifically, when choosing the elements of the grids as 'apparel websites', the focus of the grid shifted from what was planned (i.e. constructing the experience) to comparing websites or, more accurately, comparing brands. This conclusion of the pilot grid design resulted in changing the choice of elements from websites to web atmospherics (i.e. characteristics or features), which successfully shifted the focus of the grid back to answering the research question.

Based on the redesign of the grids following the pilot phase, the third part of the chapter presents the final repertory grid design, which I used to conduct 23 repertory grids in a one-to-one interview setting. All the interviews were audio recorded to capture any in-depth discussions as they occurred. Additionally, each interview resulted in a grid sheet that offered a visualisation of the participant's construction of their experiences.

In the final section of this chapter, I discuss my approach to the analysis of grid data. This part first identifies the initial process and eyeball analysis generally used in this

type of study. Then the choice of either a qualitative or a quantitative approach is debated and justified. Finally, I present my choice of qualitative multi-coding analysis that ensures higher reliability of the analysis of such data.

The following figure (6-1) represents the structure of this chapter.

Theoretical Underpinnings
What is the theoretical stance of this method? What are the assumptions and consequences of such approach?

Repertory Grid as a Research Method
What is a repertory grid? The rationale for using this method and why it is beneficial for this research?

Pilot Interviews
What are the aims of the pilot study? How was it carried out? What were the conclusions, implications on the research, and why?

Data Collection: Repertory Grid Interviews
What were the procedures involved in the repertory grid interviews? How was the sample recruited and what was the end result of the data collection?

Repertory Grid Analysis
What are the ways in which grids can be analysed? What techniques are chosen for analysing them and why?

Figure 6-1 Overview of Chapter 6

6.2   **Personal Construct Theory (PCT)**

George Kelly (1955;1963), developed PCT in response to the need for a humanistic approach in psychology studies. A theory that accounts for the role of the person as a whole; as a person who is capable of learning from his or her experiences and constructions of the world (Carroll & Carroll, 1981).

Kelly described personal construct psychology as 'a theory of man's personal inquiry – a psychology of the human quest' (Bannister, 1970). This perspective views 'man as a scientist', as the expert in his own experiences and feelings (Bannister & Fransella, 1986).

The theory of personal constructs is best understood by addressing its assumption (i.e. Kelly's fundamental postulate), its propositions and consequences (i.e. the eleven corollaries).

6.2.1   *The underpinnings of personal construct theory*

When Kelly proposed PCT, his initial statement was of an assumption that underpins this theory.

> "A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events." (Kelly 1963, p.46)

This 'fundamental postulate', Kelly (1963) explains, may not be the ultimate truth. Everything is open to argument and discussion, but a postulate is no longer a postulate once it is argued. It might not be ultimately true but it should be accepted as a matter of convenience when using PCT.

What is worth noting about Kelly's fundamental postulate is that it places high emphasis on the person as a whole. It sets limits on psychological theory to indicate that even if physiological processes arguably have an impact, they are simply beyond the scope of PCT.

Moreover, Kelly carefully uses the word 'channelized' to refer to a structure to the person's processes. It is to say that processes are ordered in 'networks' rather than randomly fluttering in emptiness.

Finally, Kelly argues that PCT gets its predictive and motivational features by choosing the term 'anticipates' in this postulate. That is, *'like the prototype of the*

scientist that he is, man seeks prediction. His structured network of pathways leads toward the future so that he anticipates it.' (Kelly, 1963, p.49)

Bannister and Mair (1968, p.12) comment on Kelly's fundamental postulate by saying that it clearly highlights what he wanted using carefully chosen words.

> *Kelly highlights in his fundamental postulate that it is persons he wished to understand, not rats, earthworms or cybermen, and not parts of persons, groups of people or specific processes manifested in a person's behaviour. In concerning himself with processes he obviates the need for any subsequent concepts about mental energy, motives, needs or drives. He refused to make the assumption that a person is an object which at various times is impelled into action, but starts by acknowledging that a person is essentially a form of motion.*

Starting from this postulate, the evolution of PCT is summarised in a few meaningful lines by Bannister and Mair (1968, p. 13):

> *Man is a form of perpetual motion with the direction of the motion controlled by the ways in which events are anticipated. The ways in which a person anticipates events are defined by his personal constructs. A construct is a way in which some things are interpreted as being alike and at the same time different from other things.*

This outlook on the person as a dynamic process that is ever changing and driven by the anticipation of future experiences rather than past ones is the essence of PCT. The question that needs to be addressed is whether this theory is suitable for studying emotions—given that Kelly and his theory have a reputation for being anti-emotion/motivation. The following section aims to answer this question and clarify the misconceptions about PCT.

6.2.2   *Emotions in personal construct theory*
PCT has been criticised for neglecting emotions as part of the person's experience. Therefore, this following section addresses this claim and highlights this misconception and the scholarly efforts made for correcting it.

In setting the stances of the psychology of personal constructs, Kelly refers to the *push* and *pull* theories of psychology and to the use of *energy* as a metaphor borrowed from physics. He comments:

> *For a time psychologists had trouble deciding what it was that was propelled by 'energy'. Was it ideas or people? At last, most psychologists agreed that it was people. But what were the vehicles for the energy which prodded these obviously inert objects into actions? On the verbal level, it was a simple matter to ascribe energetic properties to the elements of one's personal environment by calling them 'stimuli'. Or, if one preferred, he could ascribe energetic properties to aspects of the person himself; these were called 'needs'. Thus, psychology developed push theories based on 'stimuli' and pull theories based on 'needs'. But, both approaches tended to be animistic, in that it was the 'stimuli' or the 'needs', rather than the person which accounted for all the work that was done. (Kelly, 1963, p.36)*

In this perspective, PCT is neither a push nor a pull theory; it is a theory that accounts for the person as whole. Hence, PCT is neither animistic nor dualistic. PCT offers an alternative to the emotion vs. cognition perspective as it bridges the two, or does not even differentiate between emotion and cognition in its holistic look at the person.

Many scholars criticise PCT as a theory that is too 'mentalistic' and has no place for emotions: Bannister and Fransella (1986, p.34) comment:

> *It is felt that the description of construct systems is purely a description of 'thinking' and thereby deals with only one aspect of man, 'rational' man. But Kelly did not accept the cognition-emotion divisions intrinsically valid. It is a jargon descendant of the ancient dualities of reason versus passion, mind versus body, flesh versus spirit which has led to dualist psychologies. Construct theory is an attempt to talk about man in a unitary language.*

Although Kelly did not wish to highlight 'emotion', 'drive' or 'motivation' as concepts in order to avoid dealing with such dualisms, he did identify specific emotions such as threat, fear, guilt and anxiety (Kelly, 1955) *to which he referred as 'awareness of transitional states'* (Bannister & Fransella, 1986, p.35). Given that the

person is a dynamic process, Kelly defines emotions as states of transition that may result from mismatch between the anticipation of events (constructs) and the events themselves.

Therefore, to claim that emotions have no place in PCT is a misconception. In fact, following the early work of PCT, various attempts were made to integrate emotions in PCT or to study the emotional states of the individual from this perspective (e.g. McCoy, 1977; Raskin, 2013; Yassim, 2011).

In a comprehensive review of emotions in PCT, Lester (2009) identifies Kelly's proposition of transitional states as specific emotions, and then discusses how McCoy further explored the construction of emotions in this theory. Drawing conclusion of his review, Lester comments:

> *Any comprehensive theory of personality cannot dismiss emotion and refuse to discuss or account for them. Although George Kelly claimed to have no emotion in his theory, he did discuss at least four basic emotions (threat, fear, guilt and anxiety). McCoy explored how other emotions could be incorporated into PCT and extended the range of emotions that could be accounted for. [...] The result is that we can conclude that PCT is not a theory of personality in which emotions have no place. Rather, the full range of human emotion can be explained using the concepts of PCT. (2009, p.97)*

6.3   The Repertory Grid

In light of PCT, Kelly developed the repertory grid technique to help the individual unveil his or her constructs. The repertory grid as a technique is closely related to PCT. It follows that attempts to use the grids should always be underpinned by the assumptions of PCT (Bannister & Mair, 1968).

Unlike other types of measurement, the grid does not impose any content dimensions on the participants. Instead, the participants use their own words in constructing their experiences and their understanding of these experiences.

The eleven corollaries of PCT (appendix 4) are of particular importance in understanding the repertory grid technique. The essence of the corollaries is to explain how a person organises, uses and modify his or her constructs. For instance,

every person creates 'meaning' of their own experiences (individuality corollary), and so the grid method does not assume shared meanings.

On the other hand, commonality of meaning may still be possible through the exploration of more than one construction system (commonality corollary). Bannister and Mair clarify this, saying:

> *Kelly distinguishes between commonality and individuality in construct meaning; and while other types of psychological measures depend primarily on commonality of meaning, grid method can readily allow exploration of either commonality or individuality in construct usage. (1968, p.143)*

Moreover, grids allow for the assessment of both content and structure of an individual's construct system. Accordingly, the use of this method as a way to understand how consumers construe their shopping experiences is important in not only revealing the content of the experience, but also how it is structured in every individual's system.

In its basic format, the grid consists of four components: topic, elements, constructs, and ratings. It is how the individual chooses to construe his or her experience and how he/she structures it that gives the grid its meaningful shape.

The design of the grid and its four components will be fully discussed in the pilot study section as it developed throughout the interviews. The rationale for leaving the discussion of the grid's design is that I want to emphasise the importance of viewing grid design as a process that evolves, and not as a protocol set in stone. The stages of design modifications and how every slight change affected the grid results will be fully discussed then.

However, before discussing the pilot study and its results, I shall shed light on the use of PCT and the repertory grid in marketing and consumer research. Moreover, I will further explain my rationale for using this method to answer the research question.

6.4 The Repertory Grid in Consumer Research

Various attempts have been made in consumer research to employ the repertory grid as a research method. However, as Marsden and Littler (2000b) argue, most of these endeavours have largely ignored the theoretical stance that underpins the technique. This can be hazardous for various reasons.

First, Kelly (1955) created the grid only as a 'tool' to help his patients elicit their constructs according to the assumptions of PCT. Consequently, as Bannister and Mair (1968) warn, using the repertory grid in isolation from PCT can be hazardous because then it is set in completely different philosophical and theoretical stances.

Second, Kelly (1955) introduced this method as a less intrusive method that empowers the patient as the expert in his or her own feelings and experiences. This came as a radical move against the extreme positivistic stance of intrusive highly controlled experiments that dominated psychology research at the time.

Although both qualitative and quantitative use of the repertory grid is possible (Jankowicz, 2005), most consumer research attempts at using the repertory grid have predominantly adopted a solid positivist stance and often ignored the rationale behind PCT (Marsden & Littler, 2000). Indeed, employing the repertory grid as a qualitative research method allows deeper understanding of the phenomena as it allows individual interpretations that the participants themselves make throughout the process.

The main themes in which the repertory grid has been employed as a research method are: (1) as an exploratory tool (Lemke, Clark, & Wilson, 2011; Marsden & Littler, 2000b), (2) as a tool of comparison between gender attributes (Tagg & Wilson, 2011), food choice (Russell & Cox, 2004; Thomson & McEwan, 1988), tourist destination/image (Coshall, 2000; Embacher & Buttle, 1989; Pike, 2003), or as a technique to understand emotional and cognitive processes (Yassim, 2011; Yassim, n.d.; Zinkhan & Biswas, 1988).

6.5 My Rationale for Using the Repertory Grids

My rationale for using PCT and the repertory grid technique is twofold. First, it is due to the unique nature of the topic and, second, because of the methodological

limitations of the other, more familiar, approaches in regard to the scope of this study. I discuss these two reasons to justify my choice of this approach below.

The topic of this study, emotion and experience, has a particular influence on my choice of research method. The multidisciplinary term 'experience', as it appears in the literature, is often used interchangeably to refer to either antecedents or consequences of the experience.

Similarly, 'emotion' as a topic is highly complex and often taken lightly as in the comment by Fehr and Russell (1984, p.464) on the vacuity of emotion, 'everyone knows what an emotion is, until asked to give a definition. Then, it seems, no one knows'. This may also mean that the individuals may often be unaware of their emotions either intentionally or unintentionally. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Holman (1996, p.4) comment, 'It can be extremely difficult to answer questions about something one has taken for granted for a considerable period of time. For example, "What exactly is it that makes Jane a better manager than Mark?"'

The argument throughout my literature review is that terms such as emotion and experience have often been taken for granted. The PCT's stance of individuality seems appropriate to lay down this issue and to explore what emotions and experiences the individual seems to have about their online fashion shopping. This leads to the second issue about my choice.

Because emotions are arguably deeply rooted in the individual's construing system, more effort is needed to dive into the inner world of the individual when attempting to study the topic.

Studying such an ambiguous, highly complex topic that is often taken for granted by using direct methods of questioning would not necessarily work on such an abstract level. The usual use of emotional measurement scales in questionnaire-based studies often constitutes rating a large number of emotional phrases based on a particular situation or experience (e.g. Russell & Mehrabian, 1977).

The use of such scales is problematic because the individual may be unable to relate to these phrases of various emotions. Moreover, there is a risk that the participant could be confused by the many different yet similar phrases for emotions that the scales use.

I argue that unless the individuals themselves set their own phrases in the context of what is being studied, it is highly unlikely that any deep understanding of emotions can be established. The repertory grid technique is designed to elicit the individual's own constructs, and is therefore appropriate for overcoming this issue.

This, I believe, justifies my choice of such a method in answering my research question of how consumers construct their online fashion-shopping experiences using their own words and constructs.

6.6   Pilot Interviews

It is extremely important that a pilot study be carried out when employing the repertory grid method. This is because no matter how much planning is done in advance, there is only a very limited scope of expectations as to what the overall result of the grid will be like especially for someone new to the method. Second, the pilot interview helps to explore how the participants would respond to the prompts and how open they would be about their experiences and feelings. Third, the pilot interview is necessary to form an understanding of the different scenarios that are likely to occur. Scenarios can range from whether the participants would struggle to follow the instructions of the technique, if they would prefer to talk about a particular aspect of their experiences, and specifically, whether or not the technique would be effective in eliciting the required constructs.

6.6.1   Aims and objectives of the pilot study

The main objective of the pilot study is to assess the process of grid completion and the outputs of the method for analysis purposes. In other words, the pilot's aim is to evaluate whether or not this technique would serve in answering my research question.

6.6.2   Pilot grid design: Topic

Every grid consists of four components; topic, elements, constructs and ratings (Jankowicz, 2005). It is important that the topic of the grid be communicated explicitly to the participant because it sets the realm of discourse that we are trying to explore.

As Jankowicz (2005, p.12) comments;

> *People have constructs about anything and everything. A grid is always conducted about a particular topic, with the intention of eliciting just those constructs which the person uses in making sense of that particular realm of discourse – that particular slice of their experience.*

This research uses the online fashion-shopping experience as the topic of interest in the grids. Therefore, from the initial stage of inviting the participants for the interview, they are told that it is about their online fashion-shopping experiences.

6.6.3 Pilot grid design: Elements

The second component of the grid is the 'elements'. Jankowicz (2005, p.13) defines an element as 'an example of, exemplar of, instance of, sampling of, or occurrence within, a particular topic. A set of elements is compared systematically to discover a person's constructs'. It is therefore understandable to claim that the choice of elements is vast and that it is extremely important to choose the right set of elements, as it will determine the types of constructs elicited by the grid. This will be further explored in the following sections.

Jankowicz (2005, p.29) advises, 'choose terms which sample or represent that topic. The best set of elements is one that covers the whole field of the topic evenly'. According to Jankowicz, there are four methods of choosing a set of elements: elements chosen by the investigator, elements chosen by the participant, elements chosen by negotiations between the two, and elicited elements.

For the design of my pilot study, I asked my participants to choose ten fashion websites that they are familiar with. The chosen websites would include some that the participant thinks are good, and some that are not as good or even very bad.

The rationale for choosing websites at the initial stage was simply because I wanted an extensive set of elements that could account for the overall experience. Thus, discussing the range of different sites from a customer's perspective could open a window onto the experiences as constructed in their minds.

The choice of elements in this case is the participant's. I had no influence on what sites they chose to include or exclude in order to allow them to maintain some sense of 'ownership' (Jankowicz, 2005) of their experiences.

Equally important is the fact that any attempt to impose particular choices of websites for the discussion carries a high risk of failure. The explicit risk is that the participant might not be familiar enough with the suggested sites, but would hesitate to acknowledge that. There is also the risk that the person had a very specific experience with a particular site that is not representative of their overall shopping experience. Recall of a forgotten negative experience could be easily triggered if the participant were to be asked about it directly.

As the intention of the research is to allow the participant the freedom to talk about their worlds the way they view it and they construct it, it was important to limit the researcher's control over what websites the participants chose to discuss.

On the other hand, it was important to make the participants aware that they should choose websites that are solely or mostly related to fashion. This is because the nature and uniqueness of fashion shopping needs to be accounted for when the participants evaluated these sites. In other words, websites like Amazon and eBay are different in the wide range of market sectors they cover, and in their mechanism of sales and payments.

One thing that I wanted to ensure did not affect the study were experiences that were not fashion-related, such as winning a bid or buying a faulty second hand item. Such issues are beyond the scope of my research, and would relate to a different hierarchy in the consumer's construing system. However, as Kelly (1955; 1963) warned, the human construing system is very complicated and it can overlap many aspects. Therefore, it was important to ensure that such overlap is minimised by picking the right set of elements.

Once the participants emailed me their set of apparel websites that they would like to talk about, we arranged a time for the interview to take place. Prior to the interview, some preparation was necessary. First, I would make sure I visited all the websites given to familiarise myself with them. Then, I would write the website titles on cards. Finally, I printed out Jankowicz's (2005, p.25) grid template ready for the interview.

6.6.4   Pilot grid design: Constructs

The third component of the grid is the 'constructs', which are elicited during the interview process. As each interview commenced, I reminded my participants of the interview topic (i.e. their online fashion-shopping experiences) and noted it on the grid sheet. Then, I reviewed the elements (websites) they chose and wrote them across the header row of the grid (the elements row)

The process of eliciting constructs would then begin by comparing the noted elements, which results in bipolar constructs forming the rest of the grid rows. It is worth noting that eliciting constructs is not a simple process of description or

comparison. Instead, there are fundamental theoretical underpinnings that have to be consulted carefully throughout the process. In the light of this, Jankowicz (2005, p.41) comments:

> *In eliciting a grid, you're not simply obtaining a description of how a person thinks about an issue per se but, rather, you're opening a window on their entire mental world.*

Construct elicitations could be performed by any means of comparison of elements (e.g. dyads, and triads). However, Kelly (1955; 1963) suggests the use of triads as the most appropriate method. Precisely, I followed carefully the minimum context card form of Easterby-Smith et al. in which *'the cards are normally drawn randomly from the pack and triads are presented until time runs out or the person "dries up"'*. (1996, p. 9)

To perform the triad comparison in my interviews, I picked three cards randomly, then I asked my participants the following question, 'can you tell me in which way two of these cards (elements/ websites) are similar and different from the third, in terms of your experience (or how they make you feel)?'

The participant's answer for the similar (common factor) between two of the cards is recorded on the very left-hand side of the grid. This represents the 'emergent' pole of the construct. Whereas the participant's answer for how the two cards are different from the third is recorded on the right-hand side of the same row, representing the 'implicit' pole of the same construct.

For instance, a participant comparing Warehouse, Mango and Boohoo suggested that Warehouse and Mango are similar (in that they usually sell expensive items), and different from Boohoo (cheap items). The construct elicited here is 'expensive, cheap. On the grid it is represented as

	Warehouse	ASOS	**Mango**	Topshop	**Boohoo**	
Expensive						Cheap

Kelly argues that the polarity of a construct is extremely important in helping an outsider to understand an individual's construing system. That is, one can only understand what is meant by a word by knowing its contrast. For instance, in the

aforementioned construct (expensive-cheap), the word 'expensive' gives a different meaning every time its contrast changes e.g. 'cheap', 'worthless', 'valuable', or 'luxurious'.

Moreover, Jankowicz (2005, p.61) elaborate on the nature of constructs:

> *Constructs are contrasts we devise when dealing with the world, in order to understand it. While they're commonly communicated in words—and we've got used to thinking of constructs as spoken or written pairs of single words, or phrases—it's the actual distinctions a person recognises and makes that are the constructs, and not the words in which these distinctions are expressed. Constructs in themselves are non-verbal.*

This argument is appropriate since the elicitation of constructs is only a means of understanding what is already constructed in the individual's inner world. As a researcher, my role is to help the participant communicate his or her inner thoughts in the clearest way possible in order to form a mutual understanding of concepts.

It is worth noting that Kelly's idea of 'constructive alternativism' is bound to happen at some stage. This theoretical stance asserts that we have our own ways of making sense of our experiences and that these may well differ from person to person. Therefore, my construction is different from my participants' constructions and different from the readers' constructions as well.

6.6.5 *Pilot grid design: Ratings*

The final component of a grid is the 'ratings'. The aim of this step is to let the participant indicate a link or a relationship between his or her elicited constructs and the elements of the grid. In this step, I ask the participant to indicate what elements belong to the emergent pole and which belong to the implicit pole of each construct.

Various methods of ratings can be used but the most accepted one is 5-point Likert scale rating in which each bipolar construct acts as a Likert scale. This is because this type of ratings may allow for a variety of statistical analyses that maybe infeasible otherwise. If such analyses were not relevant, the ratings can be excluded from the analysis (such as in qualitative coding of constructs).

The aforementioned example of the (Expensive-Cheap) construct becomes a five-point scale in which 'expensive' represents '1' and 'cheap' represents '5'. The participant then gives a rating to each of the three elements in the triad (in this example; Warehouse, Mango, and Boohoo). If an element rating was '1' then the participant clearly sees this brand as a very expensive one. If it is given '2', it is more on the expensive side, but not the most expensive. If it is given '5', it is perceived as a very cheap one.

Once the participant had rated the three elements in the triad, I would ask them to apply the same scale to rate the rest of the elements on the grid. The result looks like the following example.

	Warehouse	ASOS	**Mango**	Topshop	**Boohoo**	
Expensive	**1**	4	**1**	3	**5**	Cheap

6.6.6 Validation and modifications

In other methods of measurement such as questionnaires, the choice of using pre-defined and pre-validated scales is common. However, the construction of the grid, the choice of elements and the choice of constructs and ratings represent a risky experimental design. It is highly dependent on the participants themselves—how they construct the world and learn about themselves and their experiences. The variety of output from a grid interview can be so extreme that no scale or scope could contain it. Therefore, it is important that the direction of the grid and some boundaries be drawn to ensure the grid is still fit for purpose, i.e. to answer the research question(s). However, the decision to draw any boundaries must be made carefully so that the researcher is not dominating the participants' construing of their inner world, which would go against essence of PCT.

Because I believe in empowering my participants, I intentionally gave them the choice of the elements they would like to discuss. The only limit on this was that the range of elements should be from apparel websites. Consequently, during constructs elicitation, the triads that the participants had to compare and contrast were triads of their chosen fashion sites such as ASOS, Boohoo and Topshop.

After a couple of pilot interviews, it was apparent that the grid's focus was shifting toward the evaluation of websites instead of the construction of the experience. Even

with laddering, the constructs did not reflect the participants' experiences and how they construct them. The following example is one of my pilot grids:

Table 6-1 Pilot Grid 1. Topic: Online fashion shopping

Construct's Emergent Pole	ASOS	Oasis	River Island	Boohoo	Dorothy Perkins	Zara	M & S	Topshop	Warehouse	Mango	Construct's Implicit Pole
					Grid Elements						
More filtering facilities based on price, size, etc.	1	3	3	2	4	4	2	2	3	3	Basic Filtering
Expensive	3	2	3	5	5	2	3	2	1	1	Cheap
Diverse product range	1	4	2	3	2	4	1	2	4	4	Limited product range
Special section for trends and outfit combination	1	4	2	3	5	5	3	3	5	1	Just clothes, no suggestions
One click purchase, easy and simple	1	5	2	3	2	4	1	4	2	5	Complicated payment system
Clear website, light colours, organised	1	4	2	5	1	4	4	1	2	1	Dark colours, dark green and yellow, difficult to find off putting
Product presentation 3D	1	5	2	5	4	5	2	1	1	1	2D view
Logical pattern of product grouping 'Accessibility'	5	2	3	4	5	1	1	2	2	1	No sort of order (sleeves, no sleeves, colour)
Delivery & return policy (free delivery)	1	4	2	3	3	4	1	2	3	4	Poor delivery policy (expensive)
Good customer involvement (Reviews, FB link)	3	5	4	5	2	5	1	1	2	3	One way communication (No involvement)
Good website image	1	2	2	4	3	2	2	1	2	2	Poor website image
Target group Young, trendy	1	3	1	1	2	3	4	1	3	3	Middle-aged groups

Table 6.1 shows that the nature of the constructs elicited from such triads was far from the experience itself and provided only simplistic descriptions or evaluation of

the websites in question. For example, the constructs discussed sites' functionality (e.g. more vs. basic filtering, one click vs. complicated payment), web design (e.g. clear light organised vs. difficult colours), brand positioning (e.g. good website image vs. poor website image, expensive vs. cheap) and related issues.

It is worth noting that these types of construct capture the participants' evaluations of different apparel websites. However, such constructs certainly divert from the focus of this research, i.e. understanding the individual and their experiences in online fashion-shopping environments. Consequently, the pool of elements had to be reconsidered in order to arrive at a grid that is fit or answering the research question. This rationale is illustrated in figure (6-2) below.

Inputs/Elements Fashion websites	Comparing fashion websites result in web characteristics	Outputs/Constructs Website Characteristics

This does not answer the research question. It only attributes characteristics to sites.

RQ: How Do Consumers Construct Their Online Fashion Shopping Experiences?

Proposition: comparing web characteristics may unveil the experience as the individual anticipates their influence

Inputs/Elements Web Characteristic	Comparing web characteristics result in individual preferences	Outputs/Constructs The Experience

Figure 6-2 Repertory grid pilot redesign

As explained in figure (6-2) the elements of the grids resemble inputs and the process of triad comparison of such inputs results in constructs outputs that seem to describe the characteristics of these elements. This imposed a real risk that the data were shifting away from answering the research question.

Seeking to understand consumer experiences of such environments, I propose that if the inputs are changed to web characteristics, then the individual will move from

describing attributes to discussing how he/she perceives them, and in turn, how she or he experiences the environment.

6.6.7 Pilot grid redesign

The new design of the grid followed the same steps, except that two major modifications were implemented. First, the pool of elements has changed from fashion websites to web characteristics. Just as in the initial grid design, the participants supplied the elements in the redesigned grids. The participants were asked to name different web characteristics that they would like to discuss. Second, the elicitation of constructs did not follow only a simple triad comparison. In addition, laddering and pyramiding were used. The rationale for this is the nature of the construing system as Bannister and Mair (1968, p.143) explain:

> *It is important to note that a person uses constructs, not as isolated descriptive categories that can be picked out and examined separately, but as changing categorisations of events which are systematically interrelated with each other and ordered into various hierarchical subsystems within a total system.*

Based on this stance, it is important to explore the complicated construing system or subsystems by challenging the person by asking more in-depth questions. The technique to achieve this is laddering or pyramiding which helps the participants elicit deeper constructs based on their initial constructs.

6.6.7.1 Laddering and pyramiding

"*A form of construct elicitation in which the person is able to indicate the hierarchical integration of their personal construct system*" (Bannister & Mair, 1968, p.50) To achieve laddering, Jankowicz (2005) suggests that questions of 'how' and 'in what way' be asked on both poles of the elicited construct. This allows the identification of a hierarchy of constructs (i.e. moving from peripheral constructs to higher order constructs).

Similarly, pyramiding is achieved by laddering on more than one level. In other words, asking 'how' and 'in what way' questions on the main construct, and then asking the same questions again on the construct created by laddering. This step could then be repeated as many number of times as needed, thus forming a pyramid.

Figure 6-3 shows Jankowicz's (2005) illustration of laddering and pyramiding.

Laddering: The superordinate–subordinate relationship between constructs is described by seeking ever-more specific ways of expressing constructs

I can be comfortable with this person

a) what kind of person are you comfortable with?

b) someone who'd help me in a crisis

e) can you give me an example of helping in a crisis?

Well, I could rely on them to loan me the price of a lunch if I left my wallet at home

I'm never really at ease with this person

c) and what kind of person is this?

d) I couldn't rely on them if I needed help

e) Okay, and in contrast: how might one recognise people like that?

I wouldn't even dream of asking them!

I can be comfortable with this person

a) what kind of person are you comfortable with?

b) someone who'd help me in a crisis

c) and what kind of person is the opposite of that?

c) I couldn't rely on them if I needed help

I'm never really at ease with this person

d) Now, what kind of people make you feel you're not at ease?

e) someone who always finds fault with everything I say

f) and what kind of person is the opposite of that?

f) someone who doesn't hassle me all the time

Pyramiding: The superordinate–subordinate relationship is elaborated in ever-expanding detail by examining and expanding on each pole separately

Figure 6-3 Laddering and pyramiding

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In practice, after the initial construct is elicited, laddering can be done by asking 'how?' and 'in what way?' questions.

An example of pyramiding can be found in the newly designed grid (table 6-2).

Table 6-2 Repertory grid example 1

Construct's Emergent Pole	Grid Elements										Construct's Implicit Pole
	Search Facilities	Customer Reviews	Catwalk Videos	Collection Variety	Written Product Info.	Web Layout	Mobile Access	Social Network Pages	Save-a-list Option	Filters	
Necessity 'I need the product'	2	3	4	2	1	1	3	3	5	3	Luxury 'Looking for something unnecessary'
Risk Free Purchase Decision	1	3	2	2	3	3	5	2	3	4	High risk/ Unable to purchase
Happy	2	3	3	1	1	3	4	4	3	4	Frustration
Pride	3	2	4	3	2	4	4	3	3	3	Guilt
Easy Access	2	3	2	2	2	1	4	4	3	3	Difficult Accessibility
Comfortable More at peace/at ease	1	1	3	3	4	4	3	2	3	3	Doubtful/Unsettled and confused
Happy I got it 'Achievement'	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	5	4	Unhappy and thinking about it 'Consciousness'
Precise/Focused	2	2	4	2	2	2	3	4	5	4	Lost (but I might get back on track'

The laddering process in this grid starts after the eliciting of the first construct (necessity–luxury). Following this construct elicited by means of triad comparison of three cards randomly chosen, the laddering starts by asking the individual to explain why this is a necessity and in what way. This results in the second constructs (risk-free–high-risk purchase).

By laddering the first construct, we were able to generate the second one. By repeating the same questions on the second construct, the third construct (Happy–Frustration) emerged. Furthermore, repeating the same steps the forth construct (Pride-Guilt) emerged. The pyramiding process is illustrated in figure (6-4) below.

(Necessity 'I need the product'**-Luxury** 'Looking for something unnecessary')

(Risk Free-High Risk Purchase)

(Happy-Frustration)

(Pride-Guilt)

Figure 6-4 Laddering and pyramiding example

The laddering and/or pyramiding can be performed on each construct elicited from a triad comparison. However, Jankowicz (2005) emphasises two issues here. First, whether the elicited construct is sufficient or not depends on the aim of the grid and on the research question. Second, it is important to pay attention to the individual and how comfortable he or she is with deeper discussion, as this process may be exhausting. Therefore, the process has to be flexible enough to adapt to each individual in the study.

On a more generic level, it is worth noting the different type of constructs that table 6-2 shows in comparison to the ones in table 6-1. The new constructs (colour coded in the table) seem to discuss the experience of the individual—his or her emotions and behaviours. This new design confirms my choice of elements for the grid, and so this new design will be adopted to conduct the rest of the grid interviews.

The final grid was deemed 'fit' for answering the research question and so this new design was adopted across the rest of the repertory grid interviews. This is further explained in the next section.

6.7 Repertory Grid Interviews

Following the results of the pilot study, the redesign of the grid, as discussed in the previous section, is adopted across all the interviews. At the beginning of each interview and before starting any discussion, I gave my participants 'the research participant information sheet' that explains the purpose of the study and confidentiality of data collected, and asks for their consent to participate in the study. (See appendix 2 for details).

Once the participant gave consent, I presented them with the interview guide sheet (appendix 3). The interview guide begins by asking the participants to indicate their online fashion-shopping behaviour patterns and personal characteristics (browsing, buying, number of familiar websites, gender and age). Then it outlines the main steps of the interview including choosing elements, construct elicitation, and laddering.

As aforementioned, the grid consists of a topic, elements, constructs and ratings. The topic of the grid remained the same as it maintained the focus of the research topic.

The choice of elements followed the pilot redesign, and so question 7 of the interview guide asks the participants to think of web characteristics (features or atmospherics) and write them down on the cards I provided. Throughout the interview process, it became apparent that this new choice of elements is more challenging.

By observing the participants as they wrote down their choices of element, I noticed some struggled to come up with any elements whereas others were keen to provide more than what is required. Consequently, although the participants were free to choose whatever elements they wished to discuss, I employed a 'flexible negotiation' method in which I negotiate the elements with my interviewees. That is, when a participant offered more than ten elements, I negotiated with them what to discard or keep. On the other hand, when a participant was 'unsure' what to write, I showed them a set of examples that were frequently mentioned such as image zooming, catwalk videos, etc.

Once the set of elements had been chosen and each element has been written on a card, we began the process of construct elicitation. Similar to the pilot study, constructs elicitation began initially by comparing triads and then laddering or

pyramiding the elicited constructs. To perform triad comparisons, three cards were picked and presented to the participants followed by the question: *'can you tell me in which way two of these cards (elements/ websites) are similar and different from the third, in terms of your experience (or how they make you feel)?'*

In addition to triad comparison, laddering was also used to get deeper meanings represented in phrases of constructs. As a result, bipolar constructs with emergent and implicit poles were elicited and written on the grid sheet.

During construct elicitation, I always explained to my participants that I am interested in 'how they see things' NOT in 'how things should be seen'. This is very important to make sure the participants are open to share their experiences with honesty (Jankowicz, 2005). I reassured them that there are no right or wrong answers and that all I am interested in is how *they* actually see and perceive the topic of discussion. Finally, whenever a participant started to struggle to focus on the grid and the ratings, which can be a daunting task, I would move away from the grid into an informal discussion to put the participant at ease.

In addition to the grid example in table 6-2, below, table 6-3 is another example of a typical grid output from my study.

Table 6-3 Repertory grid example 2

Construct's Emergent Pole	Search Facilities	Customer Reviews	Catwalk Videos	Product Image +/3D	Web Layout	Social Network Pages	Web Design	Return Policy	Chat with Adviser	Info on Model Size	Construct's Implicit Pole
It brings a good alternative to store service	5	3	2	4	4	3	1	1	2	5	The minimum basics
Glad and happy	3	3	2	2	4	3	1	1	2	4	Disappointed
Make me easily buy more	1	3	2	1	4	5	1	1	2	4	Only buy if the product is really good
Low risk	3	2	3	1	3	3	3	1	2	1	High risk
Vital, Essential	1	5	3	1	1	5	1	1	5	1	Useless
At ease	1	4	3	1	2	3	1	1	4	1	Scared
Comfortable	1	5	3	1	2	5	1	1	5	1	Unsettled

The repertory grid study resulted in 27 completed grids, of which 2 were excluded as they used the initial grid design (elements: fashion websites). Therefore, 25 completed repertory grids were included in the analysis of this study. The following section explores different approaches to grid analyses and explains the chosen method of analysis in detail.

6.8   <u>Repertory Grid Analysis</u>

"Grids are like people. They come in many shapes and sizes, they ask questions and give answers; they can be studied as a group or individually, on one occasion or successively over time…" (Fransella, Bannister, & Bell, 2004, p.xi)

The analysis of repertory grids, as highlighted in the pilot study, is an ongoing process. It begins within the first few seconds of the interview and does not end until findings and implications from each grid and across all grids are established.

Because completing the grid is a co-creation process between the researcher and the participants, analysing this process is as important as analysing its outputs, i.e. the grid data. Jankowicz (2005, p.72) suggests:

> *In a grid analysis, the job is twofold: firstly, to identify the interviewee's meanings, and, secondly, to draw whatever implications seem to be appropriate to you. […] How useful did s/he find it during elicitation? Was it followed or avoided? For example, if the qualifying statement was 'from the point of view of how you feel about them', and at the end, none of the constructs related to feelings, and your steering in that direction was ignored, it could be very informative!*

Jankowicz's reference to 'how the process went' is manifested in two types of initial analyses that he referred to as process and eyeball analyses (Jankowicz, 2005). Process analysis focuses on the process of the interview in which the grids are completed in order to overcome any obstacles or issues that may confuse the interviewee or be overtiring. Eyeball analysis is a quick scan of the grid to confirm obvious patterns in numbers or words.

These forms of analysis were key in identifying the issues of grid design in the pilot interviews. Specifically, eyeball analysis of the initial grids highlighted the content of the elicited constructs. For instance, it suggested that a certain website (i.e. brand) is cheap or expensive. This resulted in grids that seem to provide market research evaluation of websites rather than content that highlights the experience of online fashion shopping as constructed by the consumers. Equally important is process analysis that shows how the process of construct elicitation may require multilevel laddering or pyramiding as well as triad comparisons.

The process and eyeball analyses were essential in identifying this issue and thus being able to act on it promptly. This resulted as mentioned above in changing the inputs of the grids (i.e. the elements from a collection of apparel websites) to web atmospherics and characteristics.

Following the initial phase of process and eyeball analyses, a more sophisticated form of analysis is required (Jankowicz, 2005). Whether the analysis is quantitative or qualitative, or even both, it is determined by a number of factors. First, and foremost, this choice should be justified within the research context and what it is that the researcher seeks to achieve (i.e. answering the research question). Second, some types of analyses may be more suitable for certain types of grids.

It is worth noting that the initial eyeball and process analyses of the grids may possibly indicate whether the completion of the grids followed a standard pattern that accepts quantitative analyses. It might also be possible to form some sort of 'early understanding' on the major themes that seem to emerge from the dataset.

The approaches to grid analysis appear heavily on the quantitative side in the form of simple frequencies (e.g. Lemke et al., 2003), correlations, testing for relationships, or some other forms such as cluster analysis (Jankowicz, 2005), categorical principal component analysis (e.g. Tagg & Wilson, 2011) and Honey's content analysis (e.g. Yassim, 2011).

To facilitate the analysis of grids, a number of software solutions have been produced and used in such research. FlexiGrid and WebGrid5 are very popular for their ability to provide instant analysis of single grids. SPSS can also be used to allow more freedom of the types of analyses that could be performed especially across a number of grids.

An example of the type of analysis that can be performed easily using WebGrid5 can be found in appendix 6. This programme gives an easy and quick way of showing cluster analysis, or a plot of elements across the dimensions of two chosen constructs.

Moreover, SPSS can be used to analyse the grids. For example, following Tagg and Wilson (2011) method of analysis, categorical principal component analysis (CATPCA) can be performed on each grid in order to identify the main components

that explain all the constructs elicited in that grid. An example of CATPCA on a grid can be found in appendix 7.

The results of such analysis place the highest value on ratings, as ratings are the means to performing the analysis. However, in this thesis, the main aim of the use of the grids is to understand the construction of the experience from the customer's perspective. Therefore, the core focus is on the type of constructs elicited from the grids. Quantifying the results by means of testing for relationships or by using reduction methods such as principle component analysis may not be the best 'fit' to the research question. This is because a qualitative exploratory technique is needed in which I could explore the meaning of experience from the customer's perspective.

Indeed as table 6.4 below (taken from appendix 7) shows, CATPCA reduces the majority of the grid constructs into one component indicating the unity of all constructs, as they seem to strongly relate to each other.

Table 6-4 CATPCA component loadings example

Component Loadings		
	Dimension	
	1	2
Extra Bonus vs. Basic	.957	.160
Impressive vs. Boring	.986	-.125
Wanted/Valued vs. Put You Off	.209	.938
Make It Closer To Real life vs. Too Obv Not Impressive	.735	.555
Glamorous Vs. Expected	.937	-.292
Interesting/Appealing vs. Desperational	.836	-.431

This analysis has precisely reduced all constructs into one component. My intention is not to reduce constructs into scales or components; so quantitative may not be my ideal form of analysis for a number of reasons.

First, quantitative analysis emphasises the higher importance of the ratings. However, as explained in the previous section, ratings are based on the scenarios that the participant was discussing. Taking these numbers out of context and running a standardised statistical analysis on them could only be misleading.

Second, even if these numbers could be analysed statistically, the set of elements differed from participant to participant. Even though there are core web atmospherics that were repeatedly mentioned, statistical analysis across grids does not work unless all elements are exactly the same.

Finally, most quantitative analysis will only offer a mean of data reduction which will be subject to the researcher interpretations (Easterby-Smith et al., 1996).

On the other hand, in order to understand the construction of the experience and because the grids were completed in different scenarios, qualitative analysis is deemed essential.

Using qualitative content analysis to analyse the grids alongside the recorded interviews can offer in-depth insights into the construing system of the individual. Such qualitative analysis is usually performed to categorise the constructs elicited by the grids. Therefore, like thematic analysis, it looks for themes of constructs based on the verbal wordings of constructs instead of their weighting or scores. This can be done on one grid or across all grids in order to identify any major themes or patterns of constructs elicited in response to a particular topic. It is worth noting that in management research there is a growing interest in the qualitative use of repertory grids (Easterby-Smith et al., 1996; Lemke et al., 2011; Marsden & Littler, 2000b; Pike, 2003).

As mentioned at the beginning of the analysis section, the analysis actually begins at the start of the interview. Therefore, by the end of the interview, there is already a form of understanding of the content and the main themes of the experience and of evaluating the web atmospherics. Once all the grids were completed and ready with initial analysis of each grid, my task was to analyse the constructs across all grids. This is explained in detail below.

6.9   Step-By-Step Analysis

In this section, I explain all the steps of the analysis procedures that were made and included in drawing the findings of this research. My approach to the analysis begins with an initial phase of process and eyeball analysis for an exploration of the

experience constructed by each individual first (single grid), then across all individuals (across grids).

The second phase is a qualitative analysis of constructs across all grids; this is followed with the use of multi-coding to ensure higher reliability. Details are introduced in three phases below.

6.9.1 Phase one: Process and eyeball analyses

The grid has two dimensions, and so the analysis was twofold. First is analysis of constructs (analysis of rows). Looking across all grids, one can see patterns of constructs that appear to explain the participants' experiences. Various levels of constructions range from the situation in which the experience takes place to the deeper emotional constructs. The second analysis is of participants' perception of web atmospherics (analysis of columns), which helps identify which web atmospherics were most or least effective in the experience. The findings of this twofold analysis are outlined in the following section.

6.9.1.1 Process analysis

Carried out throughout the interview, process analysis begins when a participant starts listing the elements of the grid. This is important as it indicates whether an intervention is needed or not, and dictates whether negotiation of elements is required. Moreover, during constructs elicitation, process analysis indicates whether the participant is finding it challenging to elicit more constructs, or if laddering is becoming too confusing. Paying attention to the process of grid completion is essential. If the participant got tired or confused, I would offer them refreshments and move away from the grid to a more informal discussion until they are able to focus back on the grid.

Finally, process analysis showed that most participants were more likely to start their construction by describing the compared elements, such as (Necessity–Luxury). In many cases, emotional constructs were not elicited at the first triadic go. Therefore, the laddering technique (asking why, how, and in what way questions) was used to allow deeper level of construction. Consequently, the constructs resulted from laddering were deeper cognitive-emotional constructs. For instance, laddering the

construct (necessity–luxury) elicited the (risk-free–high-risk purchase) decision construct, which subsequently resulted in an emotional construct (happy–frustrated).

6.9.1.2   Eyeball analysis

Eyeball analysis of the grids offers a general understanding of the components of the grid. For example, eyeball analysis of Table 6-3 Repertory grid example 2) shows that this grid can be read in two ways:

   1.   The experience (rows of the grid)

Analysing the rows of the grid shows that this participant experiences various types of positive and negative emotions when interacting with the web atmospherics studied in the grid. She feels (happy–disappointed), (at ease–scared), and (comfortable–unsettled) and that certain elements on the website will trigger such emotions.

Seemingly, she experiences emotions of happiness on various occasions. (1) When she interacts with high quality product image zooming/3D and catwalk videos, (2) when the website is well designed and (3) when there is a good return policy (free and flexible) in place. On the other hand, she feels disappointed in web layout and in the size of the model displaying the clothes.

The participant feels more comfortable and at ease when all what she perceives as 'essential' elements are presented well on the website. Moreover, she tends to feel unsettled reading customer reviews or using social network pages of apparel sites. She also feels scared of talking to an adviser on the website.

Furthermore, she perceives lower risk when there are high quality images of products with zooming and 3D, when the return policy is good, and when information of the model size is displayed. Finally, she declares that web layout and information on model size would not affect her decision to buy a product (she will buy only if the product is good enough); whereas the rest of the web atmospherics discussed, if presented well, will influence her behaviour to 'easily buy more'.

   2. Evaluation of web atmospherics (columns)

Each of the elements at the header row of table 6-3 can be evaluated separately based on the participant's construction and perception of them. Some atmospherics are

viewed more positively than others. For instance, product images zooming and 3D are perceived as the minimum, or the basics, that an apparel website should offer and that they are essential. They make the participant glad, happy, comfortable and at ease. Additionally, they help her perceive lower risks and influence her behaviour to easily buy more.

Web design and return policy follow a very similar path to product images. The difference is that they are not considered the minimum a website can offer, but are viewed as a good alternative to store service. Moreover, unlike return policy and product images, web design is not perceived as a factor that influence risk perception.

The participant thinks social network pages such as a Facebook page of the apparel website are useless and completely irrelevant to her experience of online fashion shopping.

Finally, it is significant that some elements, if read directly from the grid, could prompt a contradictory and confusing evaluation. An example of this is web layout, as it is first rated negatively and then moved toward the positive side at the end of the grid. The reason for such contradiction is the way the grid was completed based on various scenarios. In one scenario, the participant evaluates poor web layout, so the rating is more negative. In the next scenario, she remembers a good layout of a website and shifts her discussion into a more positive direction. This is significant when analysing the grids, as it is vital that the grids are analysed within the context in which they were completed. Accordingly, this finding largely influences my choice of analysis.

6.9.2   *Phase two: Qualitative analysis*

The aim of this analysis is to identify the main themes of the constructs elicited as a construction of the online fashion-shopping experience. Therefore, my endeavour here is to code constructs into the main themes or categories that describe them. A category, as defined by Pace (2004, p.337), is *'a conceptual element of a theory—an abstract representation of something the researcher identifies as being significant in the data'*. Consequently, I do not intend to divide experience into different components. In fact, this thesis throughout has been arguing against such divide.

However, it is important for a variety of reasons to define themes of what goes on in an online fashion-shopping experience. First, unlike Kelly's approach of neglecting any talk on emotion in order to avoid the emotion/cognition debate, I address and look for themes of emotional constructs and then I attempt to look at whether such themes define a clear-cut category that draws clear borders of what an emotion is or is not.

Second, Kelly's theory advocates individuality and commonality at the same time (see appendix 4 for the corollaries). Hence, the essence of the theory makes it possible to look for themes across grids and allows for a conceptualisation of the experience of online fashion shopping. In these themes, it is possible to discuss individual differences in the way participants approached or used different words to construct their experiences.

In order to identify a theme or a category, I look for the wordings of constructs at its face value instead of any interpretive meaning of why a particular construct has been mentioned. This approach is fit for the research question relating to the construction of experience as constructed by the consumers and using their own words.

Various scholars in this area such as Kelly (1955), Fransella et al. (2004), and Jankowicz (2005) highlight the importance of maintaining the language of the participants in their construction of their experiences. Therefore, the themes are drawn only from the common words expressed by the participants when constructing their experiences. Hence, the themes represent the types of construct that unite to represent the experience as expressed explicitly by the consumers.

To identify these themes, the constructs of all grids were initially organised in one table (See appendix 8). Open coding was performed to identify similarities of constructs and to form initial codes. In order to ensure all the main themes are identified, the table of constructs was analysed using the NVivo software package. Word frequency and word search were run to identify the most frequent words (including stemmed words) (see appendix 9 for word frequency result). This step facilitates a quick identification of the main codes in the dataset. Additionally, the coding process was also performed manually in order to ensure all constructs are coded properly. NVivo's coding into nodes can be seen in appendix 10.

Once the initial coding is complete, the process moves to identify higher levels of theme abstraction. In order for something to count as a theme, there must be evident significance for the theme in the constructs mentioned across the grids or within the context identified in the interviews. Therefore, although NVivo automatic word frequency has identified the most frequent words as 'buy', 'put', 'product', 'purchase', these words are not considered a theme or a part of the theme because such words are used only in the context of the topic 'shopping'. In addition, such words appear in a variety of ways in constructs, and so they do not form a theme of their own.

Initial codes of happiness, disappointment, confusion, etc. were coded into the category of 'Emotions'. Similarly, codes describing risk and confidence-related constructs were coded into the category of 'Risk, Trust and Confidence' and so on.

Five major themes were initially identified as element description constructs, emotional constructs, risk perception constructs, behavioural constructs and situational constructs (see appendix 11).

Following this process of coding and extraction of themes, this research has to establish the reliability of this coding technique. Similar to other scholarly papers that adopt qualitative coding of repertory grid data, this research endeavours to establish the inter-reliability of the method of analysis explained in detail in the following section.

6.9.3 *Phase three: Multiple coders inter-reliability check*

The analysis of this study has closely followed Lemke et al.'s (2011) multi-coders approach. Although prior to starting the multi-coding process, the qualitative coding of the data was completely performed by the author as mentioned above in phase two.

The multi-coding approach helps establish the reliability of coding, and this is evident throughout the process of the multi-coding outlined below.

Stage 1: Initial coding by the researcher

This was explained in detail in phase two and in the relevant appendices (6, 7, 8). The result of this phase can be summarised as:

Table 6-5 Initial coding by the researcher

Element Descriptive Constructs
Emotional Constructs
Risk Perception Constructs
Behavioural Constructs
Situational Constructs

Stage 2: Initial coding by another researcher (Coder 1)

Another researcher[3] with significant experience in qualitative research coding and thematic analysis was asked to perform the coding of constructs. The constructs were organised in an Excel file after the deletion of any replicated constructs, which reduced the number of constructs to 142. The coder came up with three groups (themes) of constructs: process of shopping, emotions, and thoughts while in the process (see appendix 12).

Stage 3: Identification of categories

After close examination of the constructs in each of these groups, it was concluded that these wide categories almost contained the more specific codes identified by the author. For instance, the process of shopping category has identified mainly constructs related to behaviours, although some of the element descriptive constructs were divided in two categories despite being exactly the same constructs. The emotions category was largely similar between the two codings.

Following in-depth discussion between the coder and me, the categories were redefined as: perception of elements (importance and influence); risk, trust and confidence; emotions; behaviour; and situational constructs. A definition of each category was given in the coding file.

These definitions are as follows:

Table 6-6 Initial categories and definitions

Perception of Elements' Importance and	This group refers to the constructs that describe how the consumer thinks a particular element of the website influences their

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[3] Dr. O. D. a senior lecturer in marketing with active research role in qualitative consumer research.

Influence	experience
Risk, Trust and Confidence	This group refers to the constructs that relate to consumers perception of risk, trust and confidence in their shopping experience
Emotions	This group refers to the constructs that relate to all emotions and feelings expressed by the consumers
Situational Context	This group refers to the constructs that describe a specific situation of shopping
Behaviour	This group refers to the constructs that describe actual behaviours or actions such as buying, visiting a website, leaving a website, etc.

These categories were created on an Excel file as a drop down menu that appears against each of the constructs. The constructs were further organised at this stage to eliminate very similar ones in order to avoid confusing the coders, who are outsiders to the study.

Stage 4: Coding by the second coder

Before sending the file to the second coder[4], I explained in detail what the constructs are, and briefly how they were created. Quotes and definitions against some codes were given to ensure the coders are fully aware of the context in which a construct was given. I verbally explained the definitions of the categories and allowed an empty cell for coder's comments if needed. At this stage, the work required by the coders was less demanding as they have already-identified categories. Therefore, their job was to match constructs to the categories.

The second coder performed the task and left a few comments and points that required further discussion. The second coder sheet can be seen in appendix 12. The highlighted cells denote agreement of coding between the researcher and the second coder, accounting for 62% inter-reliability.

Stage 5: Modification of categories

Further discussion of the differences resulted in a re-evaluation of the categories to ensure fit with the category titles and definitions and to avoid overlapping categories.

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[4] Dr. T. G. a senior research fellow in management. Dr. TG work uses qualitative coding analysis and is experienced in using multi coder analysis.

The nature of the constructs meant that some constructs were referring to the importance and influence of the elements (i.e. web atmospherics) at the same time.

As a result, it was concluded that it was best to group the categories representing element perception in one group. This is illustrated in table 6.7 below.

Table 6-7 Modified categories and definitions

Elements' Importance and Influence	The words seem to describe how important or not important the elements are and how they influence the person
Risk, Trust and Confidence	The words relate to consumers perception of risk, trust and confidence in their shopping experience
Emotions	Emotional words-words describing an emotion that the participant may experience
Situational Context	This group refers to the constructs that describe a specific situation of shopping
Behaviour	Behavioural words: words describing actual behaviours or actions such as buying, visiting a website, leaving a website, etc.

Stage 6: Coding by the third coder

The file was then sent to the third coder[5], who was outside this study, to repeat what the second coder have done using the new category titles and definitions illustrated in table 6.7 above.

As at stage 4, I met the second coder prior to the coding and explained briefly the type of data to be coded. I verbally explained what each category means and further stressed that words should be coded at their face value not any interpreted hidden meaning. It was important to highlight what is meant by 'situational context'—that it is constructs that relate not to the individual nor to the website but to the situation in which the shopping takes place. I assured the coder that it is not essential for her to use this category unless she believes it is the best choice. The rationale for this is to avoid the overuse of situational coding simply by drawing assumptions from the meanings of words.

The third coder performed the task and returned the completed coding file (See appendix 13). This stage increased the inter-reliability to 71%.

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[5] Mrs. E. P. a postgraduate researcher in marketing with a focus on interpretive consumer research and Netnography studies.

Stage 7: Coding By the fourth coder

The same document was sent to the fourth and final coder[6] and the same steps were repeated resulting in inter-reliability of 76%. The forth coder's completed coding file can be found in appendix 14.

The final agreed categorisation of constructs is presented in chapter 10 on the construction of online fashion-shopping experiences.

6.10 <u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter presented the first field study conducted in this research, the repertory grid interviews. The chapter discussed the essential theoretical underpinning of the method as postulated by George Kelly and the latter scholars in this area such as Fransella, Mair, Bannister, and Jankowicz and others who use specifically this method in marketing and management research such as Lemke, Clark, Easterby-Smith, and Yassim.

The chapter outlined in detail the process of the pilot study phase and the lessons learned about grid design and necessary modifications. Additionally, the chapter discussed the process that was followed to conduct all the interviews following the pilot study redesign.

The final section of the chapter addressed choices of analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were discussed followed by a detailed account of the steps of the analysis performed across the grid data. Multiple qualitative coding by a number of coders was performed and explained in detail throughout. The rationale for this approach is justified in the need to establish high reliability between categorisations especially when a lot of overlap is bound to occur.

The following chapter presents the second field study, screencast videography, which was carried out as a part of this thesis.

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[6] Mrs. Y. L. a postgraduate researcher in marketing and qualitative consumer research.

Chapter 7 Screencast Videography

7.1 <u>Introduction</u>

This chapter presents the second study of my thesis, videography. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the importance of videography in studying online consumer behaviour and to show how it can provide rich insights into complex experiences that otherwise are not possible.

It begins by introducing visual research in general and videography in particular as a methodology in business and consumer research. A pilot study of videos is presented and initial analysis and implications are discussed.

Based on the outcomes of the pilot videos, which were recorded using either a phone camera or a free screen capture, Camtasia[7] software is used to capture the final videos.

Subsequently, various possible approaches to analysis are evaluated highlighting how messy the process can be. The analysis is then carried out using the critical incident technique in two phases. In the first phase, segmentation of short videos is performed using NVivo 10. The main themes (codes) of the first phase formed the basis of critical incident analysis of longer videos in the second phase.

It is worth mentioning that presenting the findings of this study in the form of a PhD thesis required various techniques to produce a simple verbal form of analysis and maintain the richness of data at the same time.

Therefore, my verbal analysis is combined with hyperlinks to YouTube videos related to the particular incidents discussed. These videos were edited using Camtasia and were uploaded to YouTube as 'unlisted', meaning they cannot be accessed without the URL links.

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[7] **Camtasia Studio** and **Camtasia for Mac** are software suites for creating video tutorials and presentations directly via <u>screencast</u>, or via a direct recording plug-in to <u>Microsoft PowerPoint</u>. Camtasia was created and published by <u>TechSmith</u>. The screen area to be recorded can be chosen freely, and audio or other multimedia recordings may be recorded at the same time or added separately from any other source and integrated in the Camtasia Studio component of the product.

Finally, QR codes of the YouTube links were produced and these are inserted along with a screenshot from each episode to help form a comprehensive understanding of the data. QR codes can be scanned using a smartphone in order to watch the episodes directly when reading a hard copy of this thesis.

Alternatively, the readers may choose to click on hyperlinks when reading the thesis online. A transcription of audio comments is also quoted beneath each episode's snapshot to allow a quicker, simpler understanding of the content of the videos.

Videography as a visual research method
What is visual research and what is videography? The rationale for using videos ,and why it is beneficial of this research?

Pilot videos
What are the aims of the pilot study? How was it carried out? What were the conclusions, implications on the research, and why?

Screen recorded videos CAMTASIA
What were the procedures involved in video recording, sample, and timescale?

Video analysis
What are the ways in which videos can be analysed? What technique is chosen for analysing screen recorded videos and why?

Figure 7-1 Overview of Chapter 7

7.2 Theoretical Stance

As abovementioned, the chapter begins by introducing visual research and its use in business, management and marketing. Kupers (2012) comments *'thinking of vision as an embodied practice opens up a different way of thinking about and researching the lived experiences and dynamic complexities'*.

Visual representation of phenomena offers a strong powerful insight that otherwise is often not available. The richness of visual data is an important motivation for gaining deeper understanding of phenomena. However, it is clear that text-based qualitative research is preferred and employed on a much wider scale than visual research especially in business and management.

Clarke (2008) summarised the position of visual in management research as follows:

Management research has long privileged verbal forms of communication over visual forms, with most qualitative management research limited to textual data-gathering techniques and representations, such as transcribed interviews, verbal observations of visual events published in text-based journals. While there is the occasional example of the use of still photographs (e.g. Buchanan, 2001) [aesthetics; drawings and images], rarely is there any evidence of moving images being encompassed into management research designs and representations.

Even though qualitative research in verbal form is well established, it is argued that *'words alone are not enough to communicate the complex social interactions'* (Clarke, 2008). The rise of visual research came mainly in the form of photography in ethnographic research. However, various forms of visual research have been employed in management studies and consumer research. Such as photographs (Clarke, Perry, & Denson, 2012; Scarles, 2011), drawing and painting (Doherty & Clarke, 2012), and videography (Belk & Kozinets, 2005; Gibson, Webb, & vom Lehn, 2011; Hietanen, Rokka, & Schouten, 2013; vom Lehn, Heath, & Hindmarsh, 2002), with still images being the dominant form of visual data used in business and management studies (In-visio, 2013).

The need for videography in consumer research has been recognised and endorsed by Belk and Kozinets initiative of the ACR Film Festival, which has been growing for more than a decade. Belk and Kozinets (2012) argue:

As industry increasingly embraces videographic techniques for representing consumer realities and portraying their marketing research findings, it is useful for our field to follow suit and, in many ways, lead the charge towards finding new, rich forms for understanding the consumer.

Indeed the ACR film festival has showcased impressive research that highlights the importance of videography, the rich data it provides and its captivating presentation and storytelling of consumer research (e.g. Hietanen, Schouten, & Vaniala, 2013; Kawaf, 2014; Rokka, Rousi, & Hämäläinen, 2014; Seregina, Campbell, Figueiredo, & Uotila, 2013; Veer, 2014)

This research takes videography to a new level in consumer research, an inevitable move toward studying the ever-growing arena of digital consumption. Therefore, this chapter presents screencast videography as a method of studying consumer experiences, and shopping and browsing behaviours in an online context.

7.3 <u>Rationale</u>

With the rapid evolution of technology, various experiences have moved completely or partly to the digital world. New experiences and opportunities arise everyday for the average individual as well as for businesses of all sizes. With this evolving shift also come tremendous opportunities for researchers in marketing and consumer behaviour.

Indeed, consumer researchers have invented and adapted existing research methodologies to allow an understanding of these new emerging phenomena. This is apparent in the rapid growth of 'netnography' as a method for studying 'the field behind the screen' by Kozinets (2002). This method has allowed an infinite number of possibilities for studying online communities in digital ethnographic fashion, and it has proved more effective than the traditional ethnographic approach in this context.

Similarly, this paper introduces a novel approach to the study of online experiences and behaviours by choosing an alternative approach to videography and videographic ethnography. This approach is screencast videography, a method of capturing interactions, behaviours, and emotions using records of screencasts of online-shopping experiences.

If visual ethnographies and videography research such as Burning Man (Kozinets, 2002a; Kozinets et al., 2004; Penaloza, 1998) allowed such rich understanding of observable experiences, so far the same has not been possible in the context of online experiences.

The experience of browsing, shopping or interacting with websites occurs within the personal and private space of the individual, and so there is currently no method in the literature that allows such work to be done in studying online experiences and behavioural decision-making processes.

7.4   <u>Videography vs. Screencasts</u>

The production of videos is becoming extremely easy. High quality, user-friendly camcorders, mobile phones, smartphones, and tablets' cameras made the production of videos an enjoyable activity, and thanks are due to the online revolution that made 'sharing' as easy as a click. It is no wonder therefore that video increasingly appears as a medium of data collection in research (Belk, 2006; Belk & Kozinets, 2005).

Emerging modes of video-based data collection methods are (a) videotaped individual or group interviews, (b) recording naturalistic observations, (c) autovideographical techniques where the participant is given a camcorder to film their observations (unobtrusive observations) and (d) a combination of self-ethnography and semi-unobtrusive techniques.

Knoblauch, Schnettler, Raab, and Soeffner (2006) comment on the advantages of video as an observational technique. Video recordings appear more detailed, more complete and more accurate compared to observations made by the naked human eye. Moreover, videos capture 'interactions' and produce 'natural data'. 'Natural data refers to data collected when the people studied act, behave and go about their business as they would if there were no social scientists observing or taping them' (Knoblauch, et al., 2006, p. 11).

However, on using videos, Belk and Kozinets (2005, p. 129) comment 'the camera can prove an unwelcome hindrance to the formation of interviewer-interviewee rapport. Shoving a camera in a person's face is both unnatural and obtrusive' which is something important to take into account when employing videographic research. Additionally, vom Lehn, Heath, and Hindmarsh (2002) argue that visitors to a museum unavoidably react to the camera and merely play-act when being filmed.

Contrary to this approach, screencast videography does not have to deal with the influence of the camera unless the researcher made a conscious decision to include camera recording with the screencast.

Screencasting is defined, in information technology research, as *'a method of presenting digitally recorded playback of computer screen output which often contains audio narration'* (Brown, Luterbach, & Sugar, 2009, p.1748).

The use of screencasts is most popular in education and particularly in virtual learning environments. Brown et al. (2009, p.1748) argue, *'Because screencasting captures desktop activity along with audio commentary, it can be a particularly effective method of explaining computer-based procedures.'*

Although screencasting has been widely used by academics for educational purposes, there is no evidence on the use of such method for research purposes, particularly in the area of consumer research. Using screencasts is ideal as it offers the advantages of rich natural data that are otherwise unobservable online behaviours, but at the same time, it is more user-friendly and less obtrusive than camcorder-based videography. This is because in a screencast the participant can see no difference on the screen while shopping therefore the effect of a camera is not present.

7.5   Pilot Videos

Initially, the first video of this study was recorded on a smartphone camera facing the screen. At this stage, the idea of recording the participant's shopping experience was still spinning in my head. Then, in the repertory grid interview with Eva, she said she would like to show me something on one of her favourite websites. Therefore, without having planned it, I held my phone ready to capture the moment. It was apparent from this video that this type of observation opened up a completely new way of looking at online fashion shopping. One of the most interesting things is that when the participant started browsing, she looked at sections that were never mentioned in the interview.

Clearly, in an interview setting, the participants recall only their experiences and it seems that they are more likely to focus on major incidents and to ignore the basic yet crucial parts.

One example is when the participant in this video went to a section that features couples as models. These couples are featured in blogs with their stories, photos, romance and fashion. The participant pointed out how the couples inspire her and how she follows their stories. She commented on how much she loves to buy matching outfits for her boyfriend and herself just like the 'couples in love' and how this is very motivational for her to go shopping. This video showed how online

fashion shopping is not just about the browsing and acquisition of fashion items online, it is a complete experience of inspiration, motivation, identity and a wide range of emotions.

The decision to move from smartphone recording to screen-recording software was made to help produce more 'natural data' (Knoblauch, et al., 2006) as it minimises the negative effect of the camera's presence. However, as screen-recording software is not very popular or well advanced, the main issue was to choose reliable software that can be trusted to produce high quality videos at the end of each recording session.

I initially used free screen-capture software to record another two pilot videos, but after testing, I recognised that it was not reliable as one video was lost and the other failed to capture audio comments.

In those last three pilot videos, the participants were asked to go online, using their preferred web browser, and start shopping the way they would usually do without actually paying for an order. It was noted that some participants were not very sure of what exactly to do. Some were hesitant to comment because I was watching them closely. Some participants did not know if it was OK to open more than one website at a time, or if it was OK to play some music or use their personal emails or social network accounts while the recording is in operation.

Results of the pilot videos helped in better shaping the instructions to ensure that the participants fully understood how much freedom they have and that it is fine if they decide that they want to stop and/or delete the video. As a result, prior to each video recording, I ensured that the participant understood all the instructions correctly and had agreed to start recording.

7.6   The Protocol of the Method

As in videography research, for a screencast, the researcher must make various decisions before and during the process of data collection in accordance with the aims and objectives of the research and in a way that answers the proposed research question.

In this research, the main aim is to explore the online fashion-shopping experience as lived by the consumer. Specifically, the use of screencast is intended to answer the following research question: *'how do consumers interact with the atmospherics of the online fashion-shopping environment?'* in an attempt to reveal the most critical aspects of the online store environment as well as mapping the processes of such experience in context.

Accordingly, and following the pilot phase of trying different approaches to screen capture, the procedure described below was followed.

7.6.1 *Settings and procedures*

For data collection purposes, the Camtasia[8] software package from Tech Smith was used after several trials of other options that were not as reliable. The participants were asked to demonstrate a real-life shopping experience the way they usually do. They had the freedom to choose the website(s) they want to shop on and whether they would like to open their emails/Facebook/Twitter accounts or any other website they usually use when shopping online. They were also asked to comment, using a headset, on what they are seeing and why they are choosing or discarding items or websites. In other words, they were told to 'think aloud' throughout the video.

The participants were given full instructions (See appendix 15) on the video recording mission and were asked whether they agree to take part or not.

With their agreement, I would give my headset to the participants and ask them to use my desktop screen with a red visible recording icon on. Some participants preferred to talk to me while doing their online shopping but others gave cues that they were not comfortable with my presence. As a result, I intentionally left some participants on their own to give them some space and familiarity with the task, whereas I stayed close to the participants who were willing to chat to me as they shopped.

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[8] **Camtasia Studio** and **Camtasia for Mac** are software suites for creating video tutorials and presentations directly via screencast, or via a direct recording plug-in to Microsoft PowerPoint. Camtasia was created and published by TechSmith. The screen area to be recorded can be chosen freely, and audio or other multimedia recordings may be recorded at the same time or added separately from any other source and integrated in the Camtasia Studio component of the product.

7.6.2 Data collection

Ten screencast videos were captured and used in this study. They varied in length from five minutes to over half an hour. Like most screencasts, the videos contain screen captures of all the activities (movements and clicks) on the screen as well as an audio track of the participants' comments as well as system sounds such as clicks and background music.

As mentioned above, cameras were not used to capture the participants' facial expressions in order to allow the participants to immerse themselves in the task without the constant influence of the camera.

7.7 <u>Analysis</u>

Most scholars agree that the analysis of video data is time-consuming because of the nature and richness of the data and the endless possibilities of the analyses (Belk & Kozinets, 2005; Knoblauch, et al., 2006; vom Lehn, et al., 2002).

Unlike other forms of research, visual research in general can be tricky and video analysis in particular is a messy process. There is no clear protocol to follow for video analysis. Most scholars agree that it starts by watching and re-watching the videos repeatedly until the main patterns are established. The various modes of watching videos are extremely important, i.e. using functions such as sound mute, slow motion, fast forward, pause, and playback help in establishing a comprehensive view and allowing one to spot details. However, as in Daniel (2006), the analysis can be carried out on two levels: the first is a simplistic description followed by a more in-depth interpretive analysis.

One of the main criticalities of visual data analysis is the representation of the data and the various trade-offs made between maintaining richness and accomplishing a simplistic form of analysis. Flewitt (2006) argues that the process of transcription that is used with audio software should be replaced with a more fitting term, which is representation.

'Representation is a more fitting description of the interpretive processes involved in the transformation of visual, multi-method data resources into the written forms required by academic writing' (Flewitt, 2006, p. 34).

In video analysis, representation of the data is the initial step in simplifying its complexity and presenting it in a textual form. Nonetheless, as Stake and Kerr (1995, p. 58) comment, *'all representations are, to some extent, misrepresentations'*.

Arguably some form of systematic representation is a must, and as it appears in Flewitt (2006), transcription in itself is a theory, and the transformation of complex and rich data to a more simplistic form for analysis purposes not only reflects subjectively established research aims, but also inevitably directs research findings.

It is important to choose the form of representation that best fits the research aims and objectives, and, as Plowman and Stephen (2008, p. 15) say, *'representations may range in style from the very complex to the quick and dirty but they need to serve the purpose for which they have been produced'*.

Since the purpose of this type of video collection is to show interactions with elements of the fashion website, the level of representation can be considerably simpler than in complex human interaction videos such as the case of surgeon and nurse interactions in the operating theatre (Bezemer, Murtagh, Cope, Kress, & Kneebone, 2011).

As a result, the process of data representation and analysis was carried out in two phases. My main aim was to ensure the analysis served its purpose, maintained the quality and richness of data, and, at the same time, that I presented it in a simple manner.

Phase one included segmenting the short five-minute video into small segments of interactions. Then followed a critical incident analysis in which the main critical incidents were identified, plotted, and examined throughout the rest of the videos. The following sections explain the process of analysis.

Phase (1): Initial analysis-NVivo

In the beginning of phase 1, as mentioned above, the repetition in watching the videos a number of times in different settings such as (sound/mute, fast forward, and slow motion) was essential in forming an understanding of patterns in the videos. Finding patterns is critical for segmentation purposes.

The process of video analysis based on segmentation is the opposite process to making a video based on a storyboard. In the analysis of videos, what we try to achieve is to reverse engineer a storyboard from a video. Thus, methods of analysis and segmentation would highly depend on the type of storyboard we are trying to establish.

For instance, simple segments could be based on equal time intervals, e.g. segments set for 30 seconds long each, in order to build a storyboard. However, this was not a technique that would give any meaningful insights in light of the research questions, aims and objectives. What is needed in understanding the consumption experience of a fashion website is identification of the critical incidents within the experience. These are identification of elements of the web environment, modes of interactions, and incidents of approach and avoidance.

After several rounds of watching the videos it became apparent that each video is a series of interactions, and so is naturally segmented based on the interactions. These interactions created a variety of incidents throughout the video. Therefore, the segments were based on incidents happening in the videos. A segment may begin at the start of a particular interaction and ends at the start of a new one. For instance, a segment begins when the participant starts browsing products and ends when they pause to examine an item; then the next segment starts when they are looking at the image of the chosen item and ends once they do something else, whether it is zooming, watching a video, or leaving the page.

NVivo was used to aid the video segmentation and analysis process. Each of the five short videos were imported into NVivo, and transcription and visual representation of the video were summarised in three fields along with the 'timespan' field on a normal NVivo transcription page. These fields are content, speaker comments, and analytical notes.

The content field verbally describes the visual scene as displayed on screen. Content accounted for the multimodality of the data (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010). The scenes on screen such as the design of the web page, layout, or the way an item is placed are described in detail. Moreover, the activities and movements captured on the

screencasts are also described verbally, including activities such as movements between pages, or up and down the page, as well as mouse cursor movements.

The next field is audio transcription of participant's comments and any trivial sounds such as 'Umms' and 'Ohs'. The importance of this is twofold. First, it is important to provide detailed transcription for analysis purposes of what is said. Second and most important, is being able to understand the emotional status of the participants in the analysis. It is not always straightforward but there are situations of excitement, boredom, and confusion and the videos captured these very well.

The final field consists of critical notes on each segment for analysis purposes. This ranged from describing a particular segment as 'layout issues' for instance, to critically explaining why the participant took a particular action. Because the segments were presented on a timespan, the representation of data had also accounted to reflect the time spent during each interaction.
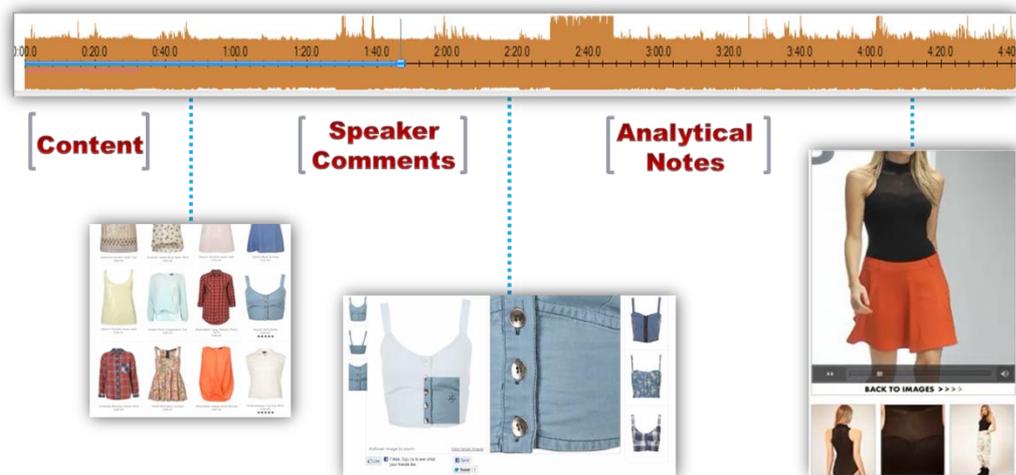
Figure 7-2 NVivo representation of videos

Video segmentation allows us to identify all the incidents extracted from a video. In this case, the incidents were identified as interactions with certain web elements. Therefore, the segments are then coded into main incidents categories (nodes in NVivo). For example, a node such as 'filters' includes all the segments of all videos that relate to filter interactions.

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Following phase 1, all incidents are identified and coded into nodes in NVivo. Inevitably, this process is extremely detailed and time-consuming as it goes throughout every verbal and visual interaction in a video.

Phase (2): Critical incident analysis

Because the representation process of a five-minute video required a very long time and a high level of concentration to ensure data are not misrepresented, it became apparent that such attempts to provide a very detailed representation of the data is often impossible when dealing with longer videos. There is a trade-off between the detailed representation of such multimodal data and maintaining the depth of analysis of important interactions in a more than descriptive manner.

Therefore, the method of analysis in phase 2 followed the critical incident technique (Edvardsson & Roos, 2001). In order to define a critical incident, Flanagan (1954, p.327) explains:

> *By an incident is meant any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects.*

Thus to determine the criticality of an incident, it is evaluated within the context of the overall experience. When an incident is evaluated as critical or not, it is looked at within the experience and its situational context. In other words, a critical incident in the video is one that seems to have clear approach or avoidance consequences.

First, watching the videos several times with audio on and off to familiarise oneself with the data and to try to get an overall understanding of the situations followed the initial steps of phase 1.

To start the critical incident analysis, codes were printed on 'Post-it' notes and organised on a page or two for each video. At every 'incident', the video is played repeatedly to establish whether the incident conforms to the main results of phase 1 or not. If it conforms to the initial results, it helps verify the results and establish

higher rigour. If the incident adds new insights into the results, it is recorded and represented as in the short videos. Additionally, two separate Post-it notes were used with the title 'other' to represent any new incidents that are not captured from the short videos.

Once all the videos were coded and represented in critical incidents, the Post-it notes were rearranged by their codes instead of being grouped according to video numbers. This allowed easy analysis of all incidents related to a particular code and helped in drawing conclusions.

The main results of phase two conform to phase one's findings and provide detail and more in-depth insights for each code. It also gives new perspective on the educational values that can be found on apparel websites. Participants went onto sections like trends, outfit suggestions and blogs to get inspired and to educate themselves on the latest fashion trends and celebrity wear.

Equally important is that these incidents highlighted in detail when a particular code is highly important. For instance, the availability of textual information is essential when such information, such as size guide information, cannot be read on a digital image.

Table 7-1 Table of critical incidents

Critical Incidents	Categorical Incidents
Direct Access	The Starting Incident
Email Access	
Facebook Access	
Infinite Scrolling	Web Design and Layout
Number Of Products Per Page	
Purposeful Browsing	
Search Facility	
Filters	
Default Image	Visual Fashionscape
Flickering Images	
Quick View	
Product Images	

Image Zoom in	
3D Images	
Colour Change	
Catwalk Videos	
Virtual fitting rooms	
Information on The Model Size	Verbal Fashionscape
Size Guide	
Delivery and Return Policy	
Customer Reviews	Social Fashionscape
Star Rating	
Social Network links	
Sharing on Social Network Sites	
Group Membership And Page Fans	
Trendy looks	Educational Fashionscape
Matching outfits	
The look book	
Blogs	
Save List	The End Incident
Gift List	
Add to basket	

Another perspective on the longer videos is that as participants were more comfortable spending time on them, they were more willing to explicitly show confusion and hesitation in their decisions. Therefore, the longer videos showed a more complex pattern of behaviours as opposed to the less complex, shorter videos.

A typical simple pattern to a short video involves browsing and searching, looking at images, checking sizes, and sometimes looking at reviews, and then adding items to the basket or ending the process by opting out.

A more complex path of the longer videos includes some other interesting steps, so it may begin as browse/search, images, reviews, then more images, adding items to the basket, and then moving to check the latest trends, interacting with more images, catwalk videos, and adding more to basket. It may also include reviewing the basket content, deleting items, and adding new similar items, etc.

For a more in-depth presentation of the results of both analyses, the following section will present the main themes with a combination of verbal and visual data incorporated.

Once all critical incidents are identified and categorised as shown in table 7.1, the analysis then moves from identifying incidents to connecting them in a situational context. Revisiting the videos and establishing a theme of incident consequences allows for establishing such connections.

Throughout the videos, two situational contexts were identified. The first, and most popular, is purposeless browsing where the shoppers engage in browsing or shopping without a task or a purpose. The second is purposeful or task-oriented browsing where the shoppers visit fashion website to accomplish a specific task such as buying a particular dress for an occasion.

In each of these contexts, certain incidents become critical, so some web atmospherics become more important than others do. By rearranging the Post-it notes in each video, we could draw a map of the video to establish a storyboard with reverse engineering. Then main themes can be established from looking across all maps. This is illustrated in figure 7-3 below.

Figure 7-3 Mapping the critical incidents of online fashion shopping
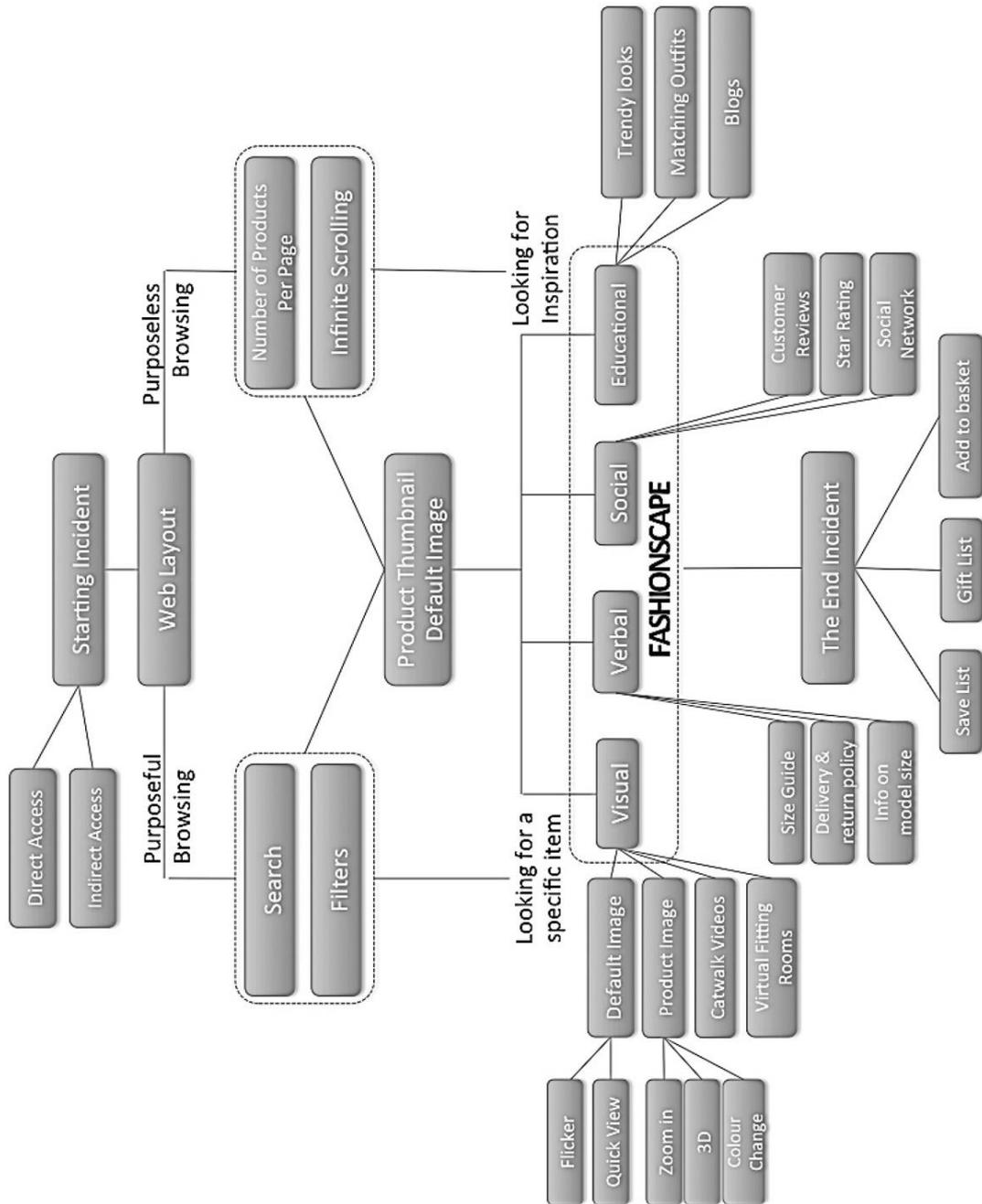
7.8   <u>Issues of Representation</u>

It is noteworthy that presenting the findings of this study in the form of a PhD thesis required various techniques to produce a simple verbal form of analysis and maintain the richness of data at the same time. Therefore, my verbal analysis is combined with hyperlinks to YouTube videos relating to the particular incidents discussed.

Finally, QR codes of the YouTube links were produced and these are inserted along with a snapshot from each episode to help form a comprehensive understanding of the data. QR codes can be scanned with a smartphone in order to watch the episodes directly when reading a hard copy of this thesis. Alternatively, the readers may choose to click on hyperlinks when reading the thesis online. A transcription of audio comments is also quoted under each episode's snapshot to allow a quicker, simpler understanding of the content of the videos.

By the end of phase 2, my main challenge was to find the best way of presenting the findings of this study in an academic style that still accounts for the unique nature of this thesis.

The main codes of both analyses therefore are going to be explored and discussed in detail in the findings section. Moreover, segments and critical incidents of the videos are edited and uploaded privately on YouTube as 'unlisted videos' which are not available on YouTube search but are accessible through the URL links[9]. These videos are embedded in text in the following section as hyperlinks, which, on click, will show the incident as it happened in its video format.

The codes are presented in a storytelling style, as they would usually appear in a simple linear shopping process. It starts with the initial code (shopping from a website, Google, or email) and ends up with the final code 'adding to the basket'. Moreover, as many interesting nonlinear processes occur, some of the codes will be discussed separately.

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[9] For easy access, unique QR codes are inserted against all videos. These can be scanned using a smartphone, so videos can be reached quickly when reading a hard copy of the thesis.

7.9 <u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter presented the second field study conducted in this research. It has introduced a novel method for capturing online-shopping experiences by means of screencasts. The chapter discussed the links of this method to other well-established methods in the field such as visual research in general, and videography in consumer research in particular as evident in the ACR film festival, which is expanding to EMAC 2015.

The chapter provided a detailed explanation of the new method, its technique, settings and procedures, as well as the scholarly argument in relation to the use of videography.

Analysis is also discussed in depth, critical incident analysis is conducted as an appropriate method of analysing multimodal data i.e. videos. The procedure of analysis was detailed and a map of the main incidents was presented.

Section Conclusion

This section, the second of the thesis' three sections, has set the thesis aims and objective to study the nature of the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumer.

The section discussed in its first chapter (chapter 5) the philosophical stance of pragmatism as an appropriate philosophical paradigm for this research. The consequences of a pragmatic philosophy were highlighted, and the generic approach to methodology was explained.

Then, in the second chapter of this section (chapter 6), a very detailed account of the first study (the repertory grid interviews) is presented. The theoretical background of this work is explained by quoting the foundations of Kelly's (1955) PCT. Furthermore, the use of the repertory grid technique in consumer research is discussed and the procedure in which this technique is used in this thesis was presented. Finally, the choices of analysis were discussed, and the use of multi-coding analysis following the approach of Lemke et al. (2011) was fully explained.

The final chapter of this section, (chapter 7), introduced a novel methodology that uses screencast as a means of data collection of online behavioural data. The methodology was anchored in the scope of visual research and the videography methodology. The differences between screencasts and videography were discussed in the chapter. A detailed account of the protocol of this method is explained including the use of different software packages for data collection, analysis, and representation.

I believe the unique methodological choices made in this thesis have allowed for exploring the phenomena in quite an unusual manner. This, therefore, has made possible a naturalistic approach to studying the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumers.

The findings of the two studies are presented in the following section followed by a discussion on the links between the findings of this thesis and existing literature.

Section Three: Findings and Discussion

Section Introduction

This final section discusses the findings and conclusion of the thesis. The main aim of this thesis is to study the nature of the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumer. Accordingly, this section aims to present answers to the aforementioned research questions as set at the beginning of this thesis:

RQ1. How do consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment? (Mapping the process/journey)

RQ2. What is the composition and role of the environment in online fashion-shopping experiences?

RQ3. How do consumers construct their online fashion-shopping experiences?

The section provides a holistic and dynamic view of the online fashion-shopping experience based on the two studies that have been carried out and discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

The experience from the pragmatist's perspective, as defined by James (1975), is a stream of continuity of consciousness. Pragmatists argue that this 'stream' is difficult to capture, and thus, researchers are only able to study the partials of the stream and not the dynamics of it. My mission in this section is to use both verbal and visual data not only to present the construction of this stream (i.e. the partials) but also to capture its dynamics and continuity.

Addressing the first research question, Chapter 8 discusses Purposeless and purposeful browsing as two distinctive types of interactions with the online fashion-shopping environment. Then, Chapter 9 presents a conceptualisation of the online fashion-shopping environment as the visual, verbal, social and educational fashionscape; thus, answering the second research question. Furthermore, in response to the third research question, Chapter 10 uses the multi-coding analysis of the constructs of the repertory grid data to present the overall construction of the experience in four main types of constructs; situational, emotional, perceptual and behavioural. Finally, chapter 11 presents a concluding discussion of the findings of this thesis in relation to existing literature.

Chapter 8 Interactions with the FASHIONSCAPE

This chapter is the first chapter in the findings and discussion section – the last section of this thesis. By revisiting the research questions that were set early in the thesis, it is important to highlight that this chapter is dedicated to answering the first research question – *RQ1. How do consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment?*

Consequently, this chapter is focused on the behavioural side of the shopping experience in the form of browsing, navigation and interactions with the online fashion-shopping environment. In this essence the chapter attempts to capture and highlight the dynamics of the experience as well as analysing these dynamics.

The structure of this chapter is illustrated in figure (8-1) below:

Process of the Shopping Experience

Highlight the main critical incidents within the process of online fashion shopping experience. A film evidence is presented.

Purposeless vs. Purposeful Browsing

Two types of browsing are discussed as a main theme of interactions throughout the videography study. This is then discussed in the context of fashion shopping.

Purposeless Browing and other concepts

Is purposeless browsing a negative phenomena like HCI research suggests? how is it different from negative phenomena like retail borrowing.

Critical Web Atmospherics

Web layout atmospherics become critical in purposeless browsing whereas filters are most important in purposeful browsing

Choice Infinity and Behavioural Decisions

A series of behavioural decision of approach and avoidance are made throughout. However, a percpetion of choice infinity might occur.

Figure 8-1 Overview of Chapter 8

8.1   Process of the Shopping Experience

Online fashion-shopping experiences are complex and unpredictable. Presenting a simple view of what could go in an experience is indeed challenging. The method of screen capture allows for an exploration of the online fashion shopping experience as it naturally progresses.

The critical incident analysis of these experiences shows two distinctive patterns' purposeless and purposeful browsing. Furthermore, this analysis depicts all the critical incidents within the experience, thus, highlighting important issues with web design and atmospherics.

The journey of online fashion shopping, according to my videography data, is not a simple linear relationship of exposure to stimuli followed by some inner processes resulting in a response. Instead, the journey is complex, and can be identified only in relation to one individual at one time, and thus it is ever changing.

The journey is also shaped by the situation in which the individual begins their shopping experience. Namely, situations of purposeless and purposeful browsing shape how the experience evolves and how the consumer approaches the environment and interacts with it. This is further explained throughout the chapter.

Video [10] 1 presents videographic evidence that summarises the findings of the screencast videography study. This film has been presented at the Association for Consumer Research Film Festival (Kawaf, 2014), and is accessible below:
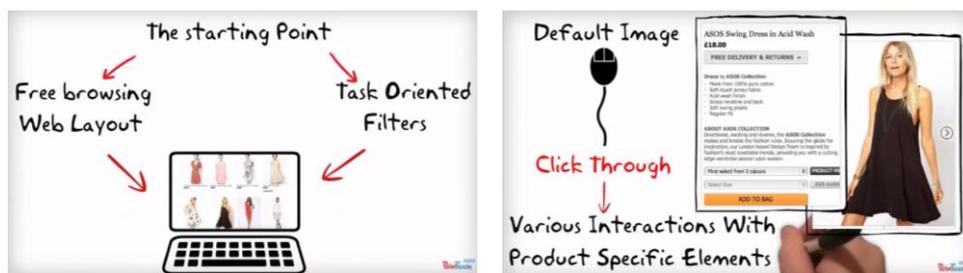
Video 1 Capturing online fashion-shopping experiences: A screencast videography (ACR 2014)

Watching this ~24-minute video is a great way to get an insight into the findings of the videography study. However, it is not essential that the reader watch it in advance. As this video is simply an overall view of all the smaller video segments

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[10] Password: proc22m

that are analysed and presented throughout the first two chapters of findings (Ch8, Ch9).

It is worth noting that by discussing a process of interactions following a critical incident analysis (Video 1), the aim is not to draw one particular path, but to focus on identifying the main critical incidents represented in a simplistic (a➜z) process. This process is introduced for presentation purposes and to provide the reader with an easy-to-follow story.

The critical incidents that were identified in the analysis of the videography study are illustrated in figure (8-2) below.
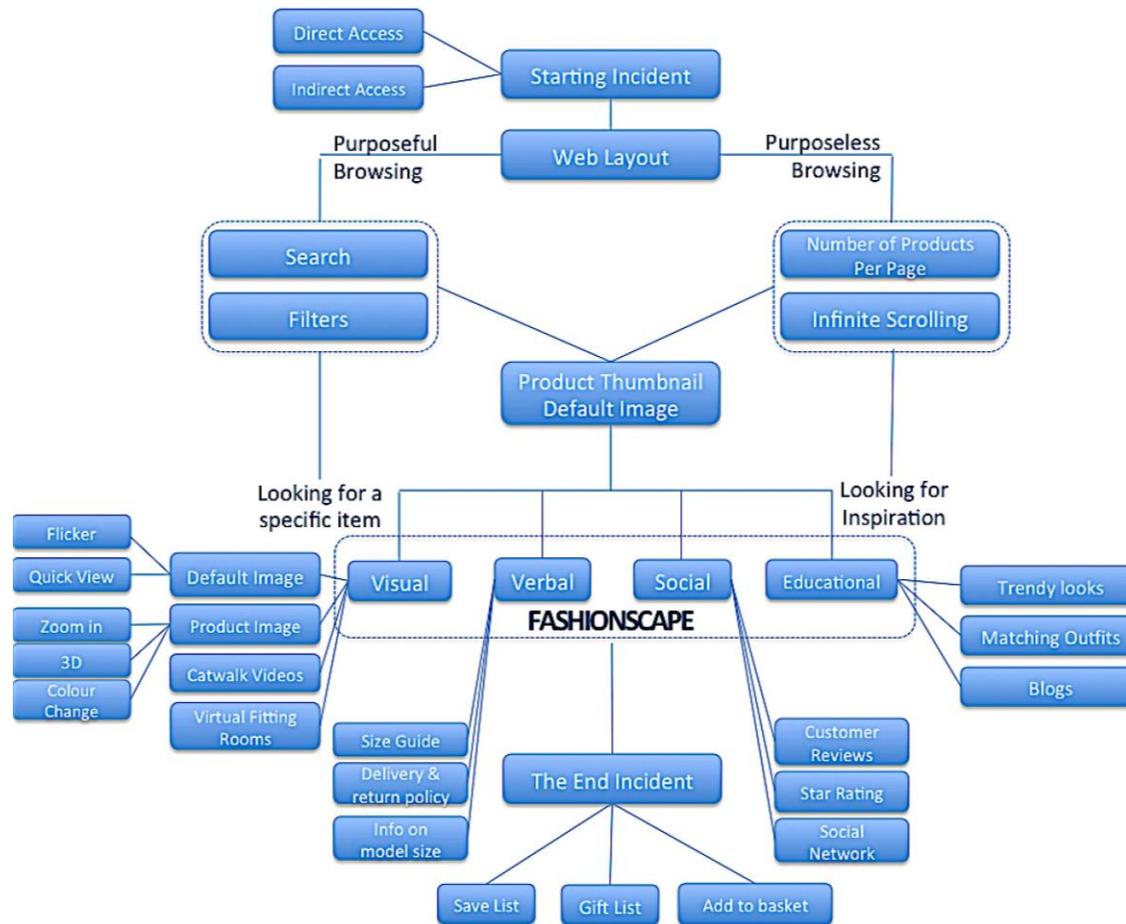
Figure 8-2 The Journey of the experience

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Figure (8-2) highlights a starting incident and an end incident to the shopping experience. A starting incident represents accessing a fashion website whether directly (by typing the URL address of one's favourite website) or indirect (via a search engine, email or a social network page). Throughout the study, a majority of the participants started their shopping experience by means of direct access (i.e. typing the URL of a website).

This, indeed, can be attributed to two issues. First, as explained in chapter 7, although arguably, such videographic data is captured as it naturally occurs. The unnatural start of the experience (prompted by the researcher) suggests that such start is predictable. Second, it may also suggests that the majority of the participants are 'experienced' shopper as they relied less on search engines and more on direct access of websites. Less reliance on search engines may be attributed to the participants' expertise or their familiarity with many different fashion websites. This is in line with existing literature, Cheema and Papatla (2010) for instance suggest that, with increased Internet experience, the user is less likely to use a search engine.

On the other hand, the end incident represents a final incident that the shopping experience stops at. In addition to the obvious incident of leaving a website altogether and ending the experience without any purchase or an indication of a purchase, the videos showed various ways of ending the experience. These are adding products to the basket, saving products in a save list, or adding them to a gift list.

Despite these two incidents that indicate a beginning and an end to the experience, the most critical incidents appear within the experience, thus, between these two incidents. Therefore the focus on this chapter and the next one is on discussing in detail all the critical incidents within the experience.

To ensure the richness of videography data is maintained in the presentation of these findings, hyperlinked videos of all critical incidents are embedded throughout the chapter. Each video clip is uploaded onto YouTube as 'unlisted'[11], presented as a

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[11] Making a video unlisted means that only people who have the link to the video can view it. Unlisted videos will not appear in any of YouTube's public spaces, such as your channel page or search results. (Google, 2014)

screenshot that is hyperlinked to the corresponding clip. Clicking on the screenshot will show the incident as it happened in its video format. Additionally QR [12] codes are placed alongside all videos for easy access on paper copies of the thesis.

Following figure (8-2), the analysis of videos has yielded an important finding that distinguishes between two distinctive types of browsing of the website based on purposeless and purposeful interactions with the site. This is rarely addressed in the associated literature with the topic but is an important issue in understanding such experience.

The following section discusses both purposeless and purposeful browsing as they appear in the findings of this thesis. Furthermore, the concepts are also discussed from the point of the relevant literature that addresses the terms and the differences and similarities that can be found between this research and other existing literature about these concepts.

8.2   Purposeless vs. Purposeful Browsing

The patterns of browsing that were clearly apparent throughout the screencast videos are what can be called purposeless and purposeful browsing. In the context of online fashion shopping experiences, it appears, browsing apparel websites can either be driven by a specific task or be free from a clear distinctive task to achieve.

The concepts of purposeless and purposeful browsing are hardly investigated in consumer research and online marketing, instead they appear in literature of Human-Computer Interactions (hereinafter HCI). For instance, Lai and Yang (2000, p. 220) suggests

> *...the purpose of browsing refers to the purpose by which a browsing behavior is driven. If there is no purpose, the user may browse whatever he pleases or randomly.*

Similarly, Eadala and Ratkal (2014, p.797) distinguish between "searching sessions" and "browsing sessions", in which they refer to purposeless browsing as "browsing sessions" and purposeful browsing as "searching sessions"; they comment:

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[12] You can use a smartphone with any QR/Barcode scanning app to reach the videos if you are reading a paper copy of this thesis. Simply launch the app and scan the QR code of the video you would like to watch and it will automatically display on your phone screen.

> …some visits are clearly purposeless and finish abruptly at pages that cannot be target pages, so these sessions are more likely to be browsing sessions.

This, therefore, suggests that HCI literature defines purposeless browsing as a form of browsing that does not conform to purpose driven pathways, instead, it is free style in which the user browses websites randomly or however they please.

On the other hand, purposeful, task-oriented, browsing could be defined as the activity in which the shopper navigates various routes to arrive at a pre-defined destination—i.e. browsing web pages in order to accomplish the set task. Lai and Yang (2000) discusses two ways of categorising purposeful browsing based on the nature of the purpose such as 'regular purpose or an ad hoc purpose' (Lai & Yang, 2000).

It is worth noting that HCI literature seems to address purposeless browsing as a negative phenomenon or as a behaviour that should be eliminated by means of intelligent web design to only cater for purposeful browsing instead. For example, Eadala and Ratkal (2014, p.797) comment:

> *To the best of our knowledge, there is no algorithm developed to distinguish between the two types of sessions and further investigation on this question is needed. While we did not explicitly separate searching sessions from browsing sessions, the preprocessing steps can help eliminate many purposeless browsing sessions*

Furthermore, Lai and Yang (2000) seems to address purposeless browsing generally negative and timewasting activity. They highlight the problems associated with this type of browsing in the following table.

Table 8-1 Problems of web browsing. Source: Lai and Yang (2000, p.222)

Purpose of browsing	Web familiarity	
	Unfamiliar	Familiar
Purposeless browsing	Waste time	Waste time
	Get lost	Get lost
	Miss the most valuable pages	Miss the most valuable pages
	Quit before browsing all pages	Lose interest due to nothing new or exciting

Purpose of browsing	Web familiarity	
	Unfamiliar	Familiar
		Miss something new

Although purposeless browsing lacks a distinctive purpose driven motive, or more appropriately a task specific search, the findings of this thesis show a different stance on both purposeless and purposeful browsing. This is explored below.

8.3   Purposeless vs. Purposeful Browsing of Fashion Websites

In the context of online fashion shopping, as this chapter shows, purposeless browsing – similar to window-shopping in offline context, is very common. It is more common in online context due to ease of access of one or multiple apparel websites at the any given moment.

In purposeless browsing of fashion websites, in line with Lai and Yang (2000) proposition, the shopper browses a fashion site for no specific purpose other than inspiration or keeping up-to-date on new collections and the latest trends and looks; or, to check out the sales collections.

On the contrary, in purposeful or task-oriented browsing, the shopper aims to pursue a purpose that is usually to find a specific item (or items) with pre-defined criteria. This purpose could be as simple as, 'I need a new pair of jeans', and so the browsing is defined by looking for a new pair of jeans, whereas in other instances, various criteria could be set for a particular item, especially if it related to an important occasion. For instance, 'I need a new long maxi dress, it's got to be black, I want it sleeveless with wrapped V-neck, I prefer satin …etc.'

Throughout the videography study, a number of participants did not set a task of purposeful browsing; i.e. looking for specific items to search for during the screen capture sessions. Further, some participants clearly stated that they are more likely to browse 'randomly' rather than go looking for something specific.

Interestingly, purposeful browsing, according to the participants of this research, is less favourable. Many participants suggested that they are more likely to go to brick and mortar fashion shopping outlets rather than shop online in cases of purposeful shopping.

For instance, one of the participants of this thesis, Steph, comments:

'Errm, I don't know I am quite indecisive when I go online shopping. I just sort of scroll about, not really… I never really go shopping looking for something. If I am looking for something I'll shop in a shop, … you know, I'll actually go shopping. I won't do it online! Cos [because] if you're actually looking for something specific, you want to buy it, you want to try it on, you want to buy it knowing… you know what it looks like on, you know what the materials are like, you know how much it costs, you know you don't have to spend extra for delivery and whatever. So I'd never really look for […] (I ask her for clarification: so usually, when you're shopping online, usually, you would shop for …? Anything?) I am just browsing yeah! Just browsing. Sometimes you can look for things like, OK I am looking for some holiday clothes so I want a couple of pairs of shorts and a top or whatever. But you know there are times when you think I need a dress to wear for this weekend, I wouldn't!' (Steph, video 16, 2:16)

Steph's attitude is similar to many other participants' stance on this. The popularity of purposeless browsing is evident in these quotes. However, as it is apparent that this types of purposeless browsing is much more positive than it is suggested by HCI literature (e.g. Eadala and Ratkal (2014) and Lai and Yang (2000))

In line with Steph's statement, the following video shows another participant, Kat, who also suggests that she would choose to go for high street shops if she was to buy something for an occasion. Thus, indicating that a less favourable attitude toward purposeful browsing.
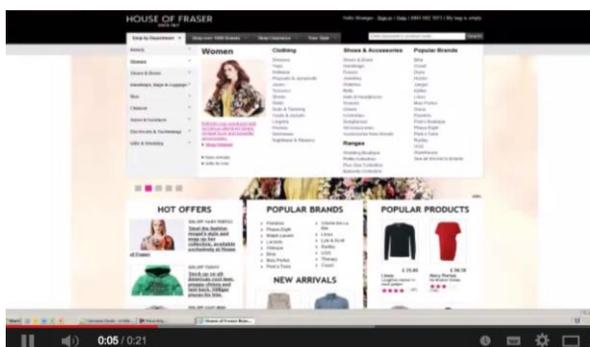
Video 2 Buying from high street for occasions

'I think I'm more likely to go through high street shops I know, because then when I find something and I'm not too sure I could just go in there and just try it on, I think, especially with a dress because it's kind of like expens... like if I get a more expensive one I just want to make sure it's, it's nice'.

These examples clearly show how fashion shoppers are more comfortable in purposeless browsing than in task-oriented, purposeful browsing. By reading back some of the previous comments; *'I never really go shopping looking for something'*, *'if I am looking for something I'll shop in a shop'*, *'I think I'm more likely to go through high street shops I know'*, it is apparent that online shopping for fashion is most likely purposeless rather than purposeful.

The rationale for a less favourable attitude toward purposeful browsing as opposed to purposeless browsing is multifaceted. A perception of risk in a task oriented shopping experience is apparent in the participant's justifications: *'if you're actually looking for something specific, you want to buy it, you want to try it on, you want to buy it knowing... you know what it looks like on, you know what the materials are like, you know how much it costs...'*

This quote, among others, suggests that the 'need for touch' in fashion items is still an important matter in cases of purposeful shopping, i.e. when the participant is specifically looking for a specific item.

Previous research such as Perry *et al.* (2013) advocates this 'need for touch' and suggests methods in which this technology may be developed to help online fashion shoppers. However, as the two aforementioned examples show, purposeful browsing is really not favourable regardless of such developments due to a desirability of being sure, trying garments on, and ensuring they arrive on time and at no extra cost or lengthy delivery process.

Therefore, although Perry *et al* (2013) suggests such technologies may improve online fashion shopping, this research argues that due to less tendency of purposeful, task oriented online fashion shopping, it might be that such issues are less important when the shoppers may still prefer to visit brick and mortar retailers in such instances.

Indeed, buying specific 'needed' fashion items impose higher risks on the participants if things went wrong and the item were to be returned. Like in Kat's case, the significance of a grad ball dress makes an online fashion shopping an extremely daunting and risky task. This might be due to the potential negative consequences that Kat would associate with issues such as ordering the wrong size or colour, or not liking the garment.

On the other hand, purposeless browsing has been captured as the main theme of interaction with fashion websites. As this chapter previously mentioned quoting research such as Eadala and Ratkal (2014) and Lai and Yang (2000), browsing fashion websites purposelessly is very common.

Steph's aforementioned comment, '*I am just browsing yeah! Just browsing. Sometimes you can look for things like, OK I am looking for some holiday clothes so I want a couple of pairs of shorts and a top or whatever',* highlights a state of purposeless browsing. Even when she states that she might look for a couple of pairs of shorts, in essence, she is not looking for one type of shorts, of a specific colour or material, etc.

Although one could argue that this type of shopping has a purpose which is to buy some holiday clothes. However, this is not considered as a well-defined purpose that would make the shopper interact with the website in a well-defined manner that would specifically allow them to reach this goal. Instead it is, as the participant says 'just browsing', indicating a random pattern to such browsing making it possibly defined as purposeless (Lai & Yang, 2000)

In purposeless browsing of fashion websites, a broad idea might be a motivation or an initiator of such experiences. For example, throughout the videography data, patters on purposeless browsing were related to broad categories such as 'summer clothes', 'sales', 'latest trends', 'looks and outfits building', etc. as opposed to specific goals such as a grad ball dress, a wedding gown, etc.

Unlike Lai and Yang (2000) and Eadala and Ratkal (2014), purposeless browsing is not a negative time wasting activity and, indeed, it is very important in the context of online fashion shopping. This activity, as we will see toward the end of this chapter, has educational values in learning about the latest fashion trends or learning how and

what to dress. Moreover, this less stressful activity increases the shopper's familiarity with the websites and facilitates his or her actual purchasing decision.

Arguably, purposeless browsing leads to a purchase more frequently than purposeful browsing. Throughout the videos, many showed intention to buy many items of a broad collection (e.g. summer clothes), they explained, they would get them delivered, try them on and return the ones they do not like.

This could be attributed to less risks being associated with buying items that are not urgent or needed for a specific occasion. Customers are more likely to take the risk of buying something, trying it on, and returning it if necessary in purposeless browsing.

Purposeless browsing, therefore, means that customers do not only have an intention to purchase, but also an intention to return items prior to even making an order. A scenario that would make this phenomenon clear, is picturing a girl buying the exact same dress in two sizes with an intention of trying both and returning at least one of them back for a refund. This phenomenon is further explored and discussed within the scope of relevant literature in the following section.

8.4   Purposeless Browsing vs. Retail Borrowing

As the previous section distinguishes between purposeful and purposeless online fashion shopping experiences, the section ends by highlighting a phenomenon that became apparent in the videography study of this thesis. This phenomenon is the purchase of a variety of items with the intention of returning some of them for a refund. This should not be confused with the phenomena of 'retail borrowing' (Piron & Young, 2000) that is addressed in existing literature as a negative phenomenon that retailers must fight.

Indeed, as Piron and Young (2000, p. 27) suggests, '*retail borrowing occurs when a non-defective product is returned for a refund subsequent to its use for a specific purpose*'. However, the intentional buying of fashion items following a purposeless browsing experience does not conform to the retails borrowing phenomenon as the items are not usually 'used' and then returned. Instead, the items are bought with an intention of returning some after trying them on.

Unlike the 'harmful' phenomenon of retail borrowing, the purchase of items with a prior intention of returning them should not be considered as a negative or a harmful phenomenon. Instead, as this research shows, this phenomenon is the participants' way of coping with the uncertainties of buying clothes online.

The issue of free delivery and free or flexible return options has frequently appeared in the data. For example, one of the participants, Hannah, mentions how she would refrain from buying an item that cannot be returned to a store. The following video shows Hannah discussing this issue as she browses a website.

Video 3 Return to shop not available

> *I normally like to get stuff that you can return to the shop because like I hate sending stuff back (Interviewer says, "yeah") So I normally do the Click and Collect or get it delivered but cos it's a brand it says that I can only post it, so definitely wouldn't get that. (Hannah, Interview 19)*

Similar to Hannah's attitude, Sara, another participant also suggests that, *'when you see free delivery you gonna instantly want to buy'* (*Sara, Interview 04*).

In spite of the, arguably, costly nature of delivery and return, this strong apparent theme of purposeless browsing and the returning of unwanted items makes it an essential motivation for the shoppers. Certainly, just as technological advances that help with the 'need for touch' (Perry et al, 2013) would come costly, free delivery and return or flexible options in this matter are also costly but proving to be critical.

This chapter, up until this point, has defined a major theme of interactions with the online fashion-shopping environment. This theme is defined by the purpose of such interactions, thus, dividing such experiences into purposeless and purposeful browsing.

As this chapter has shown, purposeless (browsing randomly or for no specific goal) and purposeful (task driven browsing to achieve a specific well defined goal) browsing have been discussed and linked to existing literature.

Unlike HCI literature (e.g. Eadala and Ratkal (2014) and Lai and Yang (2000)) stance on purposeless browsing, this chapter has shown that in the case of online fashion shopping, such experiences are often more common than purposeful browsing and are more likely to end up in purchases.

Furthermore, the chapter has discussed how such online purchases are often made with an intention to return some of the items after trying them. This concept was compared to what the literature call 'retail borrowing' (Piron & Young, 2000) which is defined as a harmful experience in which a shopper return garments after using them for a one-off occasion.

Concluding this section, the importance of delivery and return policies is discussed. As opposed to introducing expensive technologies that would meet the need for touch discussed in the literature (e.g. Perry et al. 2013), free and flexible delivery and return options such as returns to a physical store, encourages more purchases of purposeless browsing experiences.

Moreover, as have already been explained, purposeless and purposeful browsing are done differently due to the existence or non existence of a specific predefined purpose. This, therefore, suggests that interactions with the online fashion shopping environemnt are uniquely different in each case. Consequently, the following section discusses the significance of different web atmospherics in each of purposeless and purposeful browsing expereinces.

8.5 Critical Web Atmospherics in Purposeful/less Browsing

As explained in the previous section, purposeless and purposeful browsing represents different types of online fashion shopping experience. Because browsing is either driven by a specific well-defined goal (purposeful) or random and exploratory pattern (purposeless), the types of interaction with the online fashion environemnt are, therefore, different according to each of these situations. For example, atmospherics that helps the user to locate a predefined target become critical in

purposeful browsing. Whereas, other types of atmospherics become critical in cases of purposeless browsing.

This section discusses the generic web atmospherics within the online fashion shopping environment that become critical in each of these situations.

8.5.1   *Web design and layout*

As it has been highlighted in the literature review of this thesis, particularly in chapter 4, web layout in the online environment is the alternative of store layout in traditional shopping environments. Indeed, as store layout appears in the literature of atmospherics (Kotler, 1973) and servicescapes (Bitner, 1992) as a key factor that influences consumers' emotion and experiences, web layout is developed in web atmospherics and e-servicescape literature (e.g. Eroglu et al., 2001; Hopkins et al., 2009; Lorenzo, Molla, & Gomez-Borja, 2008; Manganari, et al., 2011; Tan, Tung, & Xu, 2009; Tong, Lai, & Tong, 2012; Turley & Milliman, 2000).

Specifically, Eroglu et al. (2001) has suggested that web design and layout could be categorised into 'low task-relevant cues' as opposed to 'high task relevant atmoshperics' that are highly specific to the task such as product presentation cues in shopping tasks. This conceptualisation suggests that low task-relevant cues, such as web design and layout, do not directly affect the completion of the task, instead, they suggest that such cues create an atmosphere that helps make the experience more pleasurable and that helps boost the shopper's confidence.

This perspective is supported in the findings of this thesis. For instance, one of the participants commented on the importance of web layout during an interview, saying, *'If layout is not clear or neat I'd not be confident and I'd not trust the website'*. This statement is in agreement with what Eroglu et al. (2001) suggests.

On the other hand, however, web layout has been studied in-depth as a distinctive category of web atmospherics in some literature. For examples, virtual layout and design are introduced as a distinctive category by Manganari, Siomkos, and Vrechopoulos (2009) Hopkins et al., (2009) and Harris & Goode, (2010). It has also been studied both in its technical form as a website structure (tree vs. tunnel layout) by Griffith (2005) and in its emotional and functional effectiveness in helping the

shopper explore the online environment and/or making sense of it (Demangeot & Broderick, 2007).

The findings of this research support the importance of web layout as a part of the environment. However, unlike the aforementioned scholarly endeavours, this research, by means of screencast videography, has been able to capture distinctive positions to web layout in the online fashion shopping experience. As aforementioned, purposeless and purposeful browsing results in different approaching of the online fashion shopping environment due to the different nature of each type of experience.

Although web layout is noted as critical in both purposeless and purposeful browsing, it becomes distinctively critical in purposeless browsing experiences. Due to the random style of browsing in purposeless shopping instances, web layout becomes central to guiding the shopper smoothly from one stage to another. Indeed barriers to such movement are restrictive. This stance is supported by existing literature such as Dailey (2004).

Being able to move easily between pages and allowing extreme smoothness of browsing is important in purposeless browsing, as this section will show below, specific layout dimensions such as infinite scrolling and the number of items presented per page are analysed as critical incidents in the experience.

- *Infinite scrolling*

Infinite scrolling, *'a web design technique that prevents the browser scroll bar from scrolling to the bottom of the page, causing the page to grow with additional content instead'* (Wiktionary, 2013), is based on the idea of 'pre-fetching content from a subsequent page and adding it directly to the user's current page' (Infinite-Scroll, 2008).

In other word, infinite scrolling allows online fashion shoppers to view a vast number of fashion items on one page. This helps the shopper stay longer on a website and easily browse more items. The advantage of this technique is that it maintains a simple neat main page on the website and the website loads more content only as the user scrolls to the end of the page.

Specifically, in purposeless browsing, the main aim of the shopper is to absorb as much information as possible about a collection of fashion items whether it is the new season collection, the sales collection, or any other set of items. The videography evidence shows that the most important element in such tasks is to be able to browse effortlessly without any restrictions. Consequently, infinite scrolling appears as a critical element in web layout design in such instances.

Linking this to the experience literature, it could be argued that full immersion in the experience can be understood from the theoretical perspective of flow (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; 2009) or Pine and Gilmore's (1998) four realms of experience in which immersion is a major dimension.

In accord with Hoffman and Novak's (1996) theory of online flow, individuals should be fully immersed in their experience and such immersion should be pleasurable and rewarding. In such cases the experience flows from one stage to another. Web layout therefore, especially in the form of infinite scrolling, becomes critical to achieve a state of immersion.

If web layout is restrictive and requires conscious efforts to keep the experience going, a state of immersion is unlikely to happen. This stance is supported in the literature, Dailey (2004, p.801), for example, links restrictive cues to the experience of flow by suggesting, '*When consumers' are experiencing flow during web navigation, restrictive navigation cues may interrupt the flow experience by reducing consumer control. This may result in negative attitudes and avoidance behavior toward the web site.*'

Such scholarly stance emphasises the importance of less restrictive web layout such as the use of infinite scrolling. However, even when infinite scrolling allows immersion due to the smooth and easy way of navigation, it is not always clear whether such experiences are experiences of flow.

Noting Hoffman and Novak (1996) theorisation, a clear purpose is one of the conditions of flow. A clear purpose is absent in cases of purposeless browsing that is defined as a random browsing of the website for no clearly defined purpose (Lai & Yang, 2000).

Despite these issues, infinite scrolling, as discussed in this section, is critical in design less restrictive web layout that encourages smooth exploring of the online fashion-shopping environment. This is because infinite scrolling reduces the need to click on a link in order to view more products; instead products are automatically loaded as you scroll down without the need to make such approach or avoidance decisions.

Another possible and more popular technical solution of web layout that can be considered important in cases of purposeless browsing is allowing a presentation of a maximum product number to be displayed by page. This is discussed in the following section.

- *Number of products per page*

Similar to infinite scrolling, offering the user the choice of viewing the maximum number of products per page can be extremely useful in purposeless browsing. This gives a similar experience to infinite browsing in the sense that the shoppers do not have to click between many pages of items.

The theoretical stance is similar in this case; being able to display a large number of items on one page, as opposed to displaying 12 items for instance, reduced the need to make a lot of approach or avoidance decisions; i.e. to click to view the next 12 items or to leave the website.

In order to show evidence of restrictive web layout, the following example shows a small chunk of a screencast from the videography study. Thus, video 4 shows Hannah, one of the research participants, clearly says how she hates having to click-through many pages of items.
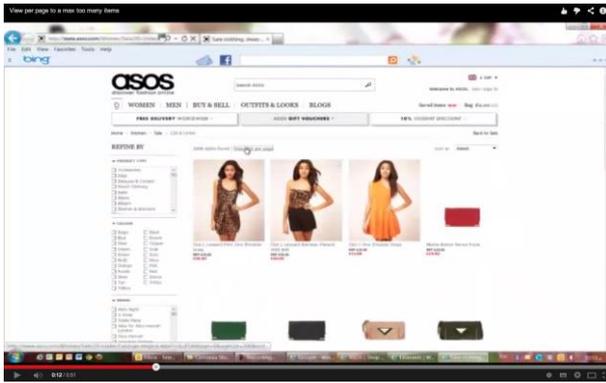
Video 4 Number of products per page

> *I don't like it when you have to, like, click every page of them. I like to see loads of them. Ahumm (in agreement to question) and if it's like 15 pages I can't be bothered going, I wouldn't be like… I would look at that and be like oh, that's too many...*

In Hannah's experience, seeing that there are many pages of items still to be browsed discourages her from continuing her shopping. This 'I cannot be bothered' attitude is a result of the overwhelming amount of information that the participant had to absorb. Web layout in this instance did not take into account helping the shoppers to browse effortlessly and to reduce the barriers to viewing content and proceeding throughout the experience.

Reducing the barriers to shopping and reducing the shopper's perception of difficulty in online clothes purchasing is already defended in the literature by Hansen and Jensen (2009).

On a practical level, there is a trade-off between offering a wide range of styles and products and maintaining a simple, easy to navigate website that is uncluttered, attractive, and barrier-free.

Consequently, this research suggests that, in purposeless browsing experiences, infinite scrolling is the best option. This rationale is due to the technical ability of this atmospheric to allow effortless browsing that aids a state of immersion (Hoffman & Novak, 1996) in addition to its role in organising and simplifying the shopping environment.

Whilst the number and mechanism of product display per page on a fashion website is critical in purposeless browsing, other atmospherics seems to play a more central role in purposeful browsing. The following section discusses these atmospherics in detail.

8.5.2 Search and Filters

As previously explained, purposeful browsing, also referred to as 'searching' (Eadala & Ratkal, 2014) is browsing that is driven by a well-defined purpose (Lai & Yang, 2000), thus it is task-driven.

Intuitively, such browsing that is aimed at finding a specific item means the way the online fashion-shopping environment is substantially different. In order to find a specific item on a website, both search and filter facilities become increasingly critical in such cases. By integrating videography and interview data, the following subsections will discuss the stance of search facility and filters in such experiences.

- *Search facility*

'Search facility…? Only if you are looking for something specific'.

This was the response one of my interviewees gave when considering the role of search facilities in their online fashion-shopping experiences. This initially and intuitively suggests that search facilities are critical in purposeful task-oriented browsing. A search box on a website would easily and simply enable the shoppers to look for the specific item(s) sought in a purposeful browsing session.

Search facilities on a website appear in literature about TAM under 'ease of use' (Tan et al., 2009) and have frequently appeared in other articles as an item of usability scale or web design that helps reduce the effort of finding products online (Chen, Hsu, & Lin, 2009; Lee & Lin, 2005; Park & Kim, 2003).

The aforementioned articles, among others, suggest that search facilities are very important and are linked to various concepts such as satisfaction and purchase intention.

My criticism of this stance is that search facilities are dealt with as a very generic term and could be attributed to more than just a search box/engine on a website. These quantitative studies asked direct questions about the perception of whether

search facilities are useful, to which many users might initially respond in agreement. As I quoted at the beginning of this section, users initially think yes, it is useful. However, since my research followed a different approach I was able to lead more discussion on this issue and find perspectives that are more specific.

My videography work showed that *the use of a website's search box is very rare and so hardly any of my participants used it or even said they would use it.* The rationale for not using it could be attributed to various issues.

One issue was discussed by one of my participants who said, *'Search box is not important! It allows you to search, but not guaranteed you'd get what you want'. This is one of the obvious reasons given for not wanting to use a search box. It is because of the risk of excluding items when using keyword search. Even though task-oriented browsing is set to achieve the objective of finding a particular product, the participants generally preferred to narrow down the collection using filters and other techniques rather than using keyword search.*

Another issue related to product search, it could be argued, is that it requires more effort to type words rather than just browse. This argument is in line with Häubl's and Trifts's (2000) suggestion that it is vital to use aiding techniques such as a 'recommendation agent' and a 'comparison matrix' that reduce the effort needed for information search and aid the decision-making process. There is a preference for simpler easier activities in online fashion shopping even in the case of purposeful browsing.

The initial most used atmospheric in purposeful browsing, as it appears throughout the videography study, is not a website's own search box rather it is filters, in particular, effective filters.

- *Filters*

A variety of visible and invisible filters are used on all websites. The visible filter menu that is usually available on any apparel website offers a way to filter fashion items based on a set of criteria. Examples of filtering criteria on apparel websites include 'Product Category' (Dresses, Shirts, etc.), 'Colour' (Black, Red, Blue, White, etc.), and various other categories.

The second type of filters are 'invisible', these are called intelligent agents (Maes, Guttman, & Moukas, 1999). Invisible filters work on intelligent displays of items that are thought to be relevant to the user by mean of mass customisation. A wide variety of examples of the use of such filters are available from retailers and pure players. For instance, in an interview with the CEO of Barneys New York, Standen (2014) report how Barneys.com uses invisible filters to customise the website according to behavioural and browsing data. The use of such filters is apparent in suggestions of outfits and recommendation sections of apparel websites. However, this section focuses on the use of the visible filters on fashion websites that the customers interact with.

The visible filter menu available on all apparel websites is extremely important in purposeful browsing, because it helps the shopper narrow down a huge collection into a more focused and relevant set of items. Throughout the videography study, whenever a participant started a task-oriented browsing, the first issue they faced was using the filters in order to arrive at a set of items relevant to their criteria.

In essence, the use of visible filters is a good indication whether or not a user is starting a purposeful browsing experience. Video 5 below presents a clear example of the critical role of filters in purposeful, task-oriented shopping.

The video shows Kat, one of my participants, looking for a dress for her graduation ball that she would attend in a few months. Kat spent a lot time and effort trying to find a dress that matched her criteria. She got very frustrated with the lack of filtering down options. The video shows clearly her frustration and confusion after a lengthy attempt to achieve said task.
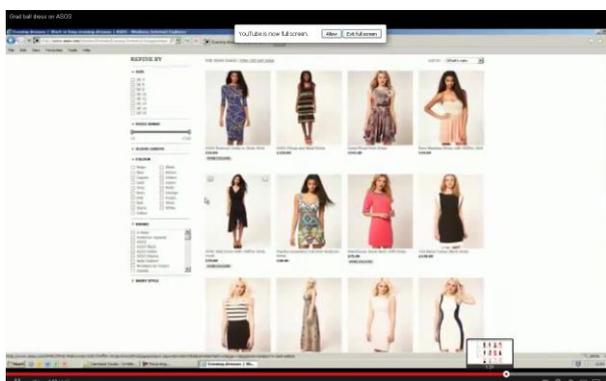
Video 5 Frustration using filters—Grad Ball dress

Um, OK, but I can't s… can I say? I can't really say whether or not I want it long, can I? No. Hmm, can I say I want it for ball to make it more formal? Product type! Oh dresses. Petite dress? Evening dresses aww, Oh they all really short! (Laughing) Oh.

I don't know there should be a bu… Oh wait I could actually say the colour, maybe that helps? I'm gonna be very boring and say "black". Party Dress? Casual Dress? Evening Dress? Am I already in "Evening Dress"?

By watching video 5 or just reading the script of Kat's comments, one can see the frustration and confusion she went through in this experience. The way she pauses and questions whether she is in the right section or not, in addition to the movement of the mouse pointer on the screen over the filter menu, clarify the importance of filters in purposeful browsing.

By making the argument that the filter is a critical incident in purposeful browsing, this is not to claim that it has no presence in the experience of purposeless browsing. In purposeless browsing, it seems, filters are more of a preference than a necessity. The importance of filters in this instance could relate to personalisation of the collection to meet the customer's preference. For example, during an interview, Liz comments, *'I like the fact that on some websites you can like say you're looking for a dress and then you put in your size and then you get different … you can go between sizes or just check one size' (Liz, Interview 0015).*

In such cases, even if the shopper is not looking for a specific item, being able to only see items that would 'fit' their figure, budget, or other preferences makes their shopping easier and less frustrating.

In another example, Paul attempts to set a budget for his purposeless browsing as he says it makes no sense for him to look at items that are outside his budget range.
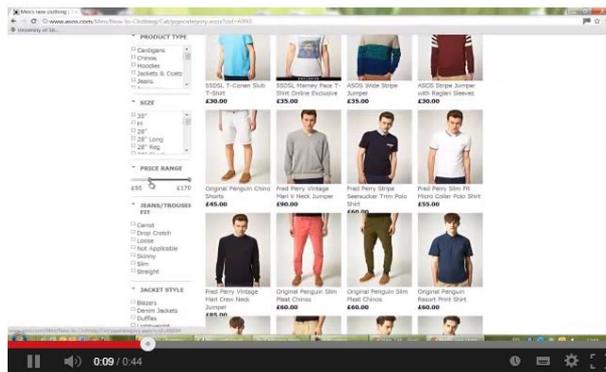
> *The prices, there're some expensive items, some cheap items. So I'd normally go to a price range under 60 pounds. I'd set a budget and then look for items within the budget price. That's a good feature there, the price range bar! Emm, oh! In fact I might have done it wrong actually. So, 60.*

Video 6 shows not only that filters are important but also that the ease of use of the filter is critical. Paul gets confused when he thinks he has set the price to under £60 only to see that the items displayed are much more expensive. It takes a while until he realises that he set the slider bar the wrong way, he adjusts it and continues.

Another participant, Sara, comments on the use of filters on the website:

> *It's not necessary, umm, not as necessary [compared to other items like catwalk videos and free delivery]… if there is a website and offered free delivery and not an option to filter, I wouldn't be bothered. But it is quite a nice extra if they do have it, but, it's just more, it's fine if they don't have it but if does speed up the process if they do. Cos [because] you can just quickly go on and find what you're looking for (Interview 0004 13:09).*

Sara's comment highlights the importance of understanding the situation in which the experience is taking place. If Sara is used to purposeless browsing, it is clear and understandable for her why she sees the filter option as a 'nice extra'. On the other hand, if she was purposefully browsing, then her experience would be completely different and her take on the use of filters would change as she explains here:

> *I think I it's good, errm, if I am in a rush, I'm going out the next night or something like that, and I realised I need a black top to go with my jeans or*

whatever… then I can just go in and quickly filter it and then I find what I'm looking for and then I can just go on and buy it, which more about the quickness which would make me happier! (Interview 04)

In purposeful browsing, uncertainty and the intangibility of an important item impose high risks on the online-shopping experience; so many shoppers opt out for websites that have a high street presence instead. This clearly highlights the 'need to touch and try' when it is not affordable for things to go wrong. Soon the tension and stress of such shopping tasks lead the customer to end the shopping incident or start looking at completely different products instead.

A number of issues are apparent with customers' interactions with the online fashion-shopping environment, as this chapter has shown so far. Namely, the distinction between purposeless and purposeful browsing is an important distinction as it allows for a closer look at how such environments are approached. Consequently, this shows how certain web atmospherics seem central to one type of shopping experiences only to disappear from other types of experiences.

Examples of this include the importance of filters in purposeful browsing in aiding the achievement of the purpose of the experience. Whereas layout and product display per page seem to be the central issue in purposeless browsing that requires restriction-free environments.

Analysing the interactions that are discussed in the previous sections, it seems that the shoppers are faced with two dilemmas in online fashion shopping. On one hand, the shopper's perception of the usefulness of certain atmospherics is central to how those shoppers interact with the fashion website.

On the other hand, the journey of the experience and the path of interactions seem to be guided by a series of approach and avoidance decisions that are not only challenged by the usefulness of certain atmospherics but also by a state of choice infinity. This is discussed in the following section.

8.6   Choice infinity and Behavioural Decisions

Up until this point, the centre of the online fashion-shopping experience is accessing a website and browsing either purposelessly or purposefully. The critical incidents

identified at this level are not product-specific elements, what Eroglu, et al. (2001) call low task relevant cues.

Merely at this level, the core of the experience is browsing a variety of items to make a series of approach or avoidance. The behavioural decisions of approach and avoidance are thought to be linked to the individual's emotional states (e.g. Kenhove & Desrumaux, 2001; Russell & Mehrabian, 1978; Sweeney & Wyber, 2002).

In addition to the usefulness of web atmospherics at this stage, approach decisions are the decisions the shoppers continually make when navigating from one step to another; for example, navigating between pages of items. An outcome of approach decisions would incidentally be a decision to 'click-through' to a product main page, in which a number of high task-relevance cues (Eroglu, et al., 2001) become the centre of interactions. These cues, discussed in the following chapter, are the core fashion specific atmospherics that make the online fashion shopping environments unique and different from other online retail environments.

In addition to 'approach' decisions, decisions of avoidance are made throughout the experience. Avoidance decisions are the decisions made to avoid certain atmospherics or to refrain from making certain interactions. The most obvious avoidance decision is to 'avoid' a website by ending the shopping experience or to ignore items throughout this journey.

Avoidance decisions result in fully or partly ending the shopping experience. The rationale for such decisions, as have already been discussed, can be attributed to failure of atmospherics such as the issues of filters failure in purposeful browsing (for example, video 5). In video 5, Kat experienced frustration due to the failure of filters in allowing her to browse a collection that is relevant to her purpose of browsing.

Linking this rationale to existing literature, it could be argued that a consideration set is not formed which results in a failure in further approach of the site. This concept of 'consumer consideration set' traditionally referred to the set of brands or products that are readily available in the mind of the customer. Hauser and Dzyabura (2010, p.1) comment:

…consumers often face a myriad of alternative products […] Evidence suggests that consumers, who are faced with many products from which to choose, simplify their decisions with a consider-then-choose decision process in which they first identify a set of products, the consideration set, for further evaluation and then choose from the consideration set.

The consideration set in the case of online fashion shopping is the collection of items that the consumer chooses from. To the traditional argument that consumer consideration set is to be memory-based, Peterson and Merino (2003, p.114) propose that, *'The consideration sets of consumers who use the Internet when searching for information will tend, over time, to become more stimulus-driven than memory driven'.*

It could be argued that the discussion on the starting point of an experience in which a consumer accesses a website directly may be related to a memory-based consideration set. However, the consideration set of fashion products on a website appears in the videography evidence as stimulus-driven. Web layout, infinite scrolling, search and filters are the elements that aid in forming a relevant collection of items—a consideration set—that the consumer then chooses from.

In the case of Kat's shopping experience, the website filters did not succeed in forming the consideration set as they did not filter out irrelevant products (not matching her grad ball dress criteria, including dress length). Various examples in the literature support that filtering information helps the evaluation and the decision-making process in general (for example, Karimi, 2013).

As a result, a decision of avoidance following such an extensive search was apparent in Kat's experience. Video 7 below shows Kat getting very fed up and frustrated and finally decided to shop for something else!

Video 7 Purposeless browsing after a frustrating task-oriented one

> *Now, right now I'm just, like I went into different websites, and I'm just fed up,*
> *I would just go, I would just, ok now I would just go to H&M, latest collection,*
> *so I wouldn't even look for a dress anymore, because I'm just, I don't know,*
> *it's been frustrating so I'm looking for something, I might think I like so I'm*
> *looking for the new arrivals, I don't know why, it just came in my head, I would*
> *just go through H&M and see what kind of summer clothes they have.*

In this instance, the purposeful browsing is ended in a negative 'avoidance' behaviour that made the participant stops approaching the website for the specific goal of finding a specific item.

The failure of filters in this instance and the inability to come at a relevant collection of items contribute to the apparent emotional state of frustration that stopped her. It is also arguable that as this video shows a purposeful browsing session, it is likely that the importance of the occasion and the number of strict criteria of said dress in the participant's mind led to such consequences.

Although this has resulted in emotional frustration at the current task, Kat's decision of avoidance only affected the specific task, as the video showed, she went on to browse purposelessly an entirely different website where her only effort is to browse, get inspired, and learn about new collections for summer clothes.

Similarly, another decision of avoidance is apparent in Liz's experience of purposeless browsing. It is also due to failure in layout atmospherics such as product display per page. This state is a problem of choice infinity that brings the shoppers to a decision of avoidance due to feeling lost. In both cases of browsing, and more in purposeless browsing where filters do not necessarily apply, the consumer usually

faces a huge collection of items, which can quickly make the experience overwhelming.

Yeah this is emm, I like this but emm I always find there's just so many pages of stuff to look through can't now be really bothered [silence browsing] See a petite is not so bad, it's only got a few items!

As the video showed, arriving at a set of relevant items to form a consideration set is a job that requires both the person and the enviroenment to become one whole in the experience. Althought usefulness and effectiveness of atmospherics are central to this equation, it is worth noting that such issue is use dependant and so certain web elements may become highly relevant in one expeirence only to disappear in the next one.

Often the very large number of items available onsite is overwhelming and the shoppers get bored easily and move on to something more specific. By filtering down the collection to a (Petite x Tops) collection, Liz thinks it is not so bad then, because the set of items is immediately more manageable. This highlights the role of the online fashion-shopping environment in co-creating the consideration set with the consumer, whether this is done by filtering in task-specific shopping or just by presenting a relevant product set in purposeless browsing. The main aim is to avoid the negative outcomes of losing interest, becoming bored, lost, confused or overwhelmed, which will lead the customer away from the website.

8.7   Conclusion

This chapter, the first in three findings chapters, focused on partly answering the first research question – RQ1, How do consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment?

The word 'partly' is used on purpose to indicate that this question will continue to be addressed along with RQ2 in the following chapter. This chapter focused on one type of interactions with the online fashion-shopping environment, that is, interactions with the generic atmospherics on the website or what Eroglu et al. (2001) call low task relevance cues.

Such interactions include approach or avoidance of generic atmospherics that are not highly relevant to the specific task of fashion shopping i.e. not necessarily fashion specific. Web layout, product per page display, infinite scrolling, search and filters are all discussed as important low task relevance atmospherics within the online fashion shopping experience.

Two distinct types of interactions were defined in this chapter by using evidence of screencast videography; these are purposeless and purposeful browsing. Although these terms are novel in existing literature in marketing and consumer research, the concepts, as the chapter highlighted, appear in Human-Computer Interaction literature (Eadala & Ratkal, 2014; Lai & Yang, 2000).

Unlike HCI literature, this chapter shows purposeless browsing as a distinctive type of experience that is not driven by a specific task; instead it is a journey of inspiration and learning about new fashion items, outfits' guides, etc.

Indeed, interactions with fashion websites vary between each type of browsing. Task oriented browsing follow a path to achieve the set task, whereas, purposeless browsing is more random or free style. Thus, critical incidents in the experience where identified as the number of products per page and infinite scrolling in purposeless browsing, and visible website filters in purposeful browsing.

Theoretical explanations are multifaceted. First, the chapter addressed the importance of barrier free, smooth interactions (Hansen and Jensen, 2009) which may contribute to a state of pleasurable rewarding immersion in the experience (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; 2009, Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

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Therefore, infinite scrolling as a web technique is seen as a critical web layout element that organises the website and facilitates such flow of experience. Indeed displaying a limited number of products per page arguably acts as a restrictive cue, which may interrupt this flow leading to behaviours of avoidance. This was evident in videos showing 'I can't be bothered' attitudes in response to displaying multiple pages of products.

This issue also leads to – choice infinity – another issue that is discussed in the chapter. As the shopper usually goes through a number of behavioural decisions of approach and avoidance, an overwhelming emotional state and a perception of extremely wide variety of choice; that is choice infinity. Indeed as the chapter showed, web layout and the management and organisation of items on the webpage contributes to the perception of choice infinity.

In order to better control the shopping experience, the chapter discussed the use of filters to minimise the number of choices to a relevant set of items. This is called a consideration set, which is traditionally argued to be memory-based (Hauser & Dzyabura, 2010) yet in online context is arguably reached using filters (Peterson and Merino, 2003). The chapter has shown how failure to form such a relevant set that the customer can choose from; result in an emotional state of frustration and feeling lost thus leading to decisions of avoidance.

The chapter, therefore, furthers existing understanding of the role of low task relevant atmospherics in the context of online fashion shopping experience. Thus it contributes to existing literature in web atmospherics, particularly research interested in web layout and search and filters (e.g. Demangeot & Broderick, 2010; Eroglu et al., 2001; Hopkins et al., 2009; Koo & Ju, 2009; Lorenzo, Molla, & Gomez-Borja, 2008; Manganari, et al., 2011; Tan, Tung, & Xu, 2009; Tong, Lai, & Tong, 2012; Turley & Milliman, 2000).

The contribution this chapter makes is perhaps not in introducing a new conceptualisation of web layout. However, unlike existing research that studies the role of web layout in online shopping in general. This study, by means of screencast videography evidence, was able to show different roles of web layout in different types of experiences.

Indeed, as the chapter showed, in answering how customers interact with online fashion shopping experiences, two types of interactions take place; these are purposeless and purposeful interactions. In each type of experience, it seems depending on whether there is a specific well defined purpose of shopping, certain atmospherics become critical (e.g. infinite scrolling and product display per page in purposeless browsing as opposed to filters in purposeful browsing)

Therefore, this chapter doesn't only contribute to the understanding of the role of certain web atmospherics; in addition, it also provides a conceptualisation for these two types of browsing that make interactions with the online fashion shopping experience completely different according to this situational context.

In order to fully answer the first research question, in addition to what this chapter has presented in terms on low task relevance atmospherics, the following chapter addresses interactions with fashion specific atmospherics (i.e. high task relevance atmospherics) thus also answering the second question in terms of conceptualising the online fashion shopping environment.

Chapter 9 The Fashionscape concept

This chapter, the second in three findings chapters, continues to build on the first findings chapter as it provides further answers to the first research question as well as focusing mainly on answering the second research question, *RQ2. What is the composition and role of the environment in online fashion-shopping experiences?*

To answer this question (RQ2), the chapter introduces the fashionscape as a concept that is relevant to studying online fashion shopping environments. The chapter discusses this concept in detail and then it moves to discuss how the fashionscape can be differentiated from other terms that are used in the literature to study the shopping environment.

The structure of this chapter is illustrated in figure (9-1) below:

RQ2 What is the composition and role of the environment in online fashion-shopping experiences?
The question is answered by introducing the fashionscape concept. Four dimensions of the fashionscape are introduced as visual, verbal, social and educational.

The Visual Fashionscape
Consists of all high task relevant visual atmospherics (default images, image zoom in and 3D, catwalk video, and virtual fitting rooms)

The Verbal Fashionscape
Consists of all high task relevant verbal atmospherics (product information, size guide, etc.)

The Social Fashionscape
Consists of all high task relevant social atmospherics (customer reviews and social network links)

The Educational Fashionscape
Consists of all high task relevant educational atmospherics (trendy looks, matching outfits, inspirational atmospherics and blogs)

Figure 9-1 Overview of Chapter 9

In the literature review of this thesis, particularly in chapter 4 (Theories of atmospherics), the relevant literature associated with 'atmospherics' discusses concepts like store atmospherics and servicescape as a means of understanding the

buying environment and its influence on consumers and employees. Following the shift toward online shopping, scholars such as Eroglu, et al. (2001), Hopkins, et al. (2009) and Harris and Goode (2010) argued for the importance of studying the new environment, the online-shopping environment, and the concepts of e-servicescape and web atmospherics that have emerged.

Toward the end of chapter 4, the special nature of fashion shopping was discussed. As explained, fashion relates strongly to identity, self-presentation, and cultural and social values. This, in addition to the heterogeneous nature of fashion garments, imposes certain challenges in the context of online fashion shopping. Therefore, it was argued that a detailed analysis of the online fashion-shopping environment is essential.

This is because general models such as the e-servicescape concept do not account for the unique nature of fashion shopping. Thus, the research question (RQ2) 'what is the composition and role of the environment in online fashion-shopping experiences?' was proposed.

The concept of the fashionscape is introduced in this thesis to refer specifically to the online fashion-shopping environment. Thus in accord to Eroglu et al (2001) classifications, the fashionscape concept consists of high task relevance cues that are specific to the concept of online fashion shopping experiences. Consequently, in addition to web design, layout, and search and filter facilities that have been discussed in the previous chapter (low task relevance cues), the fashionscape consisting of four dimensions (visual, verbal, social, and educational) is deemed an essential part of the online fashion-shopping environment.

The chapter therefore shall address each of the four dimensions fashionscape separately. It will then discuss the concept as a whole in relation to other similar concepts in existing literature.

9.1   The Visual Fashionscape

'Images are central to our everyday cognition—or, as the saying goes, a picture speaks a thousand words and is therefore packed with persuasive potential. Therefore, what people perceive in images is probably inexhaustible.' **(Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, & Deschenes, 2009, p.559)**

Indeed, the richness of visuals is what makes an online fashion-shopping environment what it is. It is almost impossible to imagine fashion without visual images, and certainly visuals are a central part of any website let alone fashion websites. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that the visual fashionscape is the most dominant, most powerful scape of the online fashion-shopping environment. It is in the visual fashionscape that consumers lively engage in cognitive and emotional experiences.

Despite the importance and dominance of visual images that surround our daily lives, as Schroeder (2002) suggests they seem to be taken for granted. He comments:

We live in a visual information culture. In no other time in history has there been such an explosion of visual images. And yet we seem to pay little attention to them, we do not always 'understand' them, and most of us are largely unaware of the power they have in our lives, in society, and how they function to provide most of our information about the world. (Schroeder, 2002, p.3)

According to the analysis of the repertory grid interviews, it is apparent that the participants possess most of their 'experience' constructs around the visual elements. They took most visual elements for granted. They did not see it as a bonus to have high quality images with zooming and 3D views; it was a mere basic essential to consider buying from a website. This is natural and understandable since vision is almost the only sense that is used in online shopping. Being unable to communicate enriching and stimulating visuals is a major failure in the fashionscape.

The dominance of the visual fashionscape could be attributed to multiple factors. First, as mentioned above, engaging the consumer's vision requires an enriching, stimulating website that presents fashion items in an aesthetically appealing manner. Additionally, as in Schroeder's comment, we live in a dominantly visual culture (2002).

Second, from a basic cognitive information processing perspective, Paivio's concept of dual information processing (Paivio et al., 1968; Paivio, 1971) can be applied in this context. Paivio suggests that the *processing of visuals is easier and faster* as it occurs in parallel as opposed to the sequential processing of verbal information. This is an important aspect of online shopping because, as illustrated in the previous sections of this chapter, both purposeless and purposeful browsing requires processing huge amount of information. To be able to do this quickly and effortlessly, the shoppers would usually engage with mainly the visual items.

This section discusses the various aspects of the visual fashionscape within the experience. The elements of the visual fashionscape, discussed below, are the elements that represent a product visually. Such elements include all types of images (whether it is a flat display or a model display, front facing images, 3D or 360° rotatable images) that present fashion products. Additionally, the fashionscape includes other visual product presentations such as catwalk videos and virtual fitting rooms, which are thoroughly discussed in the following sections.

9.1.1 *Default image*

In online visual merchandising, a product default image is the image that is chosen by default to appear in products listings. That is, when browsing any online retailing website, each product has a main 'default' image that is used when showing a collection of items and before clicking to explore one specific item in which more images might be available.

This default image can be considered as the first form of visual presentation of a product on a website. An example of product default images as they appear in the screencast videos is illustrated in video 9 below.
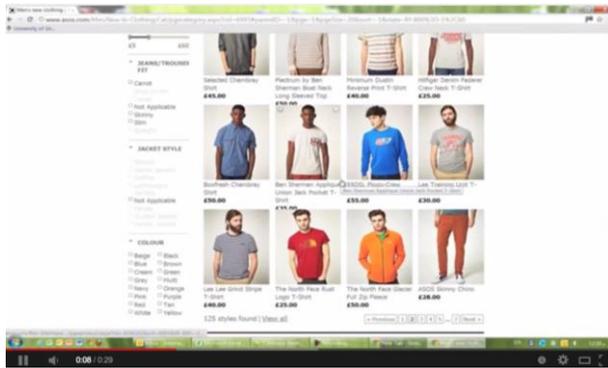
Video 9 Click-through default image

> *Umm, I'm quite fussy! Hehe [laughing] So I can normally get an idea about the product from the images they show here straight away [silence browsing] umm I quite like that!*

The first thing to note from the video, or even the video snapshot above, is that each of these products that appear during browsing appear in their default images. Although online product presentations of fashion items have been studied in detail as the literature review highlighted (e.g. Ha, et al. 2007; Kim & Lennon, 2010; Lee, et al. 2010), product default images do not appear in such scholarly endeavours. Instead, product presentations of 2D and 3D, front/side/back views, and model vs. flat display are the main concerns of these articles.

This goes in line with Schroeder's (2002) comment – quoted at the beginning of the visual fashionscape section – we seem to pay little attention to some visuals that surround us. Certainly, this is confirmed by the repertory grid interviews in which no participant has mentioned the product default image as an important part of their experience. However, the videography study has been invaluable in highlighting the significance of some, often taken for granted, visual elements.

In spite of its absence in relevant literature and in the construing systems of the participants of this thesis, default images, as video 9 has shown, are key in inviting the shoppers to further explore or ignore the product during the browsing stage. Indeed, the shopper usually ignores many items—based on the default image—and eventually decides, based on the default image too, to click-through to explore an item in depth.

Indeed, product's default image is another critical incident that triggers approach or avoidance behaviours (Eroglu et al., 2001; Russell & Mehrabian, 1978). This is because a product's default image acts as a gate in the online fashion shopping experience. In some cases, these images open the gate inviting exploring in the shopping experience further, whereas an image that does not convey the product's reality effectively closes the gate and discourages the shopper from any further exploration. Consequently, any efforts made on the page of a specific product (e.g. 3D images, zooming, images of different angle, catwalk video, verbal information, etc.) would be dismissed without an inviting main image.

In fact, in this context, Mccormick's (2009) discussion on 'first impressions' becomes relevant. Although, first impression in Mccormick's (2009) work relates to the very first impression of the website upon viewing the website's home page, this concept could also be relevant to the 'first impression' of a fashion product elicited from the product's default image.

Furthermore, in order to enhance first impressions, and to improve the potential of a default image, some fashion shopping websites have introduced further technical improvements that help communicating better quality information about products during browsing. The two major enhancements that are highlighted during the videography study are 'flickering images' and 'quick view'. The following subsections discuss both concepts and explain their importance in the online fashion shopping experience.

- *Flickering images*

As the saying goes, *'you only get one chance to make a first impression'*. Certainly, there is only one chance for a product to catch the shopper's attention, namely the default image. This has been discussed above and linked to the concept of 'first impression' of atmospherics discussed by Mccormick (2009). In order to enhance the chance of a positive first impression and to create a more inviting default images, some websites allow a flickering default image. A flickering default image allows a flicker of more than one view of the product; e.g. a product may appear on flat display only to flicker to a model display as the mouse point moves over the image. An example of this is shown in Liz's shopping in video 10 below.
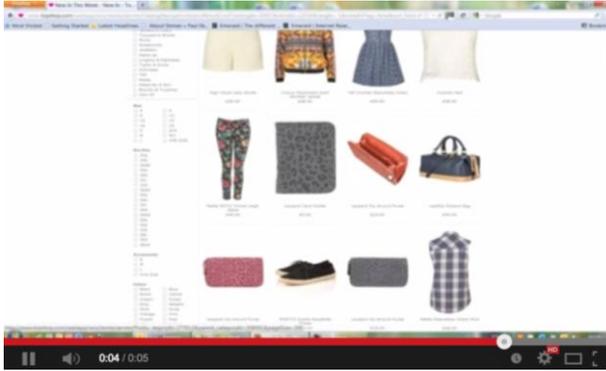
Being able to see a different angle of the product enhances its representation. In some cases, this flicker could show the back of a dress or a view of it on a human model instead of on a flat display. However, it is worth noting here that flickering images are not suggested within the scope of this research to encourage purchase or further exploration.

Emotional responses to flickering images vary between positive and less positive. On the positive side, my participants were more tempted to click on a product after seeing a quick flicker of another view of it. This emotional temptation to click-through to explore the product further is a critical incident in their experiences.

On the less positive side, a flicker of images may reveal features of the product that they do not like. Although this might sound less positive, it is still positive on an overall level of the experience, because it saved them wasting time and effort exploring the item further.

- *Quick view*

In addition to flickering default images, another option that enhances the presentation of the product, and eases the task of browsing a large variety of items is a quick view. To explain what quick view is the following description of the category is presented as it appears on website-building web page. Thus, a quick view is a feature that:

> *...allows the shopper a quick preview of the product right from its respective category listing. This can help save them time when navigating a website since it allows one to essentially view the product listing's main information*

without leaving the base category. From a quick view, the shopper can either click-through to learn more about the product, add to the basket right from the quick view window, or otherwise return to the previous category page.
(Kayako Fusion, 2011)

A number of participants expressed a preference for this feature. In the following video (Video 11), for example, Liz specifically looks for this feature and explains why she prefers it.
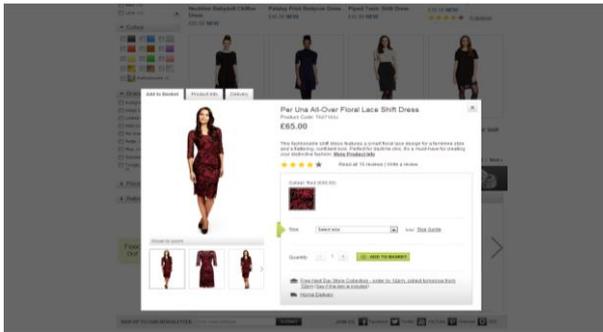
Video 11 Quick view

This one I think if you click o... if you just, emm, put your mouse over things they do a quick view? Maybe it wasn't this actually! No it wasn't this. Some websites, I can't remember which one it is now, but if you just put your mouse, it has a quick view and you can quickly check they had your size. Emm and if not it doesn't mean you have to go BACK again.

Because of the quickness that quick view achieves during product browsing, Liz placed a high emphasis on it. She saw this as less time-consuming as she can multi-browse items in parallel. Consequently, this finding is in line with the aforementioned Paivio's principle that visual processing can naturally happen in parallel, easily and quickly (Paivio et al., 1968). This ability to quickly and easily explore a wide range of products is essential in online fashion shopping where there is always a huge variety to choose from.

Another issue that may arguably relate to the online fashion shopping experience is that a quick view option reduces the barriers to the progress of the experience. As the previous chapter has explained, Hansen and Jensen (2009) advocates the importance of reducing barriers to the online shopping experience. Moreover, as Dailey (2004)

argues, such barriers act as restrictive cues that prevents a state of flow in the experience.

Therefore, quick view is positively placed as a solution to such barriers as the shopper doesn't leave the homepage of a website when exploring one specific product. Instead, products are viewed in a pop up window, with the main homepage still showing for further browsing thus eliminating the need for another approach or avoidance decision (Eroglu et al., 2001; Russell & Mehrabian, 1978) following a visit to a product page.

Up until this point, the first section of this chapter (the visual fashionscape section) has discussed one critical incident, that is, product default images along with flickering images and quick view options. The section now continue to discuss other visual product presentation atmospherics that are found on a product's own page.

The various issues of interactions that have been discussed in the findings, so far, are all types of interactions that occur prior to landing on a product's own page. In the following sections, the discussion will centre on the content of a product's own page.

In almost all websites, each product listed in a category will have its own page hyperlinked to the default image, or thumbnail, that shows the product in a category listing. The product's own page consists of a variety of visual and verbal product presentation elements and other atmospherics. It may also, depending on the website, include a further social and educational dimension as explained later in the chapter.

9.1.2 *Product images*

One of the most studied product presentation atmospherics is product image. Examples of this include studying image zooming, front/back views and 3D images, as well as image interactivity (e.g. Ha, et al. 2007; Kim & Lennon, 2010; Lee, et al. 2010). When discussing visual product presentations, indeed, the main and most basic feature seen on any fashion website is product images. The quality and advancements of such images vary between websites, however, in essence, all websites usually include a number of images of each product on the website.

During the repertory grid interviews, my participants addressed the importance of product images and said that product images are the least they would expect on a

website. Intuitively, vision is the primary sense employed in online shopping. Thus, it is only normal for the participants to struggle to talk about the images, which they have taken for granted (Schroeder, 2002).

Additionally, placing high importance on images could also be understood from the perspective of the shopper's expectations of the online fashion shopping experience. Indeed, online fashion shoppers, as Demangeot and Broderick (2006) suggest, expect websites to include atmospherics that brings their experiences closer to traditional brick-and-mortar experiences (also supported by Mccormick, 2009). This is also highly linked to the 'closeness to real life experience' theme of the repertory grid study, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Discussions on product images were fairly straightforward across all participants during the repertory grid interviews. The terms discussed in this context include 'high quality images', 'clear images', '3D images' and images from different angles of the product. However, throughout the screencast videos, various types of images were captured and analysed. Therefore, the following subsections discuss a variety of issues in relation to product images.

Before moving to discuss the detailed characteristics of product images as they appear in this study, it is worth noting the dominant role of visual images of fashion items in the shopping experience. Indeed, analysis of all video data suggest that the participants first and foremost engaged with product images as soon as they clicked-through to a product page. The instant move of the mouse pointer on nearly all product pages was directed at the images as a starting point.

The following video (Video 12) shows Jack's interactions with a product page. The clip shows the web page of a shirt, divided in two sections, left is visual presentation of the shirt (product images) and right is verbal presentation. Both sections provide the same information about the shirt—it is denim, it has a rounded collar, etc. However, a closer look at the video makes it clear that the participant is engaged with the visual part of the screen, not the verbal one.

> *I like this, it's kinda, you know, it's em kinda good take on a denim shirt, you know it's different with the collar.*

Of course, this recalls the quote at the beginning of the visual fashionscape section, *'a picture speaks a thousand words'* (Joy, et al., 2009, p.559). It is certainly much easier and quicker to look at the images to understand what this product is with absolutely no need to read any verbal information about it. Indeed, this is in line with Paivio et al. (1968) concept of visual information processing previously mentioned.

Therefore, this finding suggests a dominance of the visual product presentations over verbal written information. This is in line with existing research such as Kim and Lennon (2008) and Townsend and Kahn (2014) in which a number of experiments suggest a '*Visual Preference Heuristic*'.

This section, so far, has generally made a case for the dominant role product images play in the online fashion shopping experience by bringing it closer to traditional shopping experiences, and by allowing quicker and easier communication of product information, Moreover, the section further discusses zooming, 3D, and multi-colour images as specific features of product images in the following subsections

- *Image zoom-in*

Image zoom-in is a feature that is used on a variety of fashion websites to allow a detailed view of the product. Such detailed views, achieved by zooming in, help shoppers to examine products more closely (Ha et al., 2007, p.486). This is supported by the attitude the participants of this study have shown to image zoom-in. For

example, Rachel says, *'I do like zooming to see the details, the actual colours'* (Interview 05).

Similarly, another participant – Kat explains in video 13 below how she uses the 'zoom in' as a way of establishing a comprehensive understanding of the item.
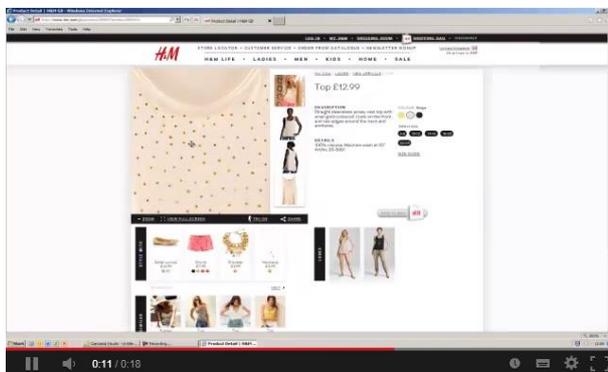
Video 13 Image zoom in for details

> *Like for example this, I would go on that one and then I would zoom in on the product, d... Just to make sure what's actually on the shirt, and I think it's quite cute so I zoom out.*

Alike video 12, this video shows clear interactions with the visual side rather than the verbal side of a product page. In this instance, higher control of the visual image is possible by means of enlarging the image and zooming in to see the details of the garment.

Research in this area suggests that such features encourage experiential aspects of shopping more than simple images. For instance, Jeong et al. (2009, p.119) argue, *'participants exposed to product presentation features offering rich sensory information and lifestyle-oriented information (e.g., the zoom feature and view on a model feature) were more likely than participants exposed to simpler product presentation features to have entertaining, escapist and esthetic experiences, which in turn affected pleasure and/or arousal'*.

Indeed, visual sensory information allows for a closer to real life experience (Demangeot & Broderick, 2006) in which rarely verbal information of products is consulted. Moreover, specific advances in image technology that allow for zooming gives the shopper a sense of control within their experiences thus encouraging a

more rewarding experience and a possible state of pleasurable flow (Novak, Hoffman, & Duhachek, 2003).

Another feature that advances the use of images in online fashion shopping environments is 3D images or images that are shown from a variety of different angles. The following section discusses this feature.

- *3D images*

With the advances of technology comes the possibility of more sophisticated images, images that do really speak a thousand words. One of these advances allows a 3D view of the product. This can be either by multiple shots of the product from different angles, or using 360/multidimensional rotatable images, which allow a view of the product from every possible angle. Ha et al. (2007) highlight the usefulness of 3D views in assisting the shopper in examining the product under consideration.

A variety of examples on the interactions with 3D images are available in the screencasts. For instance, in video 14 below, Paul explains his preference for a 3D view of the product as it allows him to see the details on the back of the shirt.

Video 14 3D View—separate images

> *So… this is why I like 3D because I don't like the backing of it, errm, cos the front… I like the front then I see the back and I'm like oh well don't really want that at the back of it!*

Indeed, such information could be easily dismissed had the back view been unavailable. In spite of the available verbal information, video 14 shows how important it is to have such detailed views of the product as the verbal information lacks any interactions from the participants throughout the videos. This perspective is

indeed supportive of the visual dominance perspective (Kim & Lennon, 2008; Townsend & Kahn, 2014) previously discussed.

Similarly, another example is video 15 showing Max using a 3D rotatable image. In this case, the image allows higher interactivity as it allows higher control of the rotation in 360 degrees horizontally which gives a detailed view of the back from every degree on a horizontal level.
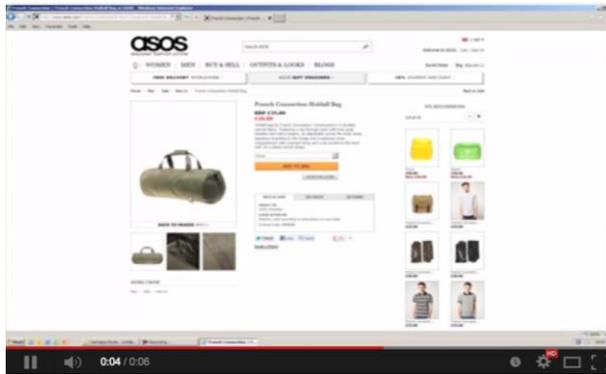
Video 15 3D View—rotatable image

See you can also even go like this [rotating the image].

In both cases, the 3D view allows higher control and quicker and more natural processing of information. Certainly, it becomes apparent that shoppers prefer visual interactions and think of them as essential part of their experiences. For example, in Steph's interview, she explains how she would feel much happier and more confident in her purchase in the presence of high quality images with zoom in and 3D views. She comments:

The way you can zoom round the clothes, cos you can see how it fits at the back and you can see the length of it […] that kinda affect your returns. Cos if you only look at them from that picture like that [a front view of a product, no 3D views or zooming] you're not really… you're not really seeing it. It can affect whether you're gonna return it or not because if you don't see all that [other 3D views and zooming] you probably gonna return it. And people obviously want to see the image a lot more closer because they cannot see it [see it as in physical stores], they cannot touch it, they can't try it on.

It definitely affects whether you're gonna return it or not cos I know when I am buying something online I want to see it fully because you don't want to waste your money on postage and you don't want to waste money on sending it back. (Interview 16)

What Steph refers to in her quote above is what existing literature calls 'image interactivity' (Fiore, Jin, & Kim, 2005; Lee et al., 2010). As Fiore et al. suggest, *'image interactivity allows the viewer to alter a product's design features, background, context, viewing angle or distance...'* (2005, p.673).

Certainly, this section and the previous one highlighted and captured live examples of image interactivity within the online fashion shopping experience. The findings of these two sections highlighted the importance of image interactivity in quicker visual information processing (Paivio et al., 1968) and in encouraging better and more engaging experiences (Jeong et al., 2009).

Another example of image interactivity that is rarely discussed in the relevant literature is colour change of displayed products. This feature, discussed in the following section, is also flagged in the screencasts as a critical incident within the experience.

- *Colour change*

Colour change is a feature that refers to having the product on display available in different colours or different prints/patterns. This is also one image interactivity feature mentioned by Fiore et al. (2005) and Lee et al. (2010).

An example of this feature is illustrated in video 16 below.
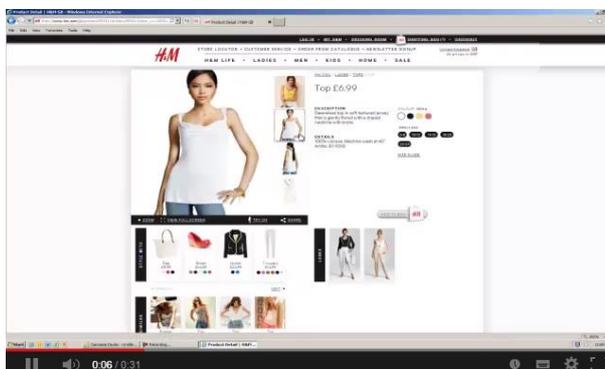
Video 16 Change of colour

See that's really cute. [...Silence, hmm ...] I don't like the material I think it looks very. Like when I go to this colour, it looks, emm, not very good!

The video showed how, by changing colour, Kat could get a better view of the product as she can see the type of material differently in all her visual interactions with the images of the garment. It is apparent that lighter colours of the product shows its material very differently to what it appears like in some darker colours. This finding also provides support to Ha et al. (2007) comment that colour change should be a useful feature of image interactivity.

Interestingly, of all image interactivity features, it is often difficult to suggest what effect exactly these features have on the shopping experience. For instance, Ha et al. (2007, p.490) comment, '*in spite of the various ways of presenting product options (e.g., interactive ways, automatic changes, showing all at once) observed in this study, research is lacking on the effects of these varying presentation methods'*.

Conversely, the screencast method allowed for clear capture of such effects, which does not necessarily immediately increase purchases. For instance, both videos 14 and 16 show avoidance decision following interactions with image 3D and colour change features.

Arguably, this is a very positive outcome as it assists the shopper in making a better, more informed decision by presenting the most possible amount of information online. This goes in line with Steph's abovementioned comment (interview 16) that such features definitely affect the chances of returning purchased items, thus it enhances the overall shopping experience even if it appears temporarily negative.

Thus far, the visual fashionscape (Section 9.1) discussed the importance of visual sensory information. Specifically the section discussed product default images with flickering images and quick view options. Moreover, the second issue that was discussed in product images and image interactivity features (zooming, 3D, and colour change). Two further atmospherics that are discussed in this section are catwalk videos and virtual fitting rooms. These are presented below.

9.1.3 Catwalk videos

Catwalk video is the one part of the visual fashionscape that 'brings products to life', as some participants put it. It is a more sophisticated form of visual product presentation. Videos, as mentioned in chapter 7, produce natural data or close to natural data, and so a catwalk video is the most natural way of bringing the garments to life on a screen. This perspective is supported by Mccormick (2009, p.170) who suggest, *'...catwalks allow the customers to see how the garment looks on a human form and how the material moves, as well as the ability to show how to accessorise an outfit for example, jewellery, shoes and a bag'*.

A variety of perspectives emerged in the interviews on how the participants perceived catwalk videos, and whether or not they would use them. For instance, Sara comments on catwalk videos as following:

> *The fact that they show you catwalk videos means that you could see what it's like which is different from when you're just standing. Put the clothes on and different from when you're moving so it'd let you see what it's like when you're gonna be walking or whatever. It is just a wee extra that lets you see what it'd actually look like… rather than just staring at a static image.*

(Sara, Interview 04)

Initially, Sara takes a very practical perspective that focuses on the utilitarian benefits of watching (or not watching) the catwalk video. She does not communicate her feelings at this stage and she explicitly announces that this element is just a wee extra. As the discussion goes, Sara says *'seeing the product on someone else is more likely to make me happy because I saw it on someone else'* (Sara, Interview 04).

Looking at her repertory grid, she then seems to be in favour of this 'wee extra'. The poles of the constructs that she mentioned in relation to catwalk videos include being 'more attractive', 'making me more certain', 'clearer', 'interested', and 'happier overall'.

Throughout the data collection, a general consensus was that catwalk videos are perceived as useful whether the participants regarded them as a necessary element or just a nice extra within the online fashion shopping environment.

Catwalk videos seem to boost confidence and certainty in online fashion shopping (Kim & Forsythe, 2009); it is like the sixth sense to the shopper. When this sixth sense 'works', the result is a happy shopper, as Hannah comments:

I am more likely to be happy with the product if I already saw it on a catwalk video, saw it on someone moving and it looked good on them and so it looks good on me [...] more confident in my purchase, more happy. (Hannah, Interview 19)

Indeed this finding is in line with existing research. For instance, as Mccormick (2009) suggest, catwalks are highly interactive, they assist the shopper in appraising products online and they make the online fashion shopping experience more enjoyable. In addition, catwalk videos are another image interactivity feature that allows for better appraising of products (Ha et al., 2007).

Supporting evidence of the role of catwalk videos is apparent in a number of screencast videos. For instance, video 17 below shows Isla viewing a catwalk video of a product she had been looking at.

Video 17 Catwalk video

Following a catwalk video interaction, like Isla, many participants make approach or avoidance decisions. That is, most shoppers will immediately make a decision of either 'adding the item to the basket' or 'leaving the page'. In video 17, Isla decides to add a dress to the basket straight after watching it on catwalk video.

This can be explained by the aforementioned scholarly stance on the importance of catwalk videos as an image interactivity technique (Ha et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2010). As Mccormick (2009) suggest being able to see the garment in action is important in appraising fashion products online.

Not only catwalk videos provide a very important feature to assist the shoppers when examining fashion products online, but also as existing research suggest, catwalks allow brands to incorporate music to convey certain messages. Mccormick (2009, p171) comment, *'...music used online in catwalks and videos convey an image of a trend or of the retailer, just as music used in a fashion show in London Fashion Week is used...'*.

Undeniably, using music on videos is a way of building sensory environment in which the shoppers use more than their vision sense. However, contrary to this stance, a pattern in this study emerged showing an unfavourable attitude toward the use of music on catwalk videos. In the following video (video 18), Linda points out that background music on videos is annoying.
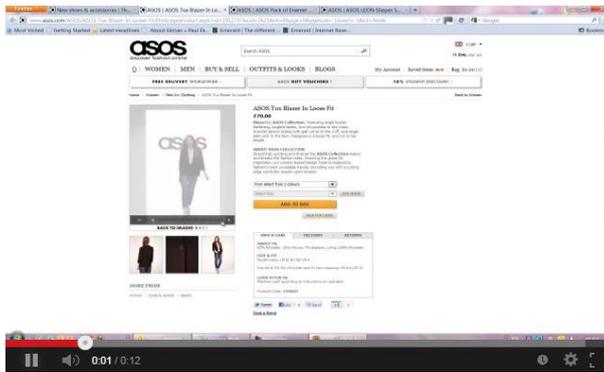
> Here you go! [Laugh]. I also hate it when they have sound on the videos [Interviewer agreeing, "yeah"]. It's quite annoying!

Taking into account that online fashion shopping may take place in public or private quiet settings, it is understandable that such loud music seems to hinder watching the videos. Mccormick's (2009) argument suggest that the use of such music can bring the shoppers near the experience of a fashion show. However, despite this, it is perhaps important to acknowledge that online fashion shopping is completely different from attending a fashion show.

Indeed, in a fashion show loud music is expected and appreciated as the event happens in public, unlike shopping for fashion online which tends to happen in private. Additionally, fashion shows' audience are usually groups, thus noise is unavoidable, and so is music; whereas online shopping is done individually where noise or music might not be appreciated to the same extent. This, as a result, influences whether or not the shoppers would click to watch the video. A few participants explained that they would hesitate to use catwalk videos if they were out and about because of the loud music.

This section has discussed the importance of catwalk videos in assisting the shoppers' appraisal of fashion products online as they are lively captured and presented in a moving form. Additionally, such videos contribute to making an enjoyable online fashion shopping experience.

This section provides supporting evidence of the importance of videos in making final approach or avoidance decisions toward a product. However, unlike previous research, the findings of this section suggest that background music on videos is less

favourable during actual shopping which may take place where such loud music is unacceptable or unwelcome by the shopper or their surroundings.

Therefore, catwalk videos, in addition to default images and product images (zooming, 3D, and colour change) are discussed as critical aspects of the visual fashionscape. The following section discusses virtual fitting rooms as the last and more contemporary form the visual fashionscape.

9.1.4   Virtual fitting rooms

The most contemporary feature of the visual fashionscape is 'virtual fitting rooms' or 'virtual dressing rooms'. Kaur (2014) describes a virtual fitting room as '*an application that allows an individual to digitally try out different apparel on a customized graphical three-dimensional model before the individual potentially purchases the apparel*'. In recent years, some online fashion retailers have integrated a virtual fitting room facility within their websites (H&M is one of many examples).

Existing research classifies virtual fitting rooms as an image interactivity technique that helps the shopper to control the presentation of fashion products online (Ha et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2010). This technique varies in its capabilities and advancements between being a simple facility that shows products in front of a dummy mannequin to being an advanced personalised avatar that resembles the size and shape of the shopper and carries their facial and skin features.

Indeed such technique is proposed as a risk reduction facility that helps the shopper to deal with the age-old problem of wanting to try the fashion items before buying them or at least the 'need for touch' of the garments (Perry et al., 2013). Therefore, the concept of a virtual dressing room was born to address these needs (Cordero, 2010).

Despite the various attempts made in the online fashion industry, consumers still do not show great interest in virtual fitting rooms. In the following episode (video 19), Kat seems to be uncomfortable as she lands on the virtual dressing room page on H&M website.
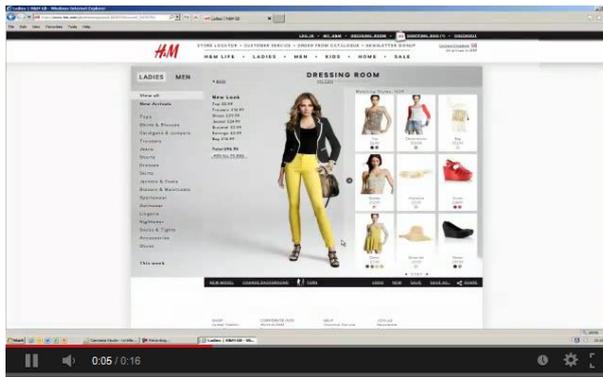
Video 19 Virtual fitting room

> Umm okay, I don't know how I just got into the dressing room (laughing!), um, but I think I want to get out of here.

The video shows Kat being clearly anxious about using something she is not familiar with, especially that she did not make the decision to use it. Instead, she was taken to this through a product image thumbnail, which caused more confusion and made her opt out.

Many participants, including Kat, expressed no interest in the virtual fitting room. In one case, the absence of interest was caused by lack of knowledge of what this feature does. As one participant says:

> *I don't know how that would work. I don't think I'd even use it. I'd prefer catwalk videos. The visuals (product images and videos) are all what the customer want, I think but the virtual fitting room is kinda unnecessary extra. (Liz, Interview 15)*

Another participant who did not see the value of a virtual fitting room comments:

> *You can imagine in your head what it will look like you don't need to see it on a virtual model. (Linda, Interview 18)*

These comments show that the customers are still mostly unaware of or unwelcoming to this new technology. Although the participants showed minimal interest in virtual dressing rooms, this is usually the case with most technological innovations (Ulwick, 2002). Ulwick comments on the mistakes that companies make when listening to customers, he says:

Companies ask their customers what they want. Customers offer solutions in the form of products or services. Companies then deliver these tangibles, and customers just don't buy. The reason is simple; customers aren't expert or informed enough to come up with solutions. [...] Customers only know what they have experienced. They cannot imagine what they don't know about emergent technologies, new materials, and the like. (2002, p.91–92)

This quote is true of technological innovation to some extent. It could be explained by Kelly's (1955) PCT that such constructs or events are simply outside the individual's repertoire system. They have never experienced it and they cannot form an opinion of it in their imagination.

In addition to the lack of knowledge or awareness of such technology, arguably virtual fitting rooms are still far from being 'fit for purpose' as they mostly allow for artificial matching of items on a dummy model rather than allowing for size/shape customisation (Cordero, 2010). Therefore, most current virtual fitting rooms are a facility that allows the user to only build outfits and match colours and accessories.

Furthermore, a different perspective that may explain why virtual fitting rooms are not highly approached by the participants is due to the shopping patterns that were explained in the previous chapter. As it has been discussed, two types of browsing, purposeful and purposeless, define two distinctive types of online fashion shopping experiences.

In cases of purposeful browsing, a number of participants clearly stated that their first and foremost choice would be brick and mortar fashion retailers rather than online retailers. On the other hand, in purposeless browsing, the participants expressed a tendency to buy a variety of items with the intention of returning some of them after trying them on. Thus, it seems in cases of purposeless browsing, virtual fitting rooms are not perceived as beneficial as shoppers are happy to take risks, whereas in purposeful browsing, it seems, virtual fitting rooms either do not effectively solve the problem or that the participants lack knowledge as to what such facilities could do.

This perspective goes against the assumption of existing research that advocates the usefulness of virtual fitting rooms. For instance, Yaoyuneyong, Foster, and Flynn

(2014) argue that *'...If consumers are motivated to shop and buy online in order to get the best price, VDRs [Virtual Dressing Rooms] can only be an aid to that process. There might be a small cost of time in order to learn how to use VDRs, but bargain shoppers are already ready to trade search time for lower prices. Learning to use VDRs can pay off in the trickier area of apparel purchasing by facilitating bargain hunting in a new category'.*

Although Yaoyuneyong et al. (2014) did not empirically study whether or not customers would be motivated to use virtual dressing rooms, their assumptions about such motives are not supported by the findings of this thesis. Indeed, future research should further study this issue to build a better understanding of the potential role of virtual fitting rooms, if any, in the online fashion shopping experience.

This section has discussed one of the most advancements of image interactivity of product presentation, virtual fitting room as a part of the visual fashionscape. Unlike the supporting evidence for dominance of visual images, zooming, 3D, colour change and catwalk videos, a general consensus amongst that participants of this study suggest avoidance of virtual fitting rooms, thus presenting it as a less effective part of the visual fashionscape either due to its current limited technological potential or due to it being deemed unnecessary extra effort by the participants.

9.1.5   *Summary of the visual fashionscape*

This section summarises the discussions made in section 9.1 concerning the visual fashionscape. As previously identified, four dimensions of the fashionscape are identified as the online fashion-shopping environment; these are, visual, verbal, social and educational. The chapter (Ch9) has, so far, discussed the visual fashionscape and has shown the most and least significant visual fashion atmospherics within the online fashion-shopping environment.

The section began by highlighting the significance of visual in everyday life (Joy et al., 2009; Schroeder., 2002) and in online shopping (Kim & Lennon, 2008; Townsend & Kahn, 2014). Product's default images were discussed as the gate to a product own page, thus a critical incident is highlighted as managing what the literature call 'first impression' (Mccormick, 2009) which can be maximised by means of flickering images techniques that allow for more than one view of the

product on its default image. This default image was also highlighted as a critical approach or avoidance atmospheric (Eroglu et al., 2001).

Moreover, the visual fashionscape section has discussed the importance of product images in general as they allow quicker information processing (Paivio et al., 1968) and foster an environment for engaging experiences (Jeong et al., 2009); and image interactivity technologies in particular (Fiore, Jin, & Kim, 2005; Lee et al., 2010).

Specifically, image zooming, 3D and colour change were discussed as important image interactivity features that assist the shoppers when examining garments online (Ha et al., 2007). Furthermore, catwalk videos were presented as an important atmospheric that 'brings product to life' as it helps the shoppers see the garments on a human model moving in all directions. Unlike Mccormick's (2009) suggestion, music background on catwalks were not appreciated by the participants of this study who thought it was irritating and unfavourable.

Finally, virtual fitting rooms, an innovative concept in its early stages, were presented as part of the visual fashionscape. The section highlighted the assumptions made by the industry (Cordero, 2010) and existing research (Yaoyuneyong et al., 2014) that the shoppers would be motivated to use this facility to reduce the risks associated with buying clothes online. The various reasons for this have been explained as (1) such technology is still underdeveloped and therefore is unfit for purpose in its current state, (2) that the shoppers are unaware of what this technology is about and therefore are apprehensive of using it, or (3) that shoppers are aware of what this technology offers but they favour spending less time on it during purposeless browsing as they are happy to buy items to try them on and return them if necessary, whereas in purposeful browsing, shoppers are unlikely to take any risks and thus would prefer to shop in brick-and-mortar stores instead.

The following section discusses the second dimension of the fashionscape of the experience. That is, the verbal fashionscape is presented and discussed using supportive evidence of both videography and repertory grid interview data.

9.2   The Verbal Fashionscape

'Ultimately, images and words are separate building blocks in the telling of stories but the two amplify each other.' **(Joy et al., 2009, p.565)**

As section 9.1 has argued for the dominance of visuals in the online fashionscape, this section discusses the role of verbal information in the online fashion shopping experience. Thus, toward the end of this section, the abovementioned quote of Joy et al. (2009) will be further discussed as to whether or not the findings of this thesis supports its argument.

The term verbal fashionscape refers to all the verbal elements put on a website to facilitate the online fashion-shopping experience. This includes verbal product information as in the text description next to the product images. It also includes other verbal information such as size guide, information about the size of the model displaying the items, and delivery information.

The stance on verbal information is not as clear as the stance on visual fashionscape. Initially during the interviews, many positive comments were made about verbal information. For example, one of the common comments during the interviews was:

Written product information makes me feel confident because I can clear any issues etc.

And specifically on when they would read them, one participant said:

If I think I might buy that I'd read verbal information like product information and delivery information. (Steph, Interview 16)

Linking verbal product information to being confident was a theme of most interviews. In another example, Sara comments:

Product information and text-based chat make you more confident, because sometimes it tells you… [Meaning, it tells details about the product]. (Sara, Interview 04)

It is remarkable, during the repertory grid interview, most participants perceived some sort of value of the verbal elements of the fashionscape. However, such views were not evident in the participants' behaviours as they were captured in the videography study.

Screencast data show, as explained in the previous section, that when interacting with high quality visual images, the role of the verbal product presentation rarely becomes critical. This view is supported by existing research such as Kim and Lennon (2008) and Townsend and Kahn (2014).

Furthremore, a variety of videographic examples were given to illustrate this point. For example, video 12 (in section 9.1.2) showed Jack's main interactions are with visual product information rather than verbal ones. Similarly, video 13 and 14 (in the same section) showed how image interactivity technologies (Fiore, Jin, & Kim, 2005; Lee et al., 2010) such as zooming and 3D images limited the role of verbal product descriptions.

In spite of the predominance of the visuals in online fashion shopping environments, certain characteristics are attributed to interactions with verbal atmospherics. For instance, Townsend and Kahn (2014) suggest that shoppers spend more time interacting with verbal information than with visual information, which indeed supports Paivio's (1968) concept of visual information processing. In addition, Ashman (2012) discusses how verbal information rather than visuals is what aids consumer's reasoning during their shopping experience.

Based on the findings of the previous sections, it is apparent that this thesis does not provide support for any critical role of verbal product information that describes the product alongside its visual display. This stance is in line with similar research that compares visual and verbal cues in online shopping environments. However, the videography study shows critical incidents in which verbal information has a clear supportive role within the experience.

It is verbal information that has no corresponding visual representation that is critical within the online fashion-shopping environment. For example, information on the size of the model displaying the products, in addition to size charts and delivery and return information are all critical verbal information that cannot be represented in a visual format. Therefore, these three verbal elements are identified as an important part of the verbal fashionscape. The following three subsections address these three elements in detail.

9.2.1 Size guide

A size guide or a size chart is a feature that is available on many online fashion websites to help the shoppers estimating their right size according to a table of measurements. An important feature that Kim, Kim and Lennon (2006) described as an important service attribute that helps the shopper's decision making process and that more websites should use them for this purpose.

Very limited research on size charts or size guides could be found. However, in addition to Kim et al. (2006), Mccormick (2009) also refer to size charts as a customer service features. Both scholarly articles refer to size charts as verbal information, though Kim et al. (2006) refer to a number of variations of size chart in which some include a visual image and others do not.

An example of a size chart within this study is illustrated in video 20 below. In the video, Hannah chooses size 12 for a trouser and, just before adding it to the basket, she decides to look at the size guide. Reading the information on size measurement, she realises that she needs another size and she adjusts accordingly.

Video 20 Size guide

Indeed this video shows how verbal information can become a critical incident in the online fashion-shopping experience. Size guide, in this instant, helped Hannah to choose a better fitting size by reading the detailed measurements of the size chart. Therefore, it could be considered as important support that the shopper needs to be able to choose the right product.

This finding is in line with Kim et al. who comment on the importance of size charts saying: *'...for online apparel retailers, it is critical to provide detailed product information and size charts because customers can not physically examine an item*

prior to purchase, but they do need an adequate amount of information to make a purchase decision.' (2006, p72)

On the other hand, it has been highlighted in previous research that size charts are not completely effective and thus further improvements are required in this area. For instance, Otieno, Harrow and Lea‑Greenwood suggest: *'...although size charts provide norms for garment fit, they have been a source of confusion and dissatisfaction amongst consumers. This is because, even within the same retailer, there can be a variation of actual measurements in garments, which are labelled with the same size code. There is even more size variation amongst different retailers.'* (2005, p.300)

Consequently, whether or not size guides and size charts have reached optimal effectiveness, they are undeniably critical within the online fashion shopping experience. This conclusion is supported by the findings of this thesis (video 20) as well as existing research such as Kim et al. (2006) and Otieno et al. (2005). Thus, this thesis emphasises the importance of size charts as a form of verbal information that adds valuable meaningful support to the online fashion shopping experience.

In addition to size guides and size charts, another smaller detail that was highlighted throughout the videography study is the information of the size of the model. Thus, the following section highlights this issue.

9.2.2 Information on the model size

Some websites give explicit information about the size of the model who is displaying the products visually. For instance, New Look includes information on the product's page such as (Model is 5'8" and wears UK 10/EU 38/US 6).

Similar to size guides, such information is thought to be useful in assisting the shoppers when examining fashion products online. Although, information on model size did not appear within the relevant literature that is cited throughout this thesis, it has been highlighted as an important feature for some participants. For instance, Rachel comments on this, *'I like being told what size the model's wearing because it helps me decide on what I should get, which size I should get'* (Rachel, Interview 05)

Being able to compare the shopper's size with the model's size is very important in making a more correct estimation of what size to buy. In this instance, although the

visual elements display the products perfectly, there is an undeniable supporting role for verbal information as well.

This perhaps could also be arguably supported by the stance of Kim et al (2006) in which they argue that detailed product and size information is a must when purchasing fashion products online. Indeed, this issue goes back to the dilemma of size and fit, therefore, when seeing a model displaying a size 10 of the product for instance, having the model's height and weight allows the shoppers to make a comparison with their own measurements for better-estimated sizes.

At this point, perhaps it is worth noting that even if research on the importance of the model's size information is not evident in relevant research, existing research have long argued for the impact of model's sizes on consumers. A wide range of studies has highlighted the effects on model of size zero on consumers in general and young females in particular (e.g. Apeagyei, 2008; Dittmar & Howard, 2004; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004).

This perspective was also apparent among the participants of this thesis. For instance, one participant, Linda (Interview 18) explained in her interview how it is disappointing when the model is 'too skinny'; she went on to explain how she compares her figure to the model's and that often makes her think that the product will never look good on her because she is not as skinny.

Although this is not of direct relevance to the issue of providing verbal information on the size of the model, it does still emphasise that shoppers compare themselves to the models displaying the products. Therefore, it could be argued that providing information on the true measurements of the models and the sizes of clothes they wear is critical in helping the shoppers making such comparisons to help them choose products that fit.

Thus, information on model size as well as size guides and size charts are verbal information that is deemed critical in the online fashion shopping experience. The final form of verbal information that has been highlighted as a critical element is delivery and return policy which is discussed in the following section.

9.2.3 *Delivery and return policy*

The last element of the verbal fashionscape that has a critical role within the online fashion shopping experience is delivery and return policy. Indeed verbal information on delivery and return is extremely important in online shopping in general (Huang & Oppewal, 2006) and in the context of fashion in particular.

Eroglu et al. (2001) classify delivery and return policies as high task relevance cues, thus indicating the high importance and immediate relevance of delivery and return information in online fashion shopping. Furthermore, Mccormick (2009) referred to these elements as 'elements that relate to the ordering process of fashion items online'.

Unsurprisingly, free delivery and free returns were popular throughout both the interviews and the videos. As the previous chapter (Ch8) highlighted, due to the popularity of purposeless browsing, it is very common for customers to buy a variety of products, or even buy one product in two different sizes, with the intention to try them on upon delivery and then make a choice on what to keep and what to return.

This pattern of buying fashion products online with the intention to return some of them has been largely evident in this thesis that it has been compared to the concept of retail borrowing (Piron & Young, 2000) in which the shoppers buy items and return them after they have been used. However, as aforementioned, unlike retail borrowing, purposeless browsing includes an intention to return items after they are tried on without using them.

In order for purposeless browsing to result in actual purchases, a number of participants emphasised that free delivery would tempt them to make a purchase. Additionally, the process of returning items (cost and method) is also essential in the decision making process of buying clothes online. For instance, in video 21 below Hannah consults the delivery and return policy and decides not to buy an item due to the unavailability of a return-to-store option.

> *I normally like to get stuff that you can return to the shop because like I hate sending stuff back [Interviewer says, "yeah"] So I normally do the Click and Collect or get it delivered but cos it's a brand it says that I can only post it, so definitely wouldn't get that.*

The importance of delivery and return information could also be identified in research studying the effect of delivery charges on intentions to shop online. For instance, a recent research paper suggests that delivery fees and return charges as well as the inconvenience of delivery times, waiting time, and method of return must be outweighed by perceived benefits of online shopping rather than brick and mortar shopping (VanScoyoc & Honeycutt, 2015).

Consequently, although this thesis does not focus on the impact of delivery and return charges and methods of online fashion shopping experiences, it is perhaps clear that this section has highlighted the importance of an element of the verbal fashionscape that is clearly essential to this experience.

9.2.4   *Summary of the verbal fashionscape*

This section summarises the discussions made in section 9.2 concerning the verbal fashionscape. As previously identified, four dimensions of the fashionscape are identified as the online fashion-shopping environment; these are, visual, verbal, social and educational. Having discussed the visual fashionscape in section (9.1) of this chapter, the second section (9.2) has presented a discussion on the role of the verbal fashionscape in the online fashion shopping experience.

This section began by addressing the importance and predominance of visual product information (findings of section 9.1) supported by Kim and Lennon (2008) and

Townsend and Kahn (2014). This has naturally limited the role of verbal product information in the shopping experience.

The section therefore has highlighted the contradictory results between the repertory grid interviews and the videography studies with regard to verbal (written) product information. For example, how consumers perceived written product information as an absolute necessity for their online fashion shopping, whereas, in practice, they completely ignored it throughout the videography study due to high quality of images and catwalk videos that made reading product description of no value.

Indeed, by revisiting the concept of visual information processing by Paivio et al. (1968), it is natural to browse visual information rather than verbal ones if they both offer the same kind of knowledge. Hence, no matter how important verbal product information the participants thought, in practice they have always opted to interact with visual information where possible.

Apart from verbal product information, three important verbal elements were identified and discussed in this section. Size guide and other size-related information in addition to delivery and return policy were discussed as examples of verbal information that form critical incidents in the online fashion shopping experience.

The importance of size guides in assisting the shoppers when buying fashion products online was highlighted and supported by existing research such as Kim et al. (2006) and Otieno et al. (2005). Furthermore, information of model's size and measurements were also highlighted as an important part of the verbal fashionscape as they allow the shoppers to compare their body measurements with the model's in order to choose the best fitting sizes.

Finally, delivery and return policy was discussed as yet another important verbal information in the shopping experience. As Eroglu et al. (2001) highlighted, this information is considered as high relevant cues therefore such information is considered a key element in the fashionscape and central to the online fashion shopping experience. The importance of delivery and return information was also supported by research that studies the influence of delivery and return charges and methods on online shopping (Huang & Oppewal, 2006; VanScoyoc & Honeycutt, 2015).

By revisiting the quote of Joy et al. (2009, p.565) at the beginning of this section (9.2) 'Ultimately, images and words are separate building blocks in the telling of stories but the two amplify each other', it is worth noting that the findings of this thesis is in agreement with this quote. On one hand, this research supports the superiority of visual information in online fashion shopping environments, therefore, verbal information that repeats what visual images already communicate do not necessarily amplify them. However, as the section presented, verbal information that has no form of visual representation is essential part of the fashionscape. Thus, it could be concluded that this thesis emphasises the importance of verbal information as a supporting tool where a visual substitute is not available or is less effective.

9.3 <u>The Social Fashionscape</u>

'I don't believe in social networks. I don't look for reviews. See if I'm buying something to do with technology, like more expensive, I'd look… but not for clothes.' **(Joe, Interview 06)**

With this statement, one of the older participants turned down the social media card during his repertory grid interview. 'Fashion is very personal' was his justification for not wanting any social media presence in his online fashion-shopping experience.

Even though, this attitude could be attributed to and explained by the participant's personality, life style, age, and the fact that he refuses to be on any social network website. Surprisingly, this attitude was not his alone. In fact, for most participants – even the younger more socially connected, technology savvy ones – the social dimensions on apparel websites were not highly relevant or present in their experiences.

The social fashionscape includes all web atmospherics that would allow activities of sharing or engaging with specific social media platforms available on, or in relation to, apparel websites. That is, social network activities such as Facebook pages and 'like' links, Twitter hash-tags, and customers' ratings and reviews. In addition to this, engaging with blogs is considered as a part of the social fashionscape when part of a website, although blogs, in general, have an educational dimension and will be discussed in the educational fashionscape.

It is noteworthy to mention that when this research initially began, the social angle of the online buying environment was its centre of attention. After all, scholars in social media marketing (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011) and specifically social shopping for fashion (Ashman & Vazquez, 2012; J Kang, 2009), have agreed on the significance of social media in influencing customers.

Various studies highlighted the importance of various social dimensions in online shopping for fashion. Examples are the role of social media pages on Facebook and Twitter in luxury fashion shopping (Kim & Ko, 2010), and the role of customer reviews in online-shopping behaviour (Dawson & Kim, 2010). These studies, and others, have actively promoted a very strong presence of social media in online fashion shopping.

In spite of the identification of social media marketing as a 'hot topic' in consumer research (Ashman et al., 2014), and unlike the aforementioned scholarly articles , this thesis does not provide strong support of a critical importance of social media elements in the online fashion-shopping environment.

At this stage, it is worth noting that the social dimensions of online fashion shopping are much wider than the focus of this thesis. The focus here is on the social fashionscape of apparel websites, i.e. the social elements that can be found on a fashion shopping website. For example, social media elements that are considered part of the social fashionscape are customer reviews and product's rating, in addition to social network links, shares, and groups.

Various other social dimensions of online fashion shopping can be found in the literature such as YouTube haul videos (Jeffries, 2011; Keats, 2012; Sykes & Zimmerman, 2014), online communities and blogs (Ashman & Vazquez, 2012). These issues did not come up in either the interviews or the videography study; thus, they are excluded from this study.

Therefore, this section specifically focuses on discussing the social fashionscape as the participants of this study, throughout the repertory grid interviews as well as the screencast videos, identify it. Two main subsections are therefore discussed below; these are customer reviews and star ratings, and social network links.

9.3.1 Customer reviews and star rating

Existing research has strongly emphasised the importance and essential role of customer reviews year after year (e.g. Cheng & Ho, 2015; Dawson & Kim, 2010; Dennis & Morgan, 2010; Gupta, Kumar, & Jaidka, 2015; Hu & Liu, 2004; Junyong Kim & Gupta, 2011). For instance, statements such as '*online reviews are an important resource for people, looking to make buying decisions, or searching for information and recommendations about a product or business.*' (Gupta, Kumar, & Jaidka, 2015, p.241) and that '*online customer reviews greatly influence consumer purchasing decisions*' (Cheng & Ho, 2015, p.883) have become widely accepted and frequently cited in the aforementioned relevant literature.

Indeed, various endeavours are made to better understand customer reviews and their significance in online shopping. For example, Hu and Liu (2004) suggest techniques

and methods of mining and summarising these reviews for improved benefit to both the retailers and the customers.

In the context of online fashion shopping, it seems, existing research has often adopted this generic perspective on customer reviews without close examination of its role in this specific context. For example, Dawson and Kim (2010) advocates the importance of customer reviews citing Wagner (2008) as a reference to support this claim. However, it is perhaps worth noting that Wagner (2008) itself does not specifically report the importance of customer reviews in the specific context of online fashion shopping, instead the report is made within the broad context of online retailing.

On the other hand, Dennis and Morgan suggest that the participants of their study '*noted that features like being able to read customer reviews and receive style advice improved their purchasing choices*' (2010, p.163). Although this quote is important as it is made within the specific context of online fashion shopping, it is worthy to note that Dennis and Morgan's (2010) work focuses on a specific type of social shopping site in which the reviews are made by identifiable members of the particular community.

This case is arguably different from reviews that are found on apparel websites such as ASOS, Boohoo, etc. where the reviewers are not known. Evidently, Cheng and Ho argue that '*the reviewer's number of followers, reviewer's level of expertise, image count, and word count all have a significant positive effect on the readers perception of the usefulness of the reviews*' (2015, p.883). Therefore, it could be argued that Dennis and Morgan's (2010) stance perhaps does not apply to standalone apparel websites where such information on the reviewers is not available.

According to the findings of this thesis, within the context of online fashion shopping experiences, the importance of customer reviews is challenged. Although different views and comments were made regarding this feature, a clear voice was unavoidably noticeable in the data that customer reviews are not as important as previous research has suggested.

An example of this is Joe's comment at the beginning of the social fashionscape section '*I don't look for reviews. See if I'm buying something to do with technology, like more expensive, I'd look… but not for clothes.*' (Joe, Interview 06).

Another example is Sara's comment below:

'Customer reviews… I'd never actually looked at that at all! I do think it's important but it is not something that I'd look at. If I found something I really like and I watched the catwalk video of it and I read product information and I liked it then I'd just go ahead and buy it. I would maybe look for customer reviews in something to do with like technology or something like that but not for clothes. Because, everybody is different anyway. Not everybody like the same clothes that I like so it is not something I'd look at. […] Even if there are negative reviews, I'd still take the risk especially if I'd been on the website before. It's not really the end of the world. I can always return it. […] It might make me feel uneasy or uncertain, it would be at the back of my mind but I would probably still buy it.' (Sara, Interview 0004)

Sara's stance on customer reviews was identified within a main theme of finding customer reviews less relevant to fashion shopping and more important in shopping for technology. This statement supports the proposition that fashion is unique in nature and that certain market sectors have more or less appeal in online shopping.

Joe and Sara, among many others, expressed little interest in reading customer reviews of fashion items. They both agreed that they were more likely to read reviews if they were shopping for a technology item (standardised products). This theme of neglecting customer reviews in online fashion shopping is apparent in both what my participants said in the interviews and what they actually did during the video sessions. There are several reasons for this.

A. *The individualistic nature of fashion*

It is apparent from both Joe's and Sara's quotes that their first justification for not engaging with customer reviews is the individualistic nature of fashion. For example, 'fashion is very personal' *(Joe, Interview 06)* and 'everybody is different anyway' *(Sara, Interview 04).*

Whether or not someone likes a piece of clothing does not indicate if others will like it; especially when this 'someone' is anonymous, has no known leading fashion position, or not relevant to the shopper. This stance might be different in cases of

social shopping websites where recognised members are the one who write such reviews (Cheng & Ho, 2015).

Fashion is down to the individual and 'liking' is highly subjective. Therefore, many shoppers seem to place much less value on customer reviews on apparel websites.

In addition to the individualistic nature of fashion, another important explanation is addressed in the following point.

B. Low risks, easy returns

Another rationale for ignoring customer reviews is the convenience of delivery and return policies. Indeed this issue is closely related to the purposeless/purposeful browsing types that were explained in the previous chapter (Ch8).

As Chapter 8 highlighted, most online fashion shopping experiences are not task driven, and so they do not follow a purposeful browsing style in which the shopper actively searches for a specific fashion item with specific criteria. Instead, purposeless shopping experiences where the shoppers are more interested in learning about new fashion trends, collections, etc. are the most popular.

Consequently, if more of these experiences are purposeless in nature and their aim is as wide as shopping for summer clothes for instance, customers then find it extremely easy to return products if they do not match their preferences, size, etc. Thus, as aforementioned, there is a general consensus that online fashion shopping involves actually buying a variety of items, trying them on, and keeping or returning some of them afterward. It is a very low-risk decision, in this case, for the shoppers especially with many websites offering free delivery and return.

Therefore, even when customers read reviews and find them negative, in many cases they may still be willing to take the risk. This was highlighted in Sara's comment, *'even if there are negative reviews, I'd still take the risk especially if I'd been on the website before. It's not really the end of the world. I can always return it.'*

Interestingly, although negative reviews may not stop a participant from buying an item, certain emotions might still be triggered as a result. For example, when discussing negative reviews, Lin suggests:

'Negative reviews make me disappointed… tension between me liking the product and the negative reviews... Might go to actual store. If I really like it I might take a chance… it is also about the price. […] I'd feel guilty if I buy something that customer reviews said it wasn't good. Hahaha' (Lin, Interview 08)

The emotional states Lin expresses in the case of encountering negative customer reviews despite liking the product are feelings of guilt, tension and disappointment Yet, in spite of these emotions, she goes on to confirm that she may still buy the items.

Interestingly, current research suggests that the value of the reviews can be perceived differently according to how the review is written. Kim and Gupta (2011, p.985) suggests that '*negative emotional expressions in a single negative review tend to decrease the reviews' informative value and make consumers' product evaluations less negative because consumers attribute the negative emotions to the reviewer's irrational dispositions. However, positive emotional expressions in a single positive review do not influence consumers' product evaluations significantly even though consumers attribute the positive emotions to the product.*'

Kim and Gupta's (2011) value of information was relevant to one participant, Steph, who suggested that reviews can be helpful sometimes if they communicate information that is not available on the website. She suggests:

A lot of the time when I shop online, it [customer reviews] would tell you what kinda sizes to go for, they say it's quite big maybe you want to go for a size lower than you always go for. So, I think that can be quite important when you're searching or browsing for something. (Steph, Interview 16).

Although reviews in this instance seems to be an important part of the online fashion shopping experience, Steph, similar to the rest of the participants, does not express any value of the reviews in terms of the reviewers opinions and evaluations of the items. Instead she focuses on tips that the reviewers might leave to help her buy the right size not to decide whether or not she would buy an item.

The discussion in this section, so far, has highlighted the findings of this thesis in relation to customer reviews as a part of the social fashionscape. As discussed, unlike

existing research (e.g. Cheng & Ho, 2015; Dawson & Kim, 2010; Dennis & Morgan, 2010; Gupta, Kumar, & Jaidka, 2015; Hu & Liu, 2004; Junyong Kim & Gupta, 2011), the findings here do not provide support for the importance of customer reviews in online fashion shopping.

Nevertheless, surprisingly, an alternative to customer reviews that was highlighted in the videos is star ratings. Star rating is a visual rating system that usually uses five stars i.e. 1-5 points for rating items with 5 indicating the top, best, highest ratings.

Star ratings were not discussed in the interviews because none of the participants brought them up in their discussions. However, the videos were invaluable in highlighting all these details and their role in the experience. Indeed such a minor atmospheric can be easily missed when discussing the overall online fashion-shopping environment, but as navigations are captured in the videos, such details are spotted and analysed accordingly.

Unlike customer reviews that are usually found on the product own page, star ratings are often available underneath the default image of a product during browsing of a collection. Whether a form of purposeless or purposeful browsing is taking place is it sometimes important being able to read the star ratings information as it provides a way of filtering through products with low ratings.

Arguably, this may influence whether or not the shopper would click on an item with a low star rating at this stage. The following episode shows Liz referring specifically to the star rating at the browsing stage.
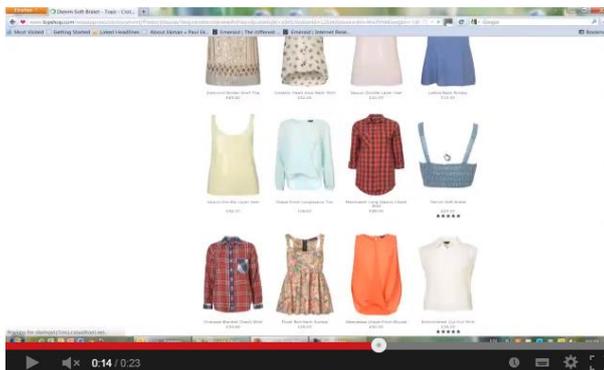
Video 22 Star ratings

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Erm, I think usually when I went on this, when you put your mouse over something they have the stars? Oh no these are new products! [Silence] Like this for example. *(Liz, Video 15)*

Star ratings at the browsing stage may be a way of indirectly filtering products that have low or high ratings. This is embedded on some websites in the direct filtering menu options as 'filter by ratings'. However, this was not identified as a critical incident in the online fashion-shopping experience.

Liz's eagerness to find the star ratings for the items she is browsing shows that they will influence whether or not she considers a certain item. This could be attributed to emotional states of comfort, assurance and confidence, as she will consider clicking only on items with high ratings.

To summarise, section 9.3.1, the first subsection of the social fashionscape section (9.3), has discussed customer reviews and star ratings as part of the social dimension of the fashionscape. The section has discussed the limited role of customer reviews in the case of online fashion shopping. A finding that challenges the mainstream stance of existing research that advocated a central role of customer reviews in online shopping.

The rationale for such a contradicting result is discussed in two main points: (1) the individualistic nature of fashion and its high subjective nature unlike other standardised products such as technology, and (2) due to the perceived ease of delivery and return, especially in cases of free services, the participants indicated that a review of negative nature would not stop them from buying the product which they will be happy to return if it is not suitable.

Furthermore, the section has briefly highlighted star rating as a form of visual review (rating) of products that seems to be more important at the browsing stage. This is because star ratings under the default images of products act as a filtering technique in which the shopper may subconsciously avoid clicking on low star rated items.

In addition to customer reviews and star ratings, another important aspect of the social fashionscape is the presence of social network websites in online fashion shopping. This is fully discussed in the following section.

9.3.2 Social network links

Fashion retailers offer two types of direct links to social network sites. The first type is the 'share to Facebook, Twitter, etc.' option, which is usually placed on each product page, so the shopper could quickly 'share' an item they like with their friends. The second option is to 'like' the retailer's page or to become a member of their group on social network sites.

Despite the high popularity of social media marketing and the great potential it has for online fashion shopping (Ashman et al., 2014), research suggests there is a major lack of strategic understanding of what this media could bring to a business or an industry. For instance, Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre comment: *'Although it is clear that – for better or for worse – social media is very powerful, many executives are reluctant or unable to develop strategies and allocate resources to engage effectively with social media.'* (2011, p.242)

The findings of this thesis, in relation to the employment of social media within the online fashionscape, supports this perspective as it shows little success of the use of one major social network site, Facebook, within the context of online fashion shopping experiences.

Facebook is the major, most popular social network site (Ezumah, 2014) which was the main focus of this thesis findings. Thus, the rest of this section (9.3.2) will discuss and present the findings on the interactions with Facebook-related functions, i.e. 'share' and 'like' interactions.

A. *Sharing on social network sites*

'People tweet, blog, et cetera to meet new like-minded people, to find true love, to build their self-esteem, or to be on the cutting edge of new ideas or trending topics.' (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p.244)

In line with this comment, other than socialising, making friendships and learning about a variety of different things, the participants of this study showed no interest in social network sharing functions. The general theme in all interviews and videos is that the participants avoid sharing on Facebook the outfits they are going to buy. They had several reasons. On one hand there is a desire for exclusivity in fashion shopping, e.g. *'I don't want anyone to know where I buy my stuff from, or how much*

they cost me'. On the other hand, one participant laughed and said '*I have all sort of 'people' on my Facebook, but I will never ask their opinion on my clothes!*'

In fact, some participants did not know that there is an option to share products on social network sites in the first place. For example, as Liz looks at the product page of a 'top' she may consider buying, she notices the links to Facebook and Twitter, and her reaction is 'oh that's good'. However, despite saying she thinks it is good to have them on the page; she did not click on or engage with them at all.
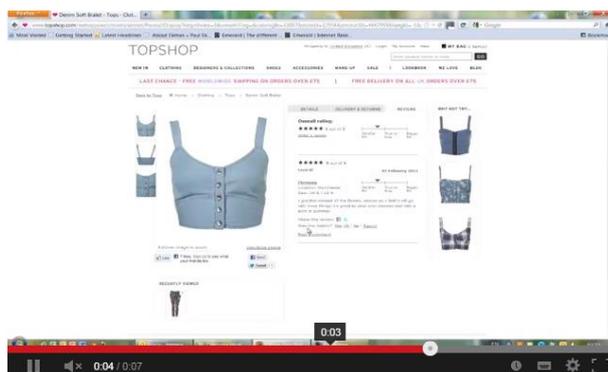
Video 23 Noticing the social network sharing links on a product page

> 'I've never seen this before! That's quite good.' [Interviewer agreeing: "Oh yeah"].

It is interesting that many fashion retailers choose to embed this option on each product page, when hardly any participant showed an interest in it. Topshop, for example, is, in the videos, one of the most frequently visited sites. Moreover, even though this link to social networks is available for each and every item on the site, there was no other incident recorded where the participant engaged with it or even paid attention to it at all.

The only other incident when a participant wanted to try this link is shown in video 24 below. The video shows Isla's attempt to engage with the Facebook links by trying to share a favourite bag that she found on a website as a way to drop hints for a gift for her. When attempting to share the link and being asked to sign in to her Facebook account, the login failed repeatedly and she became frustrated. After a few attempts to share the link she still could not share the item from the retailer website directly to her Facebook account. In the end, she decided to copy the link and paste it on her Facebook page, an option that was much easier and simpler.

Isla may have insisted on sharing the bag because she was a participant in a study. It might be related to her commitment to show me how this sharing could be part of her experience. After discussing this, she concluded that she might not necessarily have insisted as much to try the sharing option if she was shopping on her own.
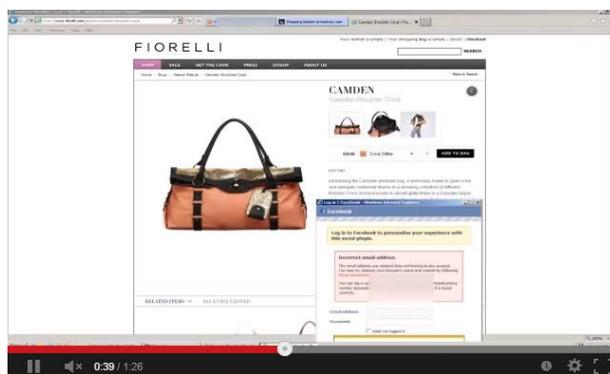
Video 24 Sharing to Facebook

> Oh, so nice. [Silence] I want to drop some hints; I like this bag, on Facebook. In case anyone wants to be nice and buy me a present. What? [Silence] Hm. It won't let me do it. (Hums a tune).

It is apparent that the engagement level with Facebook for online fashion shopping is surprisingly not as high as it is thought to be. At least, it has no direct connection on the shopping experience despite the one attempt shown in the previous episode.

In addition to sharing fashion items and outfits on Facebook, the second function that relates to social network engagement is group memberships and page 'likes'; this is discussed below.

B. Group membership and page fans

The second type is following the Facebook pages of fashion retailers. An example of this is the Facebook page of ASOS attracting more than 3.5 Million 'likes' as of June 2015. None of my participants showed a direct link between liking a page and their online fashion-shopping experience. Even those who like these pages, they have motivations for doing so other than being 'fans' of the brand. On this matter, Steph expressed her detailed perspective on this by saying.

I follow a couple, I follow Missguided on Facebook, so it is useful cuz it just comes up on your homepage [Newsfeed] and you can kinda… you're almost browsing the website without actually going on the website. You can see what's new in and you can see… You know if you're sitting on the bus and you're looking through Facebook on your phone, you can see, you can say [ohh…] just look at things. It's not like you're actually shopping, so I think social network pages are quite a good idea. And it can, it lets you know about competitions and I know… I think it was Boohoo? Or Misguided? I don't know, they had, if you like them on Facebook and enter the code using your Facebook page you get 10% off! So, umm, probably good for things like that. (Steph, Interview 16)

Steph's motivation for liking online fashion retailers on Facebook is twofold. On one hand, she points out that the Facebook pages will keep her informed and up-to-date about the latest fashion trends and collections of a website. The convenience of being able to have such continuous access to this fashion world even without intentionally starting an online-shopping task appeals to her. There is a clear educational angle to this, which will be further explained in the following section (9.4).

On the other hand, and most common for all the participants who follow fashion retailers Facebook pages, is that the monetary motivation for liking a page is usually what makes 'fans' like these pages. As Steph suggests, knowing about competitions, discounts and monetary incentives is much more likely to encourage them to like a page than the intrinsic motivations suggested by Verhagen, et al. (2012).

The major resistance to the online fashionscape was apparent throughout my two studies and mostly the participants did not believe in the so-called 'social'. Many viewed it as another suspect way for companies to push their advertising messages on them; others distrusted customer reviews, or at least thought they were of no value to their online fashion-shopping experience. In general, it seems that the statement by Page and Pitt (2011, p.iii) applies very well in the context of social fashionscapes:

Our thousands of followers on Twitter, and our vast networks of 'friends' on Facebook, deceive us about our social circles, without imposing the demands of intimacy. We text each other, 'like' and comment on our friends' status(es),

and follow each other doggedly, and still do not talk to each other. Whether we want to be or not, we are aware of how the illusion of virtual intimacy degrades our real life experiences. (Page & Pitt, 2011, p.iii)

One of the illusions of the virtual world compared to the social network reality is that fans follow us because they 'like' us, and they are attached to us; that fans are so proud of their relationship with our brand that they want to show it to their friends and relatives.

Verhagen, et al. (2012) suggest that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for getting involved with businesses on social networks are equally important and that they go hand in hand to achieve the utilitarian and entertainment value of such engagement. These extrinsic motivations seem to be prominent in the context of social network pages of fashion retailers where an emphasis on competitions, discounts, and free offers is key.

On the other hand, an important part of browsing Facebook pages of fashion retailers is, as aforementioned, the continuous exposure to fashion trends. This, indeed, offers an experience of learning. An informal chance of fashion education, in which members of these pages are subconsciously aware of fashion trends, latest brand's stories, etc. This forms another important dimension in the online fashion shopping experience, that is, the educational fashionscape that is discussed in the next section (9.4).

9.3.3   *Summary of the social fashionscape*

This section summarises the discussions made in section 9.3 concerning the social fashionscape. As previously identified, four dimensions of the fashionscape are identified as the online fashion-shopping environment; these are, visual, verbal, social and educational. Having discussed both the visual fashionscape (Section 9.1) and the verbal fashionscape (Section 9.2), the third section of this chapter has presented a discussion on the role of the social fashionscape in the online fashion shopping experience.

This section has surprisingly highlighted a very limited role of the social fashionscape in online fashion shopping experiences. Unlike the current stance of existing research that supports a critical role of social media in online fashion

shopping (e.g. Kang, 2009; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Ashman & Vazquez, 2012)

The section has identified two main elements in relation to social fashionscape, these are, customer reviews and social media networks. First, the section shows how the significance of customer reviews is well accepted in existing research (e.g. Cheng & Ho, 2015; Dawson & Kim, 2010; Dennis & Morgan, 2010; Gupta, Kumar, & Jaidka, 2015; Hu & Liu, 2004; Junyong Kim & Gupta, 2011).

Criticisms on the stance of customer reviews are made using support of this thesis data. Customer reviews appear less important and almost completely ignored in fashion shopping. The rationale for this can be explained by the individualistic personal nature of fashion, using some of the participant's words (*fashion is personal, everybody is different*, etc.). Additionally, it is argued that due to the popularity of purposeless fashion shopping, combined with free and easy delivery and return options, many are ready to buy and return items when necessary thus avoiding online reviews.

The second element of the social fashionscape is social media networks, a highly hot topic of our era (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Verhagen et al., 2012; Ashman et al., 2014). In this thesis, Facebook is the focus of the discussion due to its highest popularity (Ezumah, 2014).

Similar to the stance of customer reviews, little interest has been expressed in interacting with social media links whether by sharing outfits on Facebook or by liking or becoming a member of a group or a page of a fashion retailer. Building on Verhagen, et al. (2012), extrinsic motivations, mainly discounts and vouchers were the most common motivation for liking a page of Facebook.

As this section has discussed both customer reviews and social network links, it is worth noting that there are various other dimensions to the social element that were not discussed here, e.g. the growth of fashion blogs and YouTube haul videos. Although there may exist some social links in such a context, the main and most important role of such dimensions is rather educational.

The following section therefore will discuss the educational fashionscape, in which various issues may appear to have a social extension. The rationale for focusing on

them from an educational angle is the way they appeared in the research; the participants referred to their educational values and how they 'learn' from them rather than how socially attractive they are.

9.4   The Educational Fashionscape

'I go to fashion blogs to learn where to buy from, online, and also to learn about the looks...' **(Lin, Interview 08)**

As section 9.3 has argued for the limited role of the social dimension of the online fashionscape, this section focuses on highlighting the role of the educational fashionscape in the online fashion shopping experience. Indeed, the educational fashionscape may overlap with the social one at various points.

Separating this section from the previous one is neither a claim nor a suggestion that the topic of the rest of this section cannot be identified as social. However, dedicating a section of the educational fashionscape allows a focusing lens on one extremely important issue that came up during the two studies of this thesis: getting educated for fashion purposes by interacting with the fashionscape.

Crews, Smith and Clinton-Scott (2015) suggest that interests in browsing social media pages include *'...exploring current fashion trends, interacting with fashion brands, and gaining information'*. Therefore, as Cheung, Liu and Lee (2015) suggest social shopping is a social learning process, it is about learning. In line with this, the educational fashionscape opens up new ways to understanding the online fashion shopping experience.

Very limited research has been done of the educational experiences of online fashion shopping. Referring back to Pine and Gilmore (1998) 4Es model, educational experiences is one that requires active participation and is more likely to happen in a state of absorption rather than immersion.

Whilst Pine and Gilmore do not specifically discuss the atmospherics in which such experiences take place, Jeong et al. (2009) suggest that consumers within educational fashion shopping experiences "learn" from a variety of product presentation atmospherics. They conclude:

> *'Educational experience was significantly affected by product presentation, but contrary to what was hypothesized, educational experience did not influence emotion. Perhaps respondents perceived the educational experience to be a logical process usually connected to the prosaic textual information, where emotional experience is limited or downplayed.'* (Jeong et al., 2009, p.119)

The educational fashionscape refer to the various stimuli in the fashionscape that have educational value because they teach the fashion shoppers, inspire them, and help them to dress according to seasonal trends. Among the elements of the educational fashionscape, 'trendy looks', 'matching items', 'inspirational fashion houses' and blogs are identified as important educational fashionscape elements.

This section, therefore, addresses the aforementioned elements of the educational fashionscape in detail. The first educational fashionscape element discussed is the 'trendy looks and matching items' section that is available on various websites such as ASOS, and Topshop. This is followed by a section on 'inspirational fashion houses' and a last one on 'blogs'.

9.4.1 *Trendy looks and matching items*

The essence of the 'trendy looks' section, which may also be called 'trends', 'latest looks', etc., is to publish 'looks' of outfits that are put together from the new arrivals or the latest collection of fashion items. Either the retailer itself or its fans (customers) put together these 'looks'.

Similarly, 'matching items' appears on a product page to build an outfit of said product. The difference between this and the 'trendy looks' section is that a matching items section is usually available on each product page and therefore it requires no intention or effort on the shopper's part to view it.

Although different titles might be given to these sections, the distinction that should be made clear is between the section that shows suggested items to complete the 'look' from the one that publishes a variety of outfits in a collage or e-magazine style.

Due to the very narrow scope of these sections, it is perhaps expected that very little research have been done specifically to address this type of web atmospherics. Although, technology studies and computing system research shows a number of studies that work on developing these sections for the website, (Liu et al., 2012; Shen, Lieberman, & Lam, 2007), these are not widely addressed in web atmospherics research, online consumer behaviour or online shopping experience literature.

In online fashion shopping literature, for instance, Mccormick (2009) only briefly mentions style advisor, suggestive inspiration, and trend recommendations as value added features in online fashion shopping. Although these terms do not appear in Mccormick's (2009) work as educational fashion features, a number of statements are made throughout her work to suggest learning from these features. For example, style advisers 'provide a bit of lifestyle information' and suggestive inspiration 'gives you ideas of alternatives' (p.218)

A variety of examples from the videography data show interactions with matching outfits and trends as critical incidents within the shopper's experience. Therefore, this section shall provide some examples before discussing the rationale for identifying these elements as 'educational'.

An example of interactions with the trends sections is highlighted in the next episode (video 25). In this video, Hannah chooses to view 'today's looks' and she browses different outfits as shown below.
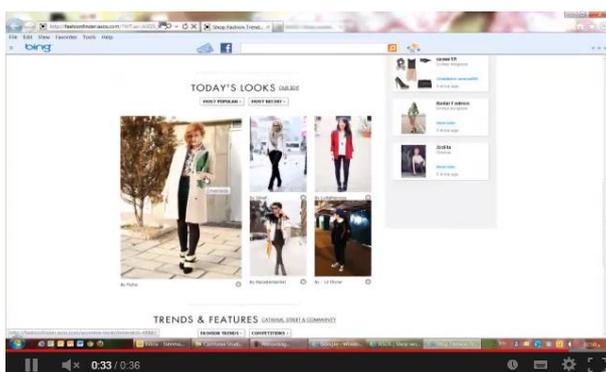
Video 25 Trendy looks

> [Interviewer asks "So what is this?"] It's like a bit that shows you like all the outfits and stuff like that people have made and stuff like that like shows you kinda looks that gives you ideas [Interviewer says, "yeah"] I like that cos then you can sort of be like "Oh I like that bag, I wouldn't know what to wear it with' that kinda thing."

Hannah's reasons for browsing this section is mainly to get inspired by the new outfits but most importantly to 'learn' how to dress and how to possibly match a particular item with an outfit such as the green bag in video 25.

Another participant, Kat, chooses to discusses how she likes matching outfit suggestions because she thinks that it shows her how she could dress in a particular item as part of an outfit.
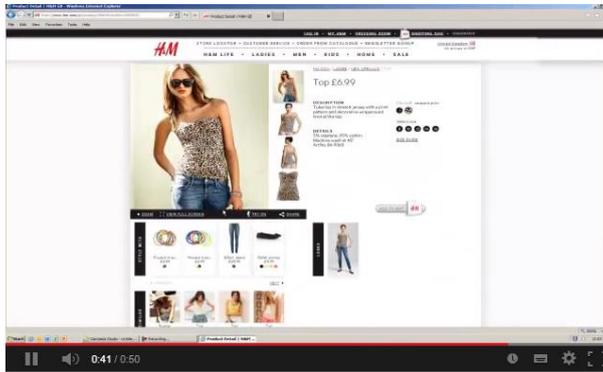
Video 26 Matching outfits

> Yeah then I would just look and sometimes they have um a little and if I just, where they combine products to sell which is very nice for me because I'm hopeless at dressing myself. I, mmm I don't know where it is now though em yeah matching styles, there we go, then, I just, look like something like that, so I know, oh great, I can just get those jeans and that, I actually just buy this whole outfit, I'm sad like that.

Ultimately, this is an effortless way for Kat to help her buy a complete outfit without having to put too much effort into it. Indeed in this case, the participant is looking at suggested products that build an outfit on the product page rather than browsing a huge collection of trends and looks. Arguably this is an easy way for the shopper to learn about product matches and added accessories to complete an outfit look rather than leaving it to the imagination and efforts of the shopper to find products that match.

In both examples (videos 25 & 26), a clear element of 'learning' from the website is apparent. However, to further evaluate the stance of these elements from an educational perspective, one could look into what exactly can be considered as an educational experience outside the context of learning for a degree or a qualification.

As Pine and Gilmore (1998) suggest, educational experiences are ones that engages the customer's mind to both actively learn and also absorb information. In the case of

the abovementioned examples, the shoppers absorb information about these looks and outfits.

Furthermore, research that further examined Pine and Gilmore's educational experience concept suggest that educational experiences can be achieved anywhere and everywhere. For example, in luxury consumption context, Atwal and Williams (2009) suggest a variety of experiences include lectures and programs that are incorporated into a 'Ferrari Driving Experience'. Similarly, Petkus (2004) discusses the educational value and incorporated programs into Arts experiences.

Hosany and Witham (2009) suggest that most experiences could carry an educational angle such as supermarkets providing preparation and cooking guidelines on the shelves. In their argument, *"consumers that engage in an educational experience as a result will have their knowledge increased or skills improved. Ultimately, consumers should be left with the impression "I felt I have learnt something."* (2009, P.354)

Indeed, an experience that could provide 'I felt I have learnt something new' perspective carries an educational angle. Referring back to video 25 and video 26, very clear learning takes place as the shoppers learn how to use a specific item in an outfit (e.g. a simple rectangle green bag) or by simply learning what goes in one outfit by providing a breakdown of all the products included in a look (video 26).

Interestingly, educational experiences appear in Pine and Gilmore (1998) on the dimensions of (absorption and active engagement). Indeed this maybe true in educational contexts of the traditional sense, e.g. attending a lecture, enrolling on a program, etc.

However, in the context of education within online fashion shopping experiences, it is perhaps predictable that such education is less intensive and generally requires less engagement. This is because fashion education for the fashion shoppers is about learning how to dress, which is probably less serious exercise than learning to fly a helicopter, drive a Ferrari (Atwal & Williams, 2009), or even undertake formal assessed learning for a degree.

Indeed, educational fashion shopping experiences seem to be less intensive and more relaxed. The shoppers do not appear distinctively active in these experiences. For example, video 26 that showed Kat interacting with matching items outfits does not

indicate active engagement. Instead, looking at all of Kat's online fashion-shopping experience videos, particularly videos (2, 5, 7), shows that she had undergone a very frustrating experience trying to find a suitable dress for her grad ball. After all the effort she made to filter down to a range of dresses that would suit her needs, she failed to find anything on three different websites. Having decided to look for something else, something completely different like the new summer collection, her preference for a matching outfit section is well justified.

The negative emotional status of failing her first task-oriented task resulted in an effortless, purposeless browsing that also gave outfit suggestions. The emotional status following this purposeless browsing is clearly much more positive, and her behavioural intentions are more positive, as she says she would probably buy all the outfit items.

Kat's description of her fashion skills as 'hopeless' suggest that this move to an easy going educational experience on how to dress is adequate, as she has failed to be able to find a suitable dress in her first event. Therefore, although the thesis acknowledges Pine and Gilmore's term educational experiences, the notion that education would take place only in an active participation/absorption setting is not fully supported and requires further research.

This section is one of three subsections that discuss specific elements of the educational fashionscape (Section 9.4). Trendy looks and matching items were discussed in this section as important educational elements within the online fashion shopping environment as they give the shoppers information of trends as well as a guide of product matches. The next section discusses another element that is considered as a part of the educational fashionscape, that is, inspirational elements.

9.4.2   *Inspiration and adaptation*

This section discusses a different type of educational experience that is facilitated mainly by exploring top fashion houses and luxurious brands websites. In this instance, the fashionscape facilitates learning that provides inspiration and adaptation opportunities.

Taking inspiration or learning from these top fashion websites is mainly facilitated by product presentation atmospherics. Arguably, in this case one could learn from

browsing the fashion products that they cannot afford to buy in order to look for other similar options elsewhere.

As aformentioned at the beginning of the educational fashionscape section, Jeong et al. (2009) suggest that educational experiences are significantly affected by product presentations; in this case, examining the presented garments on a website. However, in this case, a clear aim is set as to not purchase but only replicate the looks.

An example of this educational experience is illustrated in video 27 in which Jack suggests he would 'learn' from the latest trends of the top brands and try to adapt it, or as he says 'cheap it down', to similar items that he could afford.

Video 27 Inspiration—cheap it down

> *I kinda follow the main fashion houses down there, like you know kinda Prada, Chanel, what they're doing and trying kind cheap it down! [Interviewer agreeing "Ahha, yeah"] you know… Like so, although I'd always like trying umm [… participant wondering: have I spelled this wrong? Channel!] Umm, like everyone would, like kinda… I don't think everyone will do that but I always kinda like to check what's happening on [Interviewer suggests: "Get inspired"] yeah, yeah! Get the inspiration, before… [Silence] Umm, I find actually I'm looking at Lanvin quiet a lot. Umm, you know I kinda adore their products, if I was… If I was a millionaire, I would buy it [laughing ☺] Like again, you can see what kinda goes by it, kinda glamorous theme [music playing on the website].*

An important aspect of educational experiences is perhaps the codetermination of these experiences, Hosany and Witham (2009, p.361) suggest: *'consumers play a key role in determining their overall experience. Results indicate that education and escapism dimensions were not significantly related to satisfaction and intention to recommend.'*

Indeed, in the example of video 27, it is apparent that the participant, Jack, codetermines the educational aspect of this experience. On one hand, these luxurious fashion brands present their collections on their websites for a variety of purposes. However, for an educational experience to take place it is usually the site visitor who decides to take such an approach.

This inspiration and learning from the leading names in the fashion industry is made much easier in the context of online fashion shopping obviously. However, the term is not new, previous research such as Hirschman and Thompson (1997) suggest that consumer's interpretation of media images involve at the first stage inspiring and aspiring *'when a media image is interpreted as representing an ideal self to which the consumer can aspire'* (p.47).

This then moves on to a stage of criticism of media content in which Jack in video 27 becomes aware of the difference between him and the status of the media images (e.g. prices are much higher than his budget). Finally, as Hirschman and Thompson (1997) posit the individual may identify and individualise these images as the consumers negotiate their self perception and personal goals in relation to the idealised media images. In jack's case, he informally suggests 'cheap it down' to refer to a state in which he has learned and identified these ideal images and then individualised them into cheaper options that suit his budget.

In this case, indeed the online fashion shopping environments (the fashionscape) of top luxury fashion brands provide a source of inspiration and aspiration as becomes a source of learning about these inspiring images.

This section has discussed the fashionscape as a source of inspiration and adaptation in which the customers learn about certain fashion images (often ideal images) that they then 'cheap it down' by adapting them into more suitable replicated outfits that they can afford.

9.4.3 Blogs

This section is the last subsection that discussed the educational fashionscape elements. Blogs are discussed as an important part of the online fashionscape in which people learn about fashion as they socialise.

As identified in the social fashionscape section, blogs are at the intersection of the social and educational dimensions. On one hand, there can be a social angle and relationship building within the blog community as Kietzmann et al. suggest, *'Blogs, for instance, can allow users to develop a relationship with each other, without a formal arrangement of what and how much information they should share'* (2011, p.246).

On the other hand, blogging could be a tool to educate/inspire the public about a particular topic or phenomenon. In the case of fashion shopping, Lin says,

> *I found about online fashion shopping via fashion blogs, which is sort of social. They provide like a real, easily accessible, real people sharing their opinions [...] I go to fashion blogs to learn where to buy from online and also to learn about the looks. (Lin, Interview 08)*

Blogging and engaging with blogs could relate to various motivations, as Kietzmann et al. suggest, *'people tweet, blog, et cetera to meet new like-minded people, to find true love, to build their self-esteem, or to be on the cutting edge of new ideas or trending topics'* (2011, p.244).

Being on the cutting edge of new ideas or trending topics is what this thesis refers to as educational in the context of online fashion shopping. This comes in various shapes such as blogging about new trends in the fashion industry, how to dress for the summer, or how to match outfits.

The latter issues on how to dress and how to match outfits are most popular in the form of vlogs (video blogs) such as YouTube haul videos (Jeffries, 2011; Keats, 2012; Sykes & Zimmerman, 2014).

Indeed, the scholarly endeavours cited in this section highlight the importance and popularity of blogs in online fashion shopping experiences. However, it is worth noting that since a variety of blogs are not actually a part of a fashion retailer

website, there is limited discussion on their significance in this particular thesis. It is, however, not to belittle the role of blogs but to highlight that the nature of this study has limited this discussion.

9.4.4 *Summary of the educational fashionscape*

This section summarises the discussions made in section 9.4 concerning the educational fashionscape. As previously identified, four dimensions of the fashionscape are identified as the online fashion-shopping environment; these are, visual, verbal, social and educational. This section (9.4) has presented a discussion on the role of the educational fashionscape in the online fashion shopping experience following a discussion on each of the visual (Section 9.1), verbal (Section 9.2) and Social (Section 9.3) fashionscapes.

This section has addressed a somewhat less studied area that is the educational fashionscape i.e. the online fashion shopping environment in which certain educational experiences with regards to fashion take place.

This section, therefore, extends Pine and Gilmore's (1998) 4E's model in which educational experiences are first discussed. Although in fashion shopping context, slight differences are highlighted between the levels of active engagement shown during such experiences as opposed to other types of educational experiences such as driving a Ferrari (Atwal & Williams, 2009) or a cruising experience (Hosany & Witham 2009).

As aforementioned, sections of trendy looks and matching outfits are highlighted as important website regions in which the shoppers learn about new fashion trends as well as learning to match products and put outfits together. Although, from a technical angle such web elements are studied and developed (e.g. Liu et al., 2012; Shen, Lieberman, & Lam, 2007), very limited has been done to understand customer's experiences of these elements (e.g. Jeong et al., 2009; Mccormick 2009). Thus, this section contributes to the understanding of these specific web atmospherics and the educational experiences they foster.

Furthermore, the section highlighted another important educational experience facilitated by the fashionscape of luxury fashion brands via a process of inspiration and adaptation. Research in this area (e.g. Hirschman & Thompson, 1997) suggest

how relationships between the customer and mass media images change from a state of inspiration and aspiration to criticism to a stage of individualisation. Thus, in the context of online fashion shopping, it is argued that the fashionscape of idealised images of fashion houses can be a source of educational experiences that aspires the customers and engage their criticism before reaching a state in which they adapt what they have learnt to their personal selves.

Toward the end of the section, blogs were also briefly highlighted as a major source of educational experiences in which the shoppers learn from reading blogs that relate to fashion purchase information, latest trends, celebrity looks, etc.

It is worth noting that the emergence of these educational sections is a major part of the online fashion-shopping experience. People often escape their busy stressful lifestyle to what is informally called 'retail therapy'. Making their experience a positive one requires a lot of work to inspire, entertain, engage and educate them. Additionally, this might be extended and linked to shopping in the high street shops too. Because, as explained in the beginning of this chapter, many shoppers go online more often to get inspired, to learn about the new trends, and to occasionally buy items they like rather than to achieve a task-oriented shopping to find a particular piece of clothing.

This section marks the end of the four-fashionscape dimensions that were stated at the beginning of this chapter. Therefore, the following section presents a conclusion that summarises the content of this chapter in relation to the research questions of this thesis.

9.5   Conclusion

This chapter, the second in three findings chapters, focused on answering the second research question – RQ2, *What is the composition and role of the environment in online fashion-shopping experiences?* Which of course provides further discussions that link to RQ1 How do consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment?

As the previous chapter (Ch8) mainly answered the first research question by addressing what Eroglu et al (2001) classify as low task relevance cues, this chapter has addressed the second research question by introducing the concept of the fashionscape. Thus in accord to Eroglu et al (2001) classifications, the fashionscape concept consists of high task relevance cues that are specific to the context of online fashion shopping experiences.

The fashionscape is identified as the visual, verbal, social and educational elements that communicate fashion specific messages on fashion retailing websites. The chapter presents each of the aforementioned elements in a separate section throughout.

The visual fashionscape (Section 9.1) highlighted the significance and dominance of visual atmospherics and product presentation elements in online fashion shopping experiences. Indeed, as the section highlighted, the dominance of the visual fashionscape may be linked to quicker and easier information processing (Paivio et al., 1968) as well as fostering an environment for engaging experiences (Jeong et al., 2009).

The section extends current research on visual product presentation such as default product images, zooming and 3D, catwalk videos and virtual fitting rooms (e.g. Kim & Lennon, 2008; Townsend & Kahn, 2014). Its contribution is evident in the detailed dynamic evidence it provides to the role of each and every element of the visual fashion-shopping environment.

The verbal fashionscape (Section 9.2), on the other hand, shows the limited role of verbal product information that describes fashion garments in words. However, this section identified three important verbal elements within the fashionscape. Size guide and other size-related information in addition to delivery and return policy were

discussed as examples of verbal information that form critical incidents in the online fashion shopping experience.

The social fashionscape (Section 9.3), surprisingly, shows a very limited role of the social fashionscape in online fashion shopping experiences. Unlike the current stance of existing research that supports a key role of social media in online fashion shopping (e.g. Kang, 2009; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Ashman & Vazquez, 2012), the findings of this section identifies a very limited role of both customer reviews and social network pages (Facebook) in the experience.

Instead, the educational fashionscape (Section 9.4) seems to be an essential part of the shopping experience particularly during purposeless browsing. Participants went online not only to shop and obtain items, but also to get inspired and live the experience.

Although an intersection between the social and educational elements is bound to exist, the emphasis in this section was only of the educational experiences initially proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1998) and further examined by Atwal and Williams (2009), and Hosany and Witham (2009). Whilst these endeavours are important in understanding educational experience, limited research addresses this concept in a fashion shopping context. Thus, the findings of this section contribute and extend this existing work to further understand the online fashion shopping experiences.

By combining the four sections aforementioned – visual, verbal, social and educational – fashionscape dimensions, the chapter presents a unique composition of the online fashion-shopping environment in an attempt to answering RQ2; specifically, the high relevance cues of the environment (Eroglu et al., 2001).

The chapter, also, furthers existing understanding of the role of high task relevant atmospherics in the context of online fashion shopping experience. Thus it contributes to existing literature in web atmospherics, particularly research interested in product presentation elements (e.g. Fiore et al., 2005; Kim & Lennon, 2008; Jeong et al., 2009; Mccormick, 2009; Lee et al., 2010; Townsend & Kahn, 2014)

The contribution this chapter makes is evident in introducing a new conceptualisation of the specific, high relevance environment of online fashion shopping. The

importance of this conceptualisation is that it is specifically tailored to understanding the specific experience of online fashion shopping.

As it is highlighted throughout this thesis, on one hand, fashion is unique in nature. It requires emotional involvement (Levy, 1959), and encourages experiential consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Fashion-shopping behaviour is deeply rooted in emotional and psychological motivations (Jackson & Shaw, 2009; Kang & Park-Poaps, 2010). This, in addition to the highly symbolic and cultural meaning that fashion carries (Levy, 1959; McCracken, 1986; Solomon & Douglas, 1987), provides support of existing research to the unique nature of fashion.

Furthermore, as the findings of this thesis (Ch8) have shown, purposeless browsing experiences are very popular and common among online fashion shoppers. This unique phenomenon is unlikely to be observable in hotel booking, grocery, or furniture shopping, etc. The behavioural distinctions highlighted in chapter 8 as well as chapter 9 show an important distinction of online fashion shopping experiences, which, this thesis argues, is better understood within the four dimensions of the fashionscape.

Up until this point, the 'findings and discussion' section of this thesis have addressed the first and second research questions in chapter 8 and 9. Therefore, the following chapter endeavours to answer the third research question, *'how do consumers construct their online fashion-shopping experiences?'* The chapter uses the findings of the multi-coding analysis of the repertory grid data as the basis for answering this question and for presenting the online fashion-shopping experience as constructed by the customers and using their own words.

Chapter 10 Construction of the Experience

The previous two chapters have highlighted the findings of this thesis that provide answers to the first two research questions:

- How do consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment? (Mapping the process/journey)
- What is the composition and role of the environment in the online fashion-shopping experience?

The third research question yet to be answered is:

- How do consumers construct their online fashion-shopping experiences?

To answer this question, chapter 6 presented the repertory grid study that was carried out specifically to answer this question. Based on George Kelly's PCT, this chapter focuses specifically on presenting the findings of the repertory grid analysis explained in chapter 6.

Following the qualitative multi-coder analysis of the constructs of all repertory grid data, this chapter presents the construct themes of the online fashion-shopping experience as expressed by the participants. The main constructs themes extracted from all of the elicited constructs (150 bipolar constructs) are perceptual (perception of the fashionscape and perception of risk), emotional, behavioural and situational constructs. The chapter discusses these construct groups as illustrated in figure 10-1 below.

Fashionscape Constructs

Constructs that consist of the participant's perception of the importance and influence of web elements on their experiences and how it brings this experience closer to real life

Emotional Constructs

Constructs that include most of the emotional aspects that are contructed as part of the participant's experinece. This includes, happiness, disappointment, satisfaction, reassurance, comfort, confidence and other emotions.

Risk and Trust Constructs

Constructs that reflect the participant's percpetion of risk and trust and the interchangable nature of the two.

Behavioural Constructs

Constructs that consist of behaviours or anticipated behaviours such as behaviours of approach or avoidance

Situational Constructs

Constructs that provides a contextual situation in which the experience takes place. This includes situations of necessity vs. luxury shopping.

Figure 10-1 Overview of Chapter 10

10.1 Summary of Results

Based on the multi-coding analysis (for details see Chapter 6), the classification of construct groups were identified and established between five researchers with a final inter-reliability score of 76% between coders.

To define a construct group or category, the researcher developed this categorisation in steps. In the first step, categorisation was initially constructed based on existing literature definitions of terms. For example, happiness is a construct that is defined as emotional due to the wide use of the term in existing literature as an emotion.

Furthermore, in the following steps this definition of constructs was compared to the other researchers' definition of constructs in four steps (i.e. coder 1, then comparison, modification, then coder 2, repeat comparisons and modifications, then coder 3… etc.). Thus, using an example not as obvious as 'happiness', 'trust' is a construct that was initially defined both as an emotion and as a separate group due to conflict in existing literature about the nature of trust (see section 10.4.2 for details).

However, the steps of multi-coding helped in emphasising the importance of separating this group from the emotion group due to huge variance otherwise. Thus, modifications of categories then included separating this group of constructs to a distinctive category that is then defined and discussed in light of existing research.

Accordingly, the construction of the online fashion shopping experience is presented in table 10.1 below as a taxonomy of what makes an experience using consumers' own constructs and expressions.

As this chapter discusses, the constructs elicited from all grids are classified into five main themes, these are, (1) elements importance and influence, (2) emotions, (3) risk and trust, (4) behaviour, and (5) situation.

Table 10-1 Constructs classification

Elements: Importance and Influence	advanced elements—basics; assessment—usage; base my decision on—initial steps; better feel of the product-closer to real life—I don't care; bonus—necessity; clear—unnecessary ; closer to real-life experience—ignore it; closer to real-life experience—biased; closer to real-life experience—a good; service-time saver; closer to real-life experience—can't see or feel the product; closer to real-life experience—not impressive; closer to real-life experience (realistic) —far away-discard; encourage me to buy—irritate me; encourage me to buy—put me off; essential—reinforcing; essential-vital—useless; give you more details—make products closer to real life; glamorous—expected; help me buy—put me off; help me decide later—initial liking; help you choose product—help you choose company; important—extra; important—don't bother; important—useless; influence my purchase decision—it doesn't matter; influence my purchase decision—I won't be affected; influence my purchase decision—give information; initial liking—actual purchase decision; initial liking—reassures me -make me calm; it is a good alternative to store service—the minimum basics; it would tell you more about the product—it would make you confused; make me imagine the product—make me closer to obtain it; more attractive—a nice extra; motivate me to buy—difficult to judge on; motivate me to buy—make me informed; precise-focused—imprecise-lost; they let you see the clothes in action—finding a store in the first place
Emotions	comfortable—disappointed; comfortable—doubtful-unsettled-confused; comfortable—stressful; concerned—happy; confident—doubtful; confident—inspired; confident—unsure; confused—enjoyment; enjoyable-having fun—irritated; enjoyment-satisfaction—dislike it; excited—guilt; facilitate my choice—anxious about my choice; feel at ease—disappointed; feel valued—feeling like 'a till number'; glad-happy—disappointed; happier overall—focused; happy—frustration; happy—confusion; happy you get it (achievement)—unhappy and thinking about it (consciousness); happy-motivated—unsure; inspired—bored; inspires me—reassures me - but might put me off; interested—bored; interested—ignore; interested-happy—unsure-try to imagine; involved—don't bother; motivate me—disappointed-distracted; motivated—frustrated; motivated—confused; neutral (tend to ignore) —dissatisfied-upset; neutral-don't care—happy; not bothered—motivated; pay no attention—assurance; pride—guilt; reassured—distracted; reassured—dissatisfied; reassuring—irritating; reassuring—annoying; satisfaction—contempt; satisfied—disappointed; satisfied—nervous-angry; satisfied—annoyed; unhappy—confident; a benefit—drawback
Risk and Trust	biased—trustworthy; certain—uneasy; high-risk purchase—low-risk purchase; more confident—not guaranteed that you get what you're looking for; more confident about my choice—trust the company; more confident that the product is right for me—easier-simpler; trust—doubtful; trust—not reliable; trust—distrust; trusting the website—annoyed-disappointed; at ease—scared
Behavior	buy more—put you off; go back to the website—find an alternative; more likely to buy—leave the website; more likely to buy—might look for alternatives; search for cheaper or buy—give up; willing to buy more—might choose another website
Situation	necessity—luxury; I need the product—I am just looking for inspiration

Note: constructs separated by ';')

Consequently, this chapter discusses in detail each of the construct categories highlighted in table 10.1 beginning by the most simplistic form of construction that results in fashionscape constructs (Section 10.2). This is then followed by emotional constructs (Section 10.3), risk and trust constructs (Section 10.4), behavioural constructs (Section 10.5) and finally situational constructs (Section 10.6).

10.2 **Fashionscape Constructs**

This section discusses the first group of constructs, which relate to the participants' perception of the fashionscape (i.e. the elements of the online fashion shopping environment). Indeed, answering the research question (how do customers construct their online fashion shopping experiences?) involve constructs that relate to the participants perception and construing of the environment in which this experience takes place.

The section therefore further suggests that the first level of construction maybe linked to the participant's construing of the shopping environment. Examples of constructs in this category include constructs that evaluate the importance of certain web elements of the fashionscape. Additionally, other constructs of this category include descriptions of the influence these elements have of the shopper's experience. Therefore, this section discusses these subcategories of constructs in the following subsections.

10.2.1 *Element importance*

As aforementioned in chapter 9, the importance of web atmospherics varies according to the type of experience as well as the individuals themselves. For example, in line with previous research (e.g. Schroeder, 2002; Kim & Lennon, 2008; Townsend & Kahn, 2014), the findings of chapter 9 have reemphasised the importance and dominance of the visual fashionscape as opposed to the verbal one. Behavioural evidence of screencast videos was used to establish most of the findings of chapter 9. To the contrary, this section addresses the importance of the fashionscape elements as perceived by the participants.

Indeed, this is the most basic level of construction. The individual begins by describing what he or she thinks of certain elements on the website. Examples of such constructs include describing an element as 'essential', 'important', 'basic', 'extra', or 'bonus'. Undoubtedly, perception of an element's importance is personal and specific to the individual. However, whether the presence of a certain element is essential or an extra is very important in understanding the person's experiences, the type of emotions they feel and the observable behaviour they demonstrate, especially in situations where an 'essential' web element is missing from a particular website.

As Kelly (1955) suggests, it is this anticipation of events (i.e. the presence of certain elements that are thought to be important by the participant) that shapes the person's experience. However, when such experience occurs, the differences between the participant's expectations and the consequence of events result in a variety of different emotional statuses.

A number of examples of constructs that refer to element importance are found throughout the dataset. Common constructs in this group include *Bonus-Necessity* and *Essential/Vital-Useless*.

By examining the ratings attributed to such constructs, it becomes clear the expectations a person possess about the environment. Unsurprisingly, customers' expectations of the quality of a website are extremely high, as most elements are perceived as a necessity and their absence results in a less positive experience.

Customer's expectations are addressed in existing research as they influence the quality of the experience and levels of satisfaction (e.g. Baker et al., 2002; Anteblian et al., 2013). Indeed the expectations are used as a primary evaluating tool of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Consequently, these constructs provide a good starting point to the understanding of the experience.

It is noteworthy, however, that these types of constructs relate to the degree to which the participant is aware of the importance of the elements they are discussing. In many instances, it is merely a matter of whether the individual realises how much he or she is affected by certain stimuli, or whether an element (for instance, web layout) is always present and taken for granted.

Whilst expectations of customers are extremely important, as this subsection highlighted, another group of constructs that are categorised under this section links to the anticipated influence these elements have on the participants. This is discussed in the following subsection.

10.2.2 Element influence

This section further discusses the perception of fashionscape elements as constructed by the participants of this thesis. This group of constructs refer to all the constructs that describe the perceived influence an element has on one's shopping experience. Examples of these constructs include helpfulness, encouragement, motivation and closeness to real life experience.

That is, to what extent certain web elements help, motivate or encourage consumer decision making throughout the journey of the consumer's experience. For example, several participants mentioned constructs such as 'help me buy–put me off', 'help me decide later–initial liking', and 'help you choose product–help you choose company'. All these constructs express the expected **degree of helpfulness** of web elements. Elements' helpfulness varies at the stage of decision-making in which this help happens, i.e. initial liking, choosing between alternatives or the actual purchase.

Similarly, constructs such as 'motivate me to buy–make me informed' are used to differentiate between elements' influence. For example, Lin expresses excitement about elements such as catwalk videos and suggests that they motivate her to buy, but, in contrast, she uses the term 'make me informed' as the implicit pole to explain the influence of other web elements.

Indeed this finding is expected and in line with a wide range of scholarly outputs that discussed the importance of stimuli on behaviours and behavioural intentions. For instance, (Chiu, Chang, Cheng, & Fang, 2009; Goode & Harris, 2007; Harris & Goode, 2010; Jiang, Chan, Tan, & Chua, 2010; Kim & Lennon, 2008; Koenig-Lewis & Palmer, 2008; Lorenzo, Constantinides, Geurts, & Gomez, 2007)

However, perhaps the most important theme that relates to the influence of fashionscape elements is closeness to real-life experience constructs. Repeatedly, the participants of this study discussed the issue of bringing online fashion shopping to 'life'. Many referred to the importance of making their experience closer to real life. Figure (10-2) illustrates the constructs of closeness to real-life experiences.
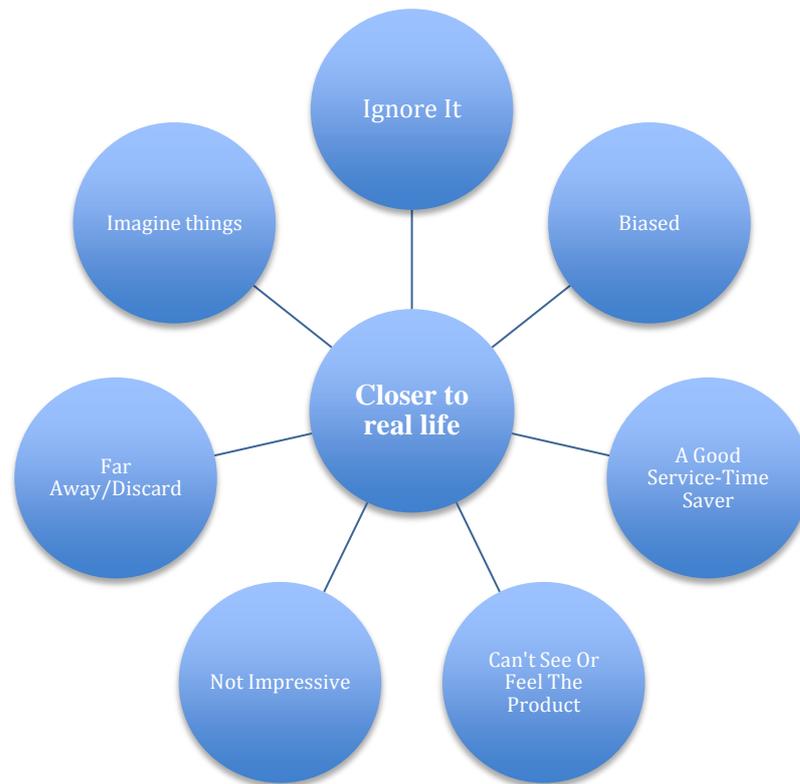
As Figure 10-2 shows a variety of different constructs included 'closeness to real life' as one pole (usually the explicit pole), which then is paired with varying implicit poles as illustrated in the outer circles on the abovementioned figure.

From a usability perspective, Paul (*Interview 17*) explains that the elements important to him are those that give a better feel for the product, thus making it closer to real life. In contrast, he suggests that he does not care about other elements such as social network links or customer reviews. Although he does move from this construct (closer to real life–don't care) to (confident–don't trust) via laddering, thus, suggesting that the deeper routes to why he doesn't not care about certain elements comes from lack of trust rather than from their relative importance.

Similarly, Anna suggests (make it closer to real-life shopping–ignore it/doesn't affect me) that catwalk videos and virtual fitting rooms help make her online-shopping experience similar to 'real life' shopping. In contrast, she thinks web layout does not affect her, so she ignores it.

On the other hand, Rachel puts (closer to real life–you can't see or feel the product) to differentiate between web characteristics that facilitate an experience that is as

close as possible to store shopping where items can be seen, touched and tried on. She says:

[Talking about product images and catwalk videos] you can see how it looks like in real life and you can see if someone's modelling it. [Talk about written product information] yeah it doesn't… it could tell you what it looks like but you cannot see it. Like that's an advantage of going to the shops just so you can see it and feel it. (Rachel, Interview 05)

'Closeness to real life' constructs are used either (a) as a mean of differentiation between elements that facilitate an online experience that is similar to a brick-and-mortar shopping experience and elements that fall short of doing so, (b) as a means of expressing perception of an element's importance, or (c) as a risk reduction scale when it is linked to confidence and trust.

Indeed, existing research addresses the importance of the qualities and quantities of web atmospherics that contribute to a virtual experience that seems to be close to real life experience i.e. the experience of shopping in a physical fashion store which is then defined as a state of telepresence (Song, Fiore and Park, 2007). Furthermore, the importance of closeness to real life experience and the 'telepresence' state is also manifested in existing work such as Ashman (2012)

Despite advances in technology in general and online fashion shopping in particular, 'closeness to real life' has been flagged as one of the most important issues of the fashionscape or the online fashion-shopping environment. This issue is highlighted in the construction of the experience by both experienced and inexperienced shoppers. To determine the level of expertise, the first three questions of the interview guide on how many times the participants browse and shop for fashion items and the number of websites they are familiar with (see appendix 3) permits an estimate of how experienced the participants are. This is not used as a scale of measurement, but rather as an indication that is deemed helpful when analysing the individual experience construction of each participant. Consequently, for 'closeness to real-life experience', the participants (Anna, Ben, Liz, Paul, Isla, and Rachel) have all suggested this term in their construction. The expertise of these participants ranges from browsing once every couple of months and being familiar with 3–4 fashion

websites, to browsing daily, shopping weekly and being familiar with up to 20 websites.

Accordingly, to sum up this section of the chapter (10.2), which has discussed the first group of constructs in relation to the online fashion shopping experience, it could be concluded that 'closeness to real-life experience' is a core construct in the online experience regardless of the shopper's expertise. The following section discusses another theme of constructs which refers to the emotional states of the participants within their experiences.

10.3 **Emotional Constructs**

As the previous section (section 10.2) discussed the first group of elements that referred mainly to the perception of fashionscape elements, this section presents the constructs that refer to the different types of emotions the participants discussed.

Indeed consumer's emotions are a core concept that has dominated the early years of this project. As the literature review shows consumer's emotion are key in the concept of experiential consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Thus, unsurprisingly, emotions are key in the online fashion shopping experience.

By revisiting chapter 3 of this thesis, the stance of emotion in existing research is clearly addressed. Indeed, a wide range of scholarly endeavours have been made to study consumption emotions and emotions in the shopping experience (e.g. Chaudhuri, 1997; Holbrook & Gardner, 1993; Kim & Lennon, 2010; Kim & Gupta, 2011; Koo & Ju, 2009; among others).

Furthermore, the most dominant approaches of studying emotions have been addressed as the categories approach (e.g. Plutchik's (1980) wheel of emotions and Richins (1997) consumption emotion set (CES)), the dimensional approach (e.g. Russell and Mehrabian (1977) pleasure, arousal, dominance (PAD) model of emotions), and the cognitive appraisal approach (e.g. Lazarus, 1991; Bagozzi et al., 1999).

Most research concerning consumption emotions is based on one of these approaches. However, despite their popularity, as chapter 3-section 3.5 discusses such approaches rarely account for the individualistic nature of each type of emotions (e.g. Griskevicius, et al., 2010a; 2010b). Contrary to these approaches, using Kelly's (1955) PCT to studying emotions allow for exploration for each of these emotional states individually and according to person's differences (e.g. Yassim, 2011).

Therefore, similar to Yassim's (2011) approach, this section discusses all the different types of emotional statuses that have been discussed as a part of the consumer's online fashion shopping experiences. Accordingly, this section presents a number of subsections. Each discusses a specific type of emotions as they appear in the findings of this thesis.

By revisiting the frequency table of the most frequently mentioned words (appendix 9), we can clearly see that 'happiness', 'disappointment', and 'confidence' appear at the top of the table as most frequently repeated words to describe the participants' emotional states. These are followed by 'confusion' and 'reassurance'. Words such as 'satisfaction', 'comfortable' and 'frustration' were also mentioned at least four times in four different grids as parts of constructs.

On a generic level, it could be argued that these words are the most important and most relevant emotional states that the participants experience in online fashion shopping. However, further examination of the constructs in which such words appear shows that the other poles of these constructs are not as frequent. For instance, a variety of different words were used as contrasts in constructs that include the word 'happy', hence if happy appeared 5 times, there are five other different words that appeared in each of the 'happy' related constructs.

As Bannister and Fransella (1986) suggested, the idea of Kelly's (emergent–implicit) constructs helps us to understand the meaning of a person's own construing system. Therefore, it is important to discern what is meant by 'happy' by examining its contrasts: 'frustrated', 'concerned', 'focused' or 'confused'. This suggests that, according to Kelly's theory, the meaning of words such as 'happiness' seems to change from one participant to another. Accordingly, this section now moves to discuss the main emotions mentioned above and their contrasting poles while highlighting individual differences in emotional constructs.

10.3.1 Happiness

The first, frequently repeated emotion in most of the grids is 'happy'. The word is used in a variety of different constructs to express a certain emotion experienced as part of the online fashion-shopping experience. Examples of these constructs are illustrated in figure 10-3 below.
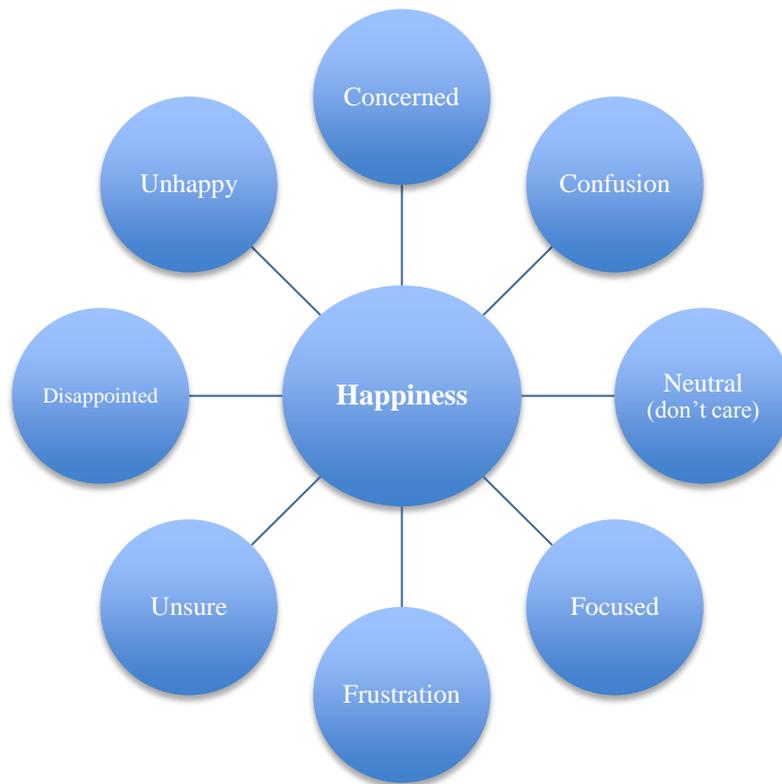
Figure 10-3 Happiness and its contrasts

The central circle in Figure 10-3 resembles one pole of the construct (usually the emergent pole) whereas all the outer circles (e.g. concerned, confusion, etc.) represent the contrasting poles of the construct (usually the implicit pole). Exploring the various contrasts that the individuals chose to use against the emotion happy, illustrated in figure (10-3), shows that the meaning of happiness changes from one participant to another.

There are many examples from the data that support this change of meaning of happiness as for instance, in constructs such as (happy–frustration) and (happy–disappointed). The context in which a participant uses the word happy, in addition to the contrast he or she chooses for it, conveys feelings of satisfaction. Rachel identified one of her experience constructs as (happy–frustration) when she said:

> *If I didn't know enough about what I'd found, I wouldn't be happy about it…*
> *I'd want to buy from somewhere else. (Rachel, Interview 05)*

Similarly, Eva who identified one of her constructs as (happy–disappointed), explained:

I am quite glad because I didn't have to errm "move" [meaning she did not have to go to the shop and was able to do it online] and I could find what I wanted… and I mean it makes me think like "oh so they do actually care about the customer" (Eva, Interview 09).

Happiness in these instances is linked to a satisfying experience in which the participant anticipates that their expectations can be met.

On the other hand, other meanings of happiness have emerged from constructs such as (happy–concerned). Emma explains this construct of her purposeless browsing experience in which she browses different sites and adds as many items to the basket as she likes. On her emotions, she comments:

Very happy, I'm having a great time, theoretically spending all this money that I don't have! Errm yeah like I say it's all big fun, having a good time, enjoying myself spending lots of money especially during study time… I do it A LOT! [Interviewer agreeing, "During exam time! That's why I did my research on fashion shopping!" (Laughing) "I have an excuse! You know, you can't blame me" (Laughing)]. …(Interviewee continues) When I get to the full basket stage I start to get a little bit concerned that I have a lot of things and that all I have is like £50 to spend and I've got £800 in my basket that gets a bit concerning and I start to stress out… (Emma, Interview 10)

In this instance, Emma seems to be referring to a relaxing activity that she may enjoy during stressful times such as 'study time'. The meaning of happiness in this instance refers to a relaxing and some exciting activity of unrealistic theoretical spending. This meaning is confirmed as Emma contrasts this emotion with feeling 'concerned' and 'stressed out', which highlights a shift to what happiness means to Emma when compared with Rachel and Eva.

A different example is the constructs (happy–confusion) and (happy–unsure) in which the participant seems to refer to a state of being clear or settled as opposed to being confused or unsure. Joe comments on this state by saying:

If I can find all the information I need about the product I need, I am happy, I am buying it. Reassured! (Joe, Interview 06)

The word happy is defined in the Oxford dictionary as 'feeling or showing pleasure or contentment' (OxfordDictionaries, 2014b). A review of the various contrasts the individuals chose to use against the word happy shows that this definition does not actually fit or reflect all the statuses the individuals were experiencing.

Moreover, scales of emotional measurement such as the PAD model do not account or capture this change in meaning. For instance, in the PAD model, pleasure is defined as the degree of happiness and pleasantness (Russell & Mehrabian, 1977), which, in the context of online shopping, refers to the degree of happiness in the online-shopping environment (Koo & Ju, 2009).

As this section shows, there is a variety of different meanings and contexts to words such as happy that may be missing when the general question is asked as 'to what extent do/did you feel happy in your shopping experience?' and so are the different implications that could be concluded as a result.

This section has presented a slice of the emotional constructs that appear in the repertory grid data of this thesis. As discussed, although a number of participants mentioned happiness and being happy in their online fashion shopping experiences, the meaning they refer to is arguably not the same among all of them. The next section discusses another popular emotional construct, disappointment.

10.3.2 Disappointment

Similar to happiness, the word disappointment appeared repeatedly in most of the grids to express a certain emotion experienced as part of the online fashion-shopping experience. Figure (10-4) below shows the constructs of disappointment from all grid data.

Figure 10-4 Disappointment and its contrasts

Unlike the word happiness that appeared as an emergent pole to the constructs, disappointment has appeared as the implicit pole, i.e. as the contrast to the emergent poles that appear in figure 10-4. However, in a similar manner, it could be argued that each of the participants who used the word disappointment as part of their experience construction seems to refer to a somewhat different feeling.

The most obvious example of disappointment usually comes with its obvious contrast satisfaction. The construct (satisfaction–disappointment) has appeared in a number of grids and in such a construction disappointment seems to refer to lack of satisfaction mainly caused by undelivered promises or unmet expectations. Similarly, the construct (happy–disappointment) as discussed in the previous section, seems to take a similar meaning and context. As aforementioned, the word happy seems to carry a sense of satisfaction since it is contrasted with disappointment.

Additionally, disappointment in this sense still seems to reflect a lack of satisfaction, which makes someone unhappy. This is also relevant to the construct (comfortable–

disappointed) put by another participant, Jennifer. She stated that her emotions in the online-shopping environment. She comments:

> *I can see texture and I can see movement and that definitely makes me more comfortable buying. Because sometimes when you see things just as a picture, then you get it home and it's not what you expected to be and then after wee while that builds up and you think hmm I am not buying from that site anymore because then I'm just disappointed every time I get something. (Jennifer, Interview 20)*

The previous examples of the word disappointment in constructs differs substantially from instances where it was paired with words such as trust, motivated as explained below.

The construct (trust–disappointment) appeared in two repertory grids in which the participant seemed to associate disappointment with risky situations. For example, Tom explains his perception of 'easy to navigate' websites saying:

> *It's like it reduces the chance of being a… the website being like a fake, so you're not gonna get scams, because the website is well established online. (Tom, Interview 13)*

Disappointment in this context is a state of distrust and a perception of unnecessary risk.

Another participant, Paul, suggested (motivate me–disappoint me) as one of his experience constructs. The state of disappointment Paul refers to is the result of poorly designed or poorly functioning websites that do not make him excited or motivated to buy anymore. (*Paul, Interview 17*)

As it appears in all the aforementioned examples, although disappointment seems to be linked to unmet expectations, the individuality with which disappointment appears in customers' experiences varies tremendously.

Existing research focuses on explaining what an experience of disappointment is like, for instance, Zeelenberg et al., (2010) suggests that disappointment stems from disconfirmed expectations. They argue that an experience of disappointment usually leads the individual to 'do nothing' or to pull out or stay away from an event.

Additionally, Watson and Spence (2007, p.502) suggests: '*disappointed people thought that the situation was uncontrollable so there was no point dwelling on it*'. Indeed in the findings of this section, the participants' unmet expectations are related to the web atmospherics or fashionscape elements, which are beyond their control. Thus, experiencing disappointment in these instances is expected and explained in the aforementioned research papers.

However, as the different constructs presented in this section show, there are varying degrees of disappointment that are due to a wide range of reasons from missing interactive web feature to failing customer's expectations of delivery or service standards, to a more serious issue of feeling unsafe or less trusting of the retailer.

Consequently, in line with existing research, this section (10.3.2) presented a discussion on disappointment related constructs. The general consensus is that disappointment has been expressed as a contrast to satisfaction and happiness. However, in some instances the participants chose disappointment, as a contrast to trust in which there might be an implied perception of risk. Following, the next section discusses another construct of the emotional constructs category, that is, satisfaction.

10.3.3 Satisfaction

The first two emotional constructs that are discussed as part of section (10.3) were happiness (10.3.1) and disappointment (10.3.2). This section discusses satisfaction as another part of the emotional constructs of the online fashion shopping experience.

The section explores the position of satisfaction as an experienced emotion. The individual nature of satisfaction throughout the different experiences is highlighted in a similar manner to the previous sections. Accordingly, this section explores the construct of satisfaction as it appears with different emotional contrasts, illustrated in figure (10-5) below.
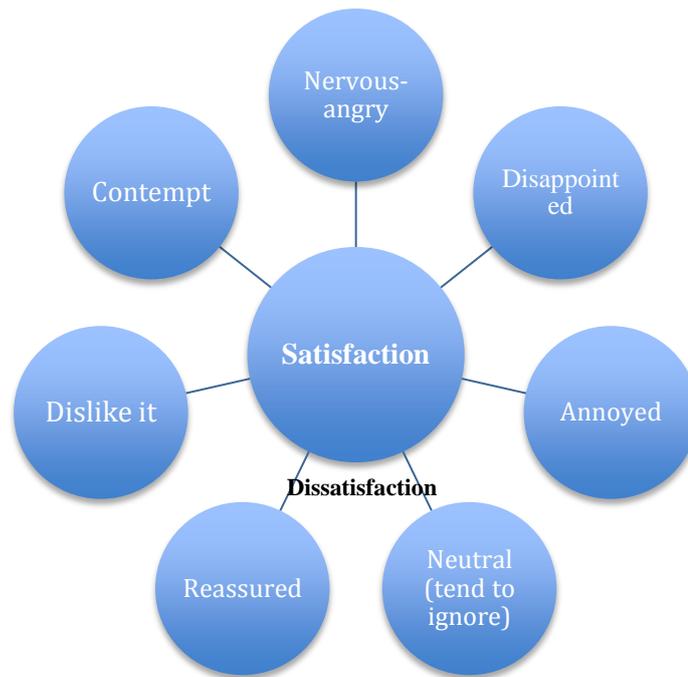
Figure 10-5 Satisfaction and its contrasts

As discussed in the previous section, the construct (satisfaction–disappointment) gives the direct meaning to satisfaction, presumably because of met expectations in contrast to the state of disappointment that relates to unmet expectations in this particular context. An example of this is Steph's comment:

> I think the search facility can make you feel satisfied to an extent, because sometimes you can find what you're looking for, but then other times obviously it can be difficult because you can't find what you're looking for. You'd be satisfied more often than you'd be disappointed. *(Steph, Interview 16)*

The use of satisfaction in constructs such as (satisfied–dislike it) indicates a milder state of liking or enjoying the experience rather than having a customer satisfied by met expectations. For example, Max (*Interview 21*) explains that he would be satisfied if the navigation was easy; so, he uses enjoyment as another word to explain his satisfaction. In contrast, he uses the phrase 'dislike it', which does not reflect the same intensity of disappointment reflected in Steph's comment.

A different example is Jill who uses (satisfaction–contempt) as one of her online fashion-shopping experience constructs. Jill initially mentions pride as the emergent pole of the construct, but then she decides to change it to satisfaction, saying, *'There*

is a little bit of pride in satisfaction. Pride is probably when I have my PhD!' (Jill, Interview 12). Satisfaction, as explained by Jill, has a degree of pride, and its contrast, contempt, is chosen as the opposite to satisfaction indicating that being respected is also a part of her satisfaction. She adds:

> I'd feel a small degree of contempt… like I don't pay attention to these people. They don't pay attention to me so I don't! *(Jill, Interview 12).*

The mainstream literature classifies satisfaction as a 'result' (e.g. Ballantine & Fortin, 2009; Eroglu et al., 2001) that is often preceded by affective and/or cognitive states. There are several reasons for classifying satisfaction as an emotion here.

First, as mentioned above, the participants used satisfaction in contrast to other emotional states (figure 10-5), thus treating it as another emotional state. According to the individuality corollary of PCT, constructs should be understood in accordance with the individual and in the context of their experiences. Second, there is a consistent classification of satisfaction as an emotional construct among the several coders who performed the multi-coding explained in chapter 6. Although satisfaction is not recognised as an emotion in the popular scales of emotions such as Plutchik's, the nature of the construct and the way the participant chose to address it advocates classifying it as a relevant emotion in the online fashion-shopping experience.

This is also consistent with Yassim (2011) who defined satisfaction as an emotion using PCT and the repertory grid technique. Thus, this section supports Yassim's stance on treating satisfaction as an emotion and shows a different angle to how satisfaction is experienced between different individuals.

10.3.4 Reassurance

Up until this point, the emotional constructs that have been discussed are happiness, disappointment and satisfaction. This section discusses 'reassurance', another construct that appears under the emotional constructs category. Reassurance is expressed as a part of a number of constructs as illustrated in figure (10-6) below.

Figure 10-6 Reassurance and its contrasts

Reassurance has been expressed with contrasts such as annoying and irritating. For example, in Interview 11, Julie comments on the search facilities and says *'it's quite annoying when there is only one or two search filters'*. On the other hand, when there are multiple filters, she could check the product type, colour, size, etc., and that would be reassuring.

Using a different construct, (reassured–dissatisfied), Kat explains how certain web features such as product images facilitate clarity, and that when she can see products clearer she feels reassured. In contrast, she feels dissatisfied if this basic issue of clarity is not addressed. (*Interview 25*)

Another construct from Isla's experience (*Interview 24*) is (reassured–distracted). Isla links her feelings of reassurance to positive customer reviews and catwalk videos. In contrast, she suggests that she would feel distracted if she sees banner ads, and they most likely put her off. According to Isla's construct, feeling reassurance is linked to being focused on her experience and not distracted by irrelevant advertisements.

Moreover, Rachel suggests (inspires me–reassures me) as one of her experience constructs. She explains how she might get inspiration from social network pages, but how this inspiration might then vanish or be reinforced by certain reassuring web

elements such as virtual chats with an adviser. The nature of reassurance is highlighted in her comment:

> *Virtual chat could help you but you have to find what you're looking for first before you chat to them I think. Like if you could say you're looking for a formal dress. But you couldn't be like, I'm just looking for something, cause there's no way they could be able to help you cause they had no idea what I'm on about. […] It could turn you off something completely or it could set your mind on something. (Rachel, Interview 05)*

The abovementioned examples highlight the participant's construction of reassuring experiences. Reassurance here is experienced or not experienced due to the presence or absence of certain web elements.

Indeed, existing research discusses reassurance in relation to a variety of different situations. For instance, Harris & Goode (2010) use reassurance as the basis for measuring perceived security in online shopping. On the other hand, Shaw and Ivens (2002) refer to customer's need of reassurance when making decisions within the shopping experience (e.g. is this the right dress? Colour? Etc.)

As the examples presented in this section show, reassurance, in the construction of online fashion shopping experiences and according to the participants of this study, relates to the role fashionscape elements play in telling the customers they are making the right decisions. This stance is closer to that of Shaw and Ivens (2002) rather than Harris & Goode (2010) because in this particular study, perceived security is not discussed as a critical issue in the experience.

This section discussed reassurance as a part of the emotional constructs of the online fashion shopping experience. A number of web atmospherics are flagged as reassuring of the decisions and behaviours made in the experience. Similar to reassurance, another construct that appears in this group of constructs is confidence. This is discussed in the following section.

10.3.5 Confidence

In addition to happiness, disappointment, satisfaction, and reassurance, feeling confident has also been expressed by a number of participants of this study. During the multi-coding of the data, there was a consensus that confidence-related constructs may be both emotional and risk related constructs.

On one hand, confidence conveys an emotional state (e.g. subordinate emotions in Fehr and Russell (1984)) and is contrasted with a number of emotional words as illustrated in figure (10-7). However, on the other hand, confidence and trust may be interrelated and are linked to perceived risks.
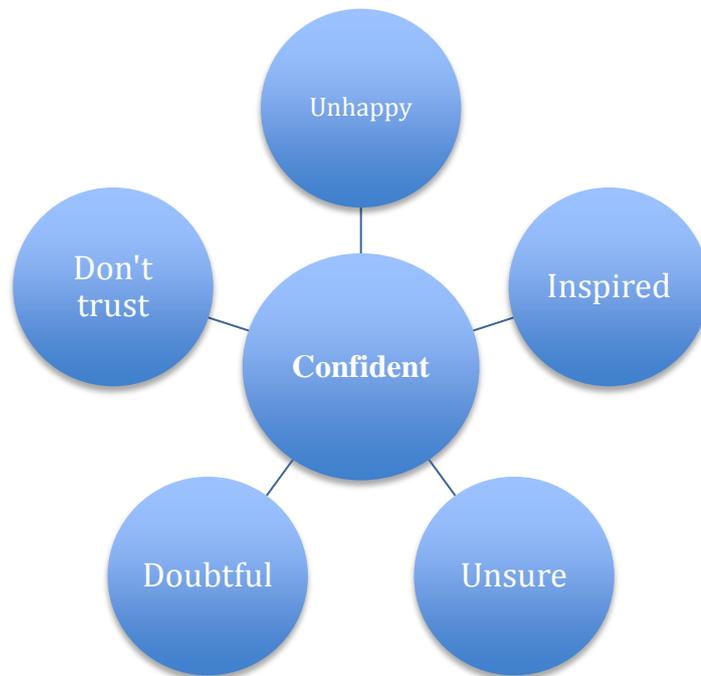
Figure 10-7 Confidence and its contrasts

As figure 10-7 illustrates, there are a number of different constructs in which confidence appears as one of the construct's poles. For example, (Confident–Unsure) is a construct mentioned by one participant, Steph. On what confident means to her, she comments:

> *Like being confident in your purchase, is knowing what you're getting for your money and knowing the materials and the measurements. If you're buying shoes knowing like the heel height or whatever. I think you need that so. So probably the other just be not confident in your purchase, just unsure of what you're buying. And I know myself I know I don't like to be unsure of what I'm buying. You don't want to waste your money, you want to know as much as you can about it. (Steph, Interview 16)*

Steph's quote shows confidence discussed here as a very similar state to reassurance. The participant is indeed not concerned with internet safety or web security, instead,

confidence, to her, is linked to her purchase decisions and to what extent she believes she makes the right decisions.

Similarly, Linda suggests (confident–doubtful) as one of her constructs and suggests that feeling 'confident' is being sure about the products. She explains that high quality images with zooming and 3D make products closer to 'real life' and so that makes her more confident.

On the other hand, Paul puts (confident–don't trust) as one of his constructs. He contrasts confident with 'don't trust', trust seems to unfold in the meaning of being confident to him. Being confident seems to be linked to various degrees of risk, whether risk is explicitly mentioned in the grid or not.

This stance is similar to Shaw and Ivens's (2002) inclusion of trust and confidence as one important factor in building great customer experience. However, there are varying degrees of being confident which range from being sure in one's choices to perceiving trust in others (i.e. companies).

Accordingly, this section together with the previous sections show commonality of expressed emotions such as happiness, disappointment, satisfaction, etc. However it also shows individuality as to what each of these emotions mean on the individual level. A variety of different meanings seem to be linked to each one of them, thus, making it arguable as to whether there is any sort of shared universal meaning of these emotions in the first place.

10.3.6 Comfortable

In addition to the emotional constructs discussed in this section (10.3) so far, one last frequently repeated construct is linked to feeling comfortable. Comfortable and feeling at ease have appeared repeatedly among the grids to express a certain emotion experienced as a part of the online fashion-shopping experience. Figure (10-8) below highlights the main constructs of comfort and its contrasts.
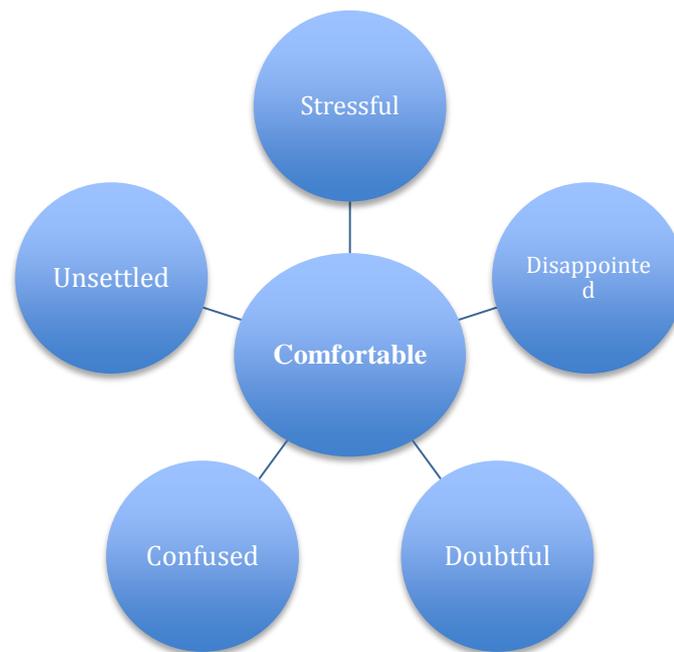
Figure 10-8 Comfort and its contrasts

Figure 10-8 above shows the different examples of constructs that include comfort as one of its poles. Of these examples, the construct (Comfortable, Disappointed) has been discussed in the section on disappointment where comfort reflects a state of met expectations. Therefore, as in Jennifer's case, she feels comfort when what she experiences is familiar or linked to what she had expected. In her case, when her anticipation does not match what she experiences she would be disappointed.

Similarly, Tom put (comfortable–stressful) as one of his online fashion-shopping experience constructs. He referred to the clarity of information on a website as comfortable and explains that when it is unclear, it would be stressful to him.

On the other hand, a different meaning to comfortable unfolds in Eva's constructs (at ease–scared; comfortable–unsettled). She explains:

> *I think it's something that makes people… err it actually makes me more comfortable with it, and my parents actually. It makes my parents more comfortable [laugh] cause when we think about it, it's their money that I am spending so they want to be sure… and like it's Internet. When you think about Internet, it's quite new that you can buy stuff. Like it's quite recent that you can buy stuff on the Internet and stuff. It's just like it's something public, the Internet. We are always kind of scared? [Suggesting to the interviewer: oh*

this's something you can add actually] like the protection of your personal
information like your debit card and stuff... because Internet is a big thing
there is danger actually. (Eva, Interview 09)

In this context, comfort is not linked to anticipation, familiarity and met expectations. Instead, the concept of comfort is directly linked to the risk associated with online shopping, particularly the protection of personal information and the safety of transactions. The contrasting emotions of feeling scared and unsettled are relevant because of the associated risks and danger. Such words also reinforce the idea that comfort in this case is completely different from Jennifer's idea of comfort.

This notion of comfort clearly links to the constructs of risk and trust, which are discussed in more detail in section 10.4. However, before moving on to discuss Risk and Trust, the following section (10.3.7) briefly summarises the stance of emotional constructs and highlights other less repeated emotional states that were part of some less frequent constructs.

10.3.7 Discussing emotional constructs

This section summarises the variety of different emotional constructs that are discussed throughout section 10.3. Six major emotions are discussed in detail; these are happiness (10.3.1), disappointment (10.3.2), satisfaction (10.3.3), reassurance (10.3.4), confidence (10.3.5), and comfortable (10.3.6).

In addition to the aforementioned emotions that are frequently repeated throughout the repertory grid study, other emotional states that are worth noting are frustration and boredom. Frustration and boredom appear as the implicit poles of constructs and are usually paired as contrast to other frequently used emotions such as happiness.

Based on the emergent pole also, the status of these emotions seems to change. For example, frustration is a state of feeling fed up when a site or a task is thought to be too complicated (as in Rachel's construct: happy–frustration). In this case it is linked to the absence of the TAM's popular construct, ease of use. This status of frustration is due to difficulty in using a website. However, frustration is also chosen by Jill to express in the construct (trust–frustration) her disappointment in delivery policies. In this instance, frustration is not the result of trying hard to navigate a website, but a simple state of disconfirmed expectations that the participant has no control of.

Frustration and boredom, together with all the aforementioned emotions are commonly expressed as part of constructs of the participants' online fashion shopping experience. However, the discussions throughout section 10.3 have indeed highlighted differences in the individual use of these words when paired and expressed in different constructs thus arguing for the impossibility of a universal outlook on emotions.

It is perhaps important to get a glimpse of the process of determining what falls into the emotional constructs category. Indeed, this thesis has argued for the non-separation of emotion and cognition, and by no means this section attempts to separate emotions. However, the purpose of this section is simply to shed the light on the use of obvious emotional words that appeared in the construction of the experience.

In order to determine what is discussed under the emotional construct category, the results of the multi coding analysis were used. Indeed discrepancies are bound to exist between participants when attempting to call something an emotion or not.

However, another layer that is used as an important point of reference contains the various existing scales of emotions that were mentioned in the literature review. For example, the pleasure-arousal-dominance (PAD) model (Russell & Mehrabian, 1977), Wheel of Emotions (Plutchik, 1980), and the consumption emotion set (CES) (Richins, 1997). This, in addition to the various affect, feeling and emotion scales from the *Handbook of Marketing Scales: Multi-Item Measures for Marketing and Consumer Behaviour Research* (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Haws, 2011), were all revisited to determine the inclusion or exclusion of certain constructs in this section. Interestingly, discrepancies between coders were understandable as inconsistencies between scales are evident. For example, 'interest' appears as an emotion in Plutchik (1980), whereas it is dropped from CES (Richins,1997) because of its 'cognitive nature'.

In this research, as mentioned above, a pragmatic perspective advocates antidualism, as Rylander (2012, p.12) comments: *'...reason and emotion cannot be separated and are intertwined in the process of experience. Emotion is ascribed a critical role in guiding attention, behavior, and as a source for originality and new ideas and behaviors'*. This stance accords with Kelly's PCT, and emotion and cognition are

treated as a unit. The findings above show different examples in which a construct could be argued that would carry one emotional pole and another cognitive one (e.g. keep you informed–confused).

This further emphasises the importance of an antidualist perspective with regards to the emotion-cognition debate. This is caused by the highlighted nature of the experience construction in this section. There is no clearly defined boundary that marks the end of emotions and the start of cognition, and consequently, this separation is deemed inappropriate for understanding the experience.

Indeed, this section has placed high significance on emotional statuses but this does not discount any cognitive nature to such emotions. The following section discusses trust and risk related constructs, and although these are put in a different category, this separation is not made for an indication of a non-emotional nature of such constructs. Instead, it is made to highlight the importance of a theme of constructs that relate to one dimension of experience construction, that is trust and risk perception.

By addressing the stance of emotional constructs along side the fashionscape constructs of section (10.2) the chapter provides two dimensions of the answer to the research question, how do consumers construct their online fashion shopping experiences? The rest of the chapter continues to fully address this question according to the participants of the study and using their own words. Therefore, the next section discusses another dimension of the construction of this experience, this includes the constructs that relate to trust and risk perception.

10.4 Risk and Trust Constructs

The previous sections of this chapter discussed two groups of constructs that are expressed in relation to the construction of the online fashion shopping experience. These groups are fashionscape constructs that address the perceived importance and influence of web atmospherics on the experience (section 10.2) and emotional constructs that address a variety of different emotional states expressed by the participants (section 10.3).

This section adds to the aforementioned sections by addressing another recurrent theme of constructs from the repertory grid data relating to issues of risk and trust. The word risk and the word trust appear at the top of the word frequency table indicating that they have been frequently used in the construction of the participants' online fashion-shopping experiences. However, the ways in which these two words appeared in constructs vary. Therefore, this section discusses risk and trust issues in online fashion-shopping experiences as constructed by the participants of this study.

10.4.1 Risk

Although risk appears as a highly frequent word in the repertory grid data, it does not appear as a frequent construct. This is because the word risk usually appeared twice in one construct, such as 'high risk–low risk'; then, this exact construct appeared in four different grids.

Therefore, although initially it seems that risk is one of the main construct themes of online fashion-shopping experiences, this appears not to be so once the constructs are examined. Figure 10-9 below shows the four constructs related to risk. These are taken from four interviews and so grid elements are not necessarily the same.

Risk-free Purchase Decision	1	3	2	2	3	3	**5**	2	3	**4**	**High risk**/ Unable to purchase
Low Risk	3	2	3	1	3	3	3	1	2	1	**High risk**
High-risk Purchase	3	3	3	5	3	3	5	3	3	3	Low-risk purchase
High-risk Purchase	**2**	3	4	4	3	**2**	5	4	3	5	Low-risk purchase

Figure 10-9 Risk constructs

A glimpse at figure 10-9 above, clearly shows that ratings toward the high risk pole of constructs is very minimal, thus suggesting that perception of high risk is marginal.

By examining the ratings between the two poles of each of the abovementioned constructs, we can see that ratings are weighted on the 'low risk' side of the constructs. The only instances where ratings are loaded on the 'high risk' side are the red numbers highlighted in figure 10-9. Specifically, on the first row, Helen makes a rating of 5 and 4 against the elements (mobile access and filters respectively) indicating that the highest risks she perceives are the risk of being unable to access a fashion-shopping website from her mobile phones or the risk of the filters not being effective in showing an item she would be looking for.

Similarly, Emma explains that the search filters may impose a high risk of complicating the shopping experience to a point where she would be unable to find anything. Furthermore, she rates social network pages as a high risk because they might suggest, 'something is wonderful and it's not!' Thus, in this context, the reference to 'risk' relates to the trustworthiness of the website or the tool in communicating the nature of a product, i.e. product risk.

Accordingly, the issue of risk can be considered marginal not only because it was not as frequent as it initially appeared, but also because it does not seem to carry a substantial weight in shaping the shopping experience.

It may seem surprising, as online-shopping literature has always emphasised the central issue of risk in the context of online shopping (Kim & Forsythe, 2009;

Miyazaki & Fernandez, 2001). Specifically, in the context of online fashion shopping, Perry et al. (2013, p.2) argue:

> *For fashion, intangibility is the principle determinant of risk in online purchase (Yu et al, 2012) rather than security, privacy and system security concerns (Eggert, 2006). This lack of sensory input prevents consumers from being able to make an informed purchase decision (Yu et al, 2012; Merle et al, 2012; Eggert, 2006).*

Perry et al. (2013) highlight an important issue, which is the intangibility of online fashion shopping. However, the findings of this thesis show that risk perception is very marginal among online fashion shoppers whether they are experienced or inexperienced, old or young, employed or unemployed.

The only one difference was in the comment of one participant, Eva, who explained how Internet shopping is a new concept in France and that she would worry about risks of exposing personal information. This issue was not emphasised by any of the other 25 participants. This may raise questions of cultural differences that are beyond the scope of this thesis.

The rationale for minimal risk perception may be a number of factors. First, as technology progresses, consumers are likely to be more familiar with it and less apprehensive. Thus, the very concept of risk begins to diminish, as the use of technology becomes an everyday routine. This may also explain the differences between the findings of this research and the mainstream research that still advocates the centrality of risk in online shopping.

Second, commenting the notion of Perry et al. that intangibility is the principle determinant of risk, the findings of chapter 8 stress that purposeless browsing is the most common type of online fashion shopping.

As mentioned above, in purposeless browsing the shopper browses fashion websites, sometimes daily, for inspiration, education or other motives. In this case, it is fairly common and popular for a shopper to buy a number of items that are delivered, tried on and then either kept or returned.

Consequently, the intangibility issue or product risk becomes less important as shoppers in purposeless browsing mode tend to buy a variety of items that are not essential; in which case they have prior anticipation that some of their purchased

items are to be returned. Flexible return options (such as free return, return to a physical store, and a 30-days refund policy) have helped a great deal with diminishing the risk perceived in online fashion-shopping experiences.

Third, it may be that the trustworthiness of most fashion websites, and the higher safety barriers imposed by most reliable search engines and web browsers, that UK consumers do not seem to perceive any risk in relation to financial transactions, payment methods and confidentiality of personal information.

As this section shows, risk perception seems to be diminishing in online fashion shopping experiences. On the other hand, an emphasis on trust is evident in the data. Therefore, the next section discusses trust as part of the risk and trust group of constructs that are linked to section 10.4.

10.4.2 Trust

Unlike risk, trust has not only appeared as a very frequent word but also as a highly frequent construct. Figure 10-10 below illustrates the trust-related constructs.
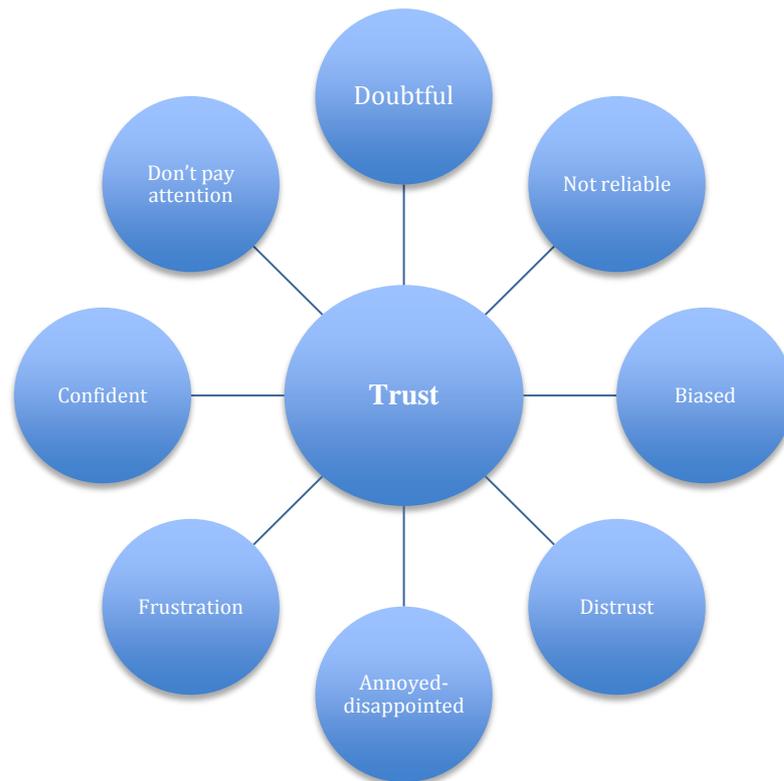
Figure 10-10 Trust and its contrasts

Trust, as it appears in the construction of the online fashion-shopping experience, seems to vary among the participants in two distinct ways. First, trust is in contrast to

biased and not reliable, in which case trust implies trustworthiness of the site or the degree to which certain web elements facilitate trust in the experience. Indeed, issues of anticipating a website's bias or unreliability is a serious dilemma or an implied perception of risk that affect the customer experience.

Bias and unreliability seems to only be relevant within certain parts of the website such as 'customer reviews'. For example, Paul explains that he trusts the genuineness of a website by the quality of certain web elements, and that fake websites do not have high quality zoom in and 3D images. He also mentions not trusting customer reviews and Facebook comments as he thinks the company itself employs the individuals who write these posts. Hence, instead of anticipating risk, Paul, like many others, chooses to ignore these elements and trust the other parts of the website.

On the other hand, constructs such as (trust–frustration) and (trust–disappointment) seem to convey a different perspective adopted by other participants. For example, Jill explains trusting a website when it meets or exceeds her expectations, and so, if they fail to deliver her items, she would not trust them and she would feel disappointed. Her concept of trust is not related to risks of anything being fake; it relates to her belief that a website would meet her expectation and strive to satisfy her needs.

Similarly, Tom explains his construct 'trust–annoyed' by saying:

> *'Probably the, errm, it would be, it would have to be like deficient, if it took too long, or if they said they are gonna order in 10 days and they didn't order in 10 days, I'd be pretty annoyed with that [...] easy navigation reduces the chance of the website being fake, like the website is well established.' (Tom, Interview 13)*

Therefore, trust appears either as an outcome of risk appraisals in which case it is the natural outcome of no perceived risks, or as an emotional state (Plutchik, 1980) that is related to anticipation or a belief that the other party 'the website, or the company' will meet the individual's expectations. It may be argued that risk and trust are interrelated concepts.

However, this is only one perspective of the relationship between them. In the literature, Nickel & Vaesen discuss the relationship between risk and trust, saying:

Philosophical conceptions of the relationship between risk and trust may be divided into three main families. The first conception, taking its cue from Hobbes, sees trust as a kind of risk assessment involving the expected behavior of another person, for the sake of achieving the likely benefits of cooperation. The second conception of trust sees it as an alternative to calculative risk assessment, in which instead of calculating the risks of relying on another person, one willingly relies on them for other reasons, e.g., habitual, social, or moral reasons. The third conception sees trust as a morally loaded attitude, in which one has a moral expectation that one takes it to be the responsibility of the trusted person to fulfill. (2012, p.858)

In the context of online fashion shopping, this trust is in companies, websites and businesses and almost the same concepts apply. As explained in this section, trust may possibly be the rational calculation of risk. In this instance, having discussed the diminishing perception of risks in online fashion shopping, it is important to acknowledge trust from an alternative perspective, whether it is an issue of expectations or an attitude.

Accordingly, trust and risk are presented in this section (10.4) as a matter of perception. As aforementioned, and unlike the arguments for existing research on the central importance of risk (e.g. Kim & Forsythe, 2009; Miyazaki & Fernandez, 2001; Perry et al., 2013), this thesis advocates that a shift in perception has resulted in focusing on trust rather than risk.

While risk did not come up as a central issue for most of the participants, the consensus was that it was construed as an essential part of the construction of the experience. However, when the participants discussed their perception of risk, it became apparent that hardly anyone perceived high risks. This, as explained previously, may be attributed to higher familiarity with online shopping and payments, and the less serious consequences of product risk in cases of flexible, cheap or free delivery, and returns.

While trust may possibly be the rational calculation or appraisal of risk (Plutchik, 1980), it is important to acknowledge, in line with Nickel and Vaesen (2012), that trust is a matter of expectations or an attitude of the individual as it appears in most

instances in this thesis (e.g. the loss of trust when a participant's expectations are not met by a company that delivers worldwide yet fails to deliver to a certain European country).

The outlook of trust has also been explained as being perceived as an emotional status, thus showing how the concept changes from one person to another. This is consistent with advocating the role of the individual in her or his own experiences and construction of events.

To sum up, section 10.4 presented a discussion on the constructs relating to risk and trust in online fashion shopping experiences. Indeed, as the section discussed most participants have very minimal perception of high risk, whereas the majority place high importance of trust.

This section provides another dimension to answering the research question: how do consumers construct their online fashion shopping experiences? Furthermore, the next section addresses another group of constructs that is discussed as part of this question. This group is behavioural constructs.

10.5 Behavioural Constructs

In addition to fashionscape perceptual, emotional, and risk and trust constructs, this section presents behavioural constructs as part of the construction of the online fashion shopping experience. This theme of constructs relate to types of behaviours mentioned by the participants. These behaviours range from exploring, buying, and revisiting to being put off, looking for alternatives, leaving the website, and giving up

These constructs can be explained by the approach-avoidance theory of behaviour (Aubert-Gamet, 1997; Eroglu et al., 2001; Ezeh & Harris, 2007) in which the participant anticipates a behaviour of approach (such as interacting, engaging, buying, or revisiting a website), or they anticipate a behaviour of avoidance (such as avoiding, ignoring, leaving a website, or giving up on the task).

Across the repertory grid sheets, anticipation of 'approach' behaviours is expressed much more frequently than anticipation of avoidance. For example, figure 10-11 below shows some of the behavioural constructs and their ratings. Each of these constructs comes from a different grid.

Search for cheaper or buy	1	3	1	2	1	**4**	3	**4**	3	2	**Give up**
Buy More	1	3	3	**4**	3	1	2	1	1	**4**	**Put You Off**
More likely to buy	1	3	2	1	**5**	3	1	2	2	2	**Leave the website/look for alternatives**
Put You Off	5	5	4	5	5	**2**	**1**	5	5	4	More likely to spend time/buy

Figure 10-11 Behavioural constructs

The participant's constructs in relation to their behaviour are influenced by the participant's level of expertise in online fashion shopping. The participants are mostly regular online fashion shoppers and, during the repertory grid stage, their anticipation would probably be influenced by their previous experiences. Therefore, it is very unlikely that anticipation of giving up and leaving a website would be

expressed. Instead, the participants focused more on anticipating positive behaviours such as buying, spending time and money, and revisiting a website.

The distinctive cases in which the participants announced behaviours of avoidance relate to anticipation of extreme disturbance caused by certain web elements. One theme that has emerged from the data relates to the ease of use, and quickness of the shopping process. For example, Max explains his perspective by suggesting that he wants the process of shopping to be as quick as possible, so he anticipates being put off by small fonts that are hard to read and do not give him useful information (*Interview 21*).

Therefore, the anticipation of avoidance is linked to obstacles in the online-shopping environment that would hinder a speedy shopping process. Similarly, Paul explains that ease of navigation is very important and that if web layout does not allow that, he would anticipate leaving the website and looking for alternatives. This perspective is further reinforced by Tom's (*Interview 13*) suggestion that the requirement of a compulsory sign up to the website before payment may put him off.

Thus, it is apparent that when anticipating behavioural constructs, the main issue for the participants is the dynamics of the experience, i.e. the journey of the experience. Indeed, the previous two chapters have discussed in detail all the behaviours within the online fashion shopping experience.

Videography evidence has provided a detailed capture of such behaviours that enable nuanced analysis of this dynamic part of the experience. However, it was important highlighting these constructs here from the repertory grid data as they reflect the participants' anticipation of their behaviours.

This section, therefore, presented behavioural constructs as part of the construction of online fashion shopping experiences. The next section discusses the last group of constructs, which then mark a complete answer to the question this chapter strives to address. That is, how do consumers construct their online fashion shopping experiences?

10.6 <u>Situational Constructs</u>

Up until this point, the chapter has presented four types of constructs of the online fashion shopping experience. These are, fashionscape constructs (Section 10.2), emotional constructs (Section 10.3), risk and trust constructs (Section 10.4), and behavioural constructs (Section 10.5). This section presents the last group of constructs that are called the situational constructs.

The situational constructs refer to constructs that are neither part of the person characteristics nor of the stimuli (i.e. the fashionscape constructs). In an attempt to define 'situation', Belk suggests:

> *'A consumer situation may be viewed as comprising all those factors particular to a time and place of observation which do not follow from a knowledge of personal (intra-individual) and stimulus (choice alternative) attributes and which have a demonstrable and systematic effect on current behaviour.'* (1975, p.158)

This perspective suggests that understanding the situation requires separating it from the physical surrounding and the personal traits of the consumers and their behaviours.

Bitner (1990) reinforces this separation by suggesting that physical surroundings and employee responses, in addition to Belk's situational variables, need to be considered in predicting and explaining consumer behaviour.

In the application of this concept to the dataset of constructs that emerged from the repertory grid study, situational constructs often were evident in the context in which the discussion about experience was taking place.

No significant number of constructs was considered 'situational' during the multi-coding analysis. This is because the term might be confusing to 'outsiders' to this study. However, it is also because the situations were expressed as a background of discussion rather than a clear construct.

There are still examples where constructs were situational in nature. For instance, Helen expressed an example of a situational construct (necessity–luxury). She explained that the concept of luxury does not refer to the purchasing of luxury fashion items. Instead, it refers to the situation of buying products that are not

necessary. She explains that buying clothes that she does not desperately need is a 'luxury'; and knowing that she can return the items if she does not like them is another 'luxury'.

At the other end of the construct, the 'necessity' pole refers to a necessary purchase that she needs to make, or a particular product she needs to buy. This 'necessity' is a situation that suggests the nature of the experience to be a more intense search for the particular item. The scope of error that the participant is ready to make is minimal in the case of necessity purchase.

However, in luxurious 'situations' she is more open for things to go wrong and she is happy to return items if she does not like them. Intuitively, offers of free delivery and free returns (or return to a physical store) facilitate a more 'luxurious' shopping situation; and thus a more positive experience.

This issue was apparent in chapter 8, where distinctions between purposeful and purposeless browsing were made. As purposeful browsing represents the concept of necessity, a situation in which there is no scope for error. This is in contrast to purposeless browsing, or what Helen called 'luxury', where the customer may be able to afford more risks.

On various occasions throughout the repertory grid interviews and the videos, the participants referred to the context or the situation they are in as a part of their experience. The situation can be the nature of the task itself, whether it is free purposeless browsing, or task-oriented 'purposeful' browsing.

Purposeless browsing was identified as the most common form of online shopping. Usually, it happens for inspiration and education purposes (e.g. learning how to dress, learning about the latest trends or discounted items). This purposeless browsing is similar to window-shopping in the high street and mall shopping. This situation offers a distinctive nature to the experience. For instance, as the videos of purposeless browsing showed, web layout becomes critical in this situation more than the filters, as it is the main tool of interaction with the website.

To the contrary, in task-oriented 'purposeful' browsing, the nature of the shopping experience is different. Even if educational and inspirational motives exist, they are minimal compared to the goal sets to be achieved in this particular situation.

For example, Kat started her shopping experience by defining the context and the situation in which her experience is taking place. She started by addressing the need to buy a dress for her 'grad ball in June' *(video 7)*. It is clear then that she is specifically looking for a particular item and that she sets a task to find this item and end her shopping task.

In this experience, we can see the participant starts by engaging with the filters offered on the website with a main aim of narrowing the wider range of items to something that fits her criteria. It is very clear that that she is emotionally immersed in the experience and she gets frustrated after failing to filter the items to something that could satisfy her needs.

When a participant is looking for a specific item for an important occasion, her or his experience differs dramatically from when they are browsing or buying a gift, for example. Understandably, browsing fashion websites for the sake of browsing can be more relaxing and less tense than buying a wedding dress. One participant, Sara, comments:

> If I need a particular item for a specific occasion, I won't go online. I'd go to the shops. I want to buy it knowing that it is the right size for me… the right colour, you see? *(Interview, 04)*

The stance of situational variables, as it is presented in this section, is in agreement with the pragmatic researcher, John Dewey. The situation is viewed as a contextual whole that bring objects and events together in the experience. Dewey (1938, p.66–67) elaborates on the nature of the 'situation' in the experience:

> *'In actual experience, there is never any such isolated singular object or event; an object or event is always a special part, phase, or aspect, of an environing experienced world – a situation.... There is always a field in which observation of this or that situation object or event occurs. […] What is designated by the word 'situation' is not a single object or event, or set of objects and events. For we never experience, nor form judgments about objects and events in isolation, but only in connection with a contextual whole. This latter is what is called a 'situation'.'*

The situational constructs identified as one of the main themes across the repertory grids' constructs refer to the 'contextual whole' defined by Dewey above. In other words, the situations in which the experience takes place provide a context to the nature of the experience itself. Therefore, this 'situation' is neither an antecedent nor a moderator of the experience; it is the contextual whole of the experience. It is how we make sense of the experience, and how we understand its nature.

In the stream metaphor of experience, the situation could refer to the nature of the ground that the stream is passing over. The flow of the stream would be drastically different if the ground it is passing over is steep or flat. Obviously, the stream would flow very slowly down a very gentle slope, very quickly and intensely down a steep hill, and go along a very different way on flat ground. It could also be influenced by weather, the wind, humidity, and anything else that can affect the stream's dynamics.

This section has presented situational constructs as the last group of constructs that are presented throughout this chapter. Therefore, according to the findings of this study, five groups (or themes) of constructs can be identified as part of the online fashion shopping experience. These are, fashionscape perceptual constructs, emotional constructs, risk and trust constructs, behavioural constructs and finally situational constructs.

The following section marks the end of the chapter by presenting a discussion that summarises all the sections of this chapter as well as further emphasising the stance of the experience as it is presented throughout the chapter.

10.7 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the question of how consumers construct their online fashion shopping experiences. Using an exploratory repertory grid, five categories of key constructs of the online fashion shopping experience are identified: perception of the environment, emotion, risk and trust, behaviour, and situation.

In line with Petermans et al's (2013) argument that the multidisciplinary nature of experience is critical and needs to be addressed, the PCT approach is adopted and used to reach the following conceptualisation of what an experience is, namely, the psychological construction and anticipation of events a person makes prior to an intentional or unintentional visit to an apparel website. This construction of emotions, situations, and perceptions of trust and of the environment shapes a journey of interactions involving approach and avoidance. This individualistic path is defined by a situational context, usually involving a task.

In presenting the aforementioned types of constructs, this thesis draw on the commonality between the constructions of all the participants, thus, looking for themes and similarity. However, what the chapter also does is taking this construction to a new level of depth in which the common themes are further examined to identify individualistic differences within each type of constructs.

This approach perfectly fit with Kelly's (1955) individuality and commonality corollaries (appendix 4) in which PCT allows a scope of understanding commonality between experiences and at the same time accounts for individuality and differences between individual experiences.

Therefore, themes of the elements' importance suggest that the role of web elements (i.e. fashionscape elements) is most reflected in bringing the online experience closer to a real-life shopping experience (i.e. the experience of shopping in a physical store). Additionally, themes of emotional constructs show tremendous differences in the emotions that the participants experience. Even when the same word (such as happy) is used to express an emotional state, the contrasts used opposite this word highlight variations in the meaning of happiness and thus different implications might be possible. This suggests an individualistic nature of emotions rather than a universally shared language.

Moreover, the exploration of the issues of risk and trust showed that trust is a more common construct than risk. Although it could be argued that trust and risk are interrelated, the section explained different perspectives in the literature about this relationship. It was concluded that trust could take a variety of different meanings: a logical result of calculated risk, an emotional state or a moral attitude. Highlighted in that section are the types of risks identified in the data, which are mainly product risks or risk of having no access rather than risks of serious fraud.

Furthermore, constructs of behaviours were presented in the light of the theory of approach–avoidance as a fitting way of understanding these constructs. It was concluded that anticipation of 'approach' behaviours is more likely than anticipation of 'avoidance', and that behaviours are better understood using the actual videography data as in chapter 8.

Finally, the situational context was presented as a contextual whole of the experience. The relevant literature associated with situational constructs was discussed. In spite of the limited appearance of situational constructs, it was concluded that the situation provides a vital context to the experience and defines the shopping experience as a whole.

The following chapter discusses how the main findings of this thesis contribute to the literature and to the understanding of online fashion-shopping experiences, emotions, and atmospherics.

Chapter 11 Thesis Conclusion

Researchers must make clear what major contributions their studies make and explain why these contributions are important. It is a mistake to assume that readers will decipher the importance of the study from a description of what was done. **(Summers, 2001, p.410)**

This chapter draws on all chapters of this thesis to address clearly the ways in which this thesis makes a significant contribution. In order to clearly establish what makes a significant contribution, Brown and Dant define a significant contribution to the retailing literature as *'research that tackles interesting and relevant research issues, advances our theoretical and/or methodological understanding of those issues, and deepens our knowledge of those issues'* (2008, p.134).

This thesis makes a significant contribution as it advances the methodological and theoretical understanding of the online fashion-shopping experience. Such a contribution is achieved by employing a novel research methodology that has granted the ultimate power to the individual in his or her own experiences and that has enabled the capture of the live dynamics of otherwise unobservable events revealing important insights both on the theoretical and managerial levels.

The chapter marks the end of this thesis and presents its concluding thoughts. Therefore, it begins by revisiting the purpose of this thesis; clearly stating the three research questions and discussing the answers presented throughout the findings chapters to address them.

Moreover, the chapter makes clear statements of the theoretical and methodological contribution the thesis has made in advancing our understanding of online fashion shopping experiences and of the online fashion shopping environments in which these experiences take place. Equally important, the chapter highlight the implications of each of the thesis's contributions both on theoretical and managerial levels.

Finally, the limitations of this research are addresses, and the opportunities for future research that could build on the findings of this thesis are discussed.

The structure of this chapter is illustrated in figure (11-1) below.

Contribution

What are the theoretical and methodological contributions made in this thesis?

Theoretical and managerial implications

What are the theoretical and managerial implications of the contributions made in this thesis?

Limitations and future research

What are the limitations of this thesis's contributions? What opportunities are suggested for future research?

Figure 11-1 Overview of Chapter 11

11.1 <u>Purpose Revisited</u>

This thesis focused on studying the experience of online fashion shopping as lived and constructed by the consumers. Specifically, the methodology chapter (chapter 5) addressed the purpose of this thesis, which was to **study the nature and the processes of the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumer.**

This general aim was specified in three sub-questions posited as worth investigation. The research questions, along with the methods that have been used to answer them, and the chapter of findings that provide these answers, are summarised in table (11.1) below.

Table 11-1 Purpose revisited

Main RQ	Sub RQs	Method	Findings
What is the nature and the processes of the online fashion-shopping experience as lived and constructed by the consumers?	RQ1. How do consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment?	Videography	Chapter 8 (and Ch9 in parts)
	RQ2. What is the composition and role of the environment in online fashion-shopping experiences?	Videography+ Repertory Grids	Chapter 9
	RQ3. How do consumers construct their online fashion-shopping experiences?	Repertory Grids	Chapter 10

As table 11.1 highlights, in order to answer the overall question of understanding the nature and dynamics of online fashion shopping experiences as lived and constructed by the consumers, three sub-questions were addressed throughout the findings chapters.

Has the thesis achieved its purpose? And are these research questions fully answered? What contributions does this thesis make to the relevant research field? This section addresses these questions in detail clearly highlighting the important, major and incremental contributions made in this thesis.

11.1.1 Interactions with the online fashion shopping environment

The first subsection of section (11.1) revisits the first research question: How do consumers interact with the online fashion-shopping environment? And discusses the answers this thesis provides to address the question highlighting how this thesis

contribute to existing research and current knowledge of interactions with web atmospherics in online fashion shopping.

In order to address this question and its dynamic nature, screencast videography (discussed in chapter 7) was used as a method for data collection that allowed capturing 'live' experiences. As the findings of this videography study have shown, interactions with the online fashion-shopping environment could be distinctively classified into purposeless and purposeful browsing types of interactions.

Additionally, interactions with the online fashion-shopping environment are also separated based on the types of elements of the environment, following Eroglu et al. (2001) high/low task relevance cues.

Chapter 8 discussed in detail the differences between purposeless and purposeful types of interactions. Although these terms appear in Human-Computer Interaction literature (Eadala & Ratkal, 2014; Lai & Yang, 2000), they can be considered novel in existing literature in marketing and consumer research.

The importance of understanding the differences between these two types of browsing lies in the way these browsing types put a context to the experience, thus, allowing a better understanding of specific incidents.

For example, rather than generically discussing the importance of reducing barriers to shopping online, this distinction allows us to relate to the context of the experience. In purposeless browsing, for instance, the shoppers are usually browsing for inspiration or to learn about trends or to just spend some pleasant time.

Reducing all barriers to this movement to allows smooth interactions (Hansen and Jensen, 2009) may contribute to a state of pleasurable rewarding immersion in the experience (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; 2009, Pine & Gilmore, 1998). However, as chapter 8 shows, to achieve this infinite scrolling as a web technique is seen as a critical web layout element that organises the website and facilitates such flow of experience. Indeed displaying a limited number of products per page arguably acts as a restrictive cue, which may interrupt this flow leading to behaviours of avoidance. This was evident in videos showing 'I can't be bothered' attitudes in response to displaying multiple pages of products; thus leading to a state of overwhelming choice infinity.

On the other hand, in purposeful browsing (where the shopper navigates a website in a systematic manner in order to find a specific item), interactions with filters to minimise the number of choices to a relevant set of items become critical. Therefore, restrictions in this case allows technically forming a consideration set (Peterson & Merino, 2003) that helps achieve the search task.

The answer this thesis presents to RQ1, therefore, furthers existing understanding of the role of low task relevant atmospherics in the context of online fashion shopping experience. Thus it contributes to existing literature in web atmospherics, particularly research interested in web layout and search and filters (e.g. Demangeot & Broderick, 2010; Eroglu et al., 2001; Hopkins et al., 2009; Koo & Ju, 2009; Lorenzo, Molla, & Gomez-Borja, 2008; Manganari, et al., 2011; Tan, Tung, & Xu, 2009; Tong, Lai, & Tong, 2012; Turley & Milliman, 2000).

11.1.2 *Fashionscape as a concept*

As the previous section (11.1.1) discussed the answers this thesis present to the first research question and the contribution this makes to the relevant body of literature; this section revisits the second research question: What is the composition and role of the environment in online fashion-shopping experiences? And discuss the answers this thesis present and the contribution these answers make to existing research in this area.

To answer the aforementioned question, the online fashion-shopping environment is discussed in detail in chapter 9. By proposing the concept of the fashionscape, this thesis furthers the understanding of atmospherics, particularly in a specific industry, i.e. the fashion industry.

This industry has its unique characteristics that are evident in the need to touch fabrics and try garments on, which is not necessarily relevant to other industries (Li & Gery, 2000). Studying the e-servicescape in an industry-specific context is important and has been recommended in the literature (Mari & Poggesi, 2013).

Accordingly, it is perhaps important to discuss the fashionscape concept against other similar concepts that study the atmospheric environment in other industries. Figure (11-2) below summarises the fashionscape, servicescape and e-servicescape concepts.

Servicescape

Physical evidence:
Ambience Factors,
Design Functionality
(Bitner, 1992; 2000)

**Social/Human
factors:** (Ezeh &
Harris, 2007; Mari &
Poggesi, 2013)

Subjective factors:
Cultural factors,
symbols and artefacts
(Arnould et al., 1998;
Visconti & Giesler,
2011)

E-servicescape

Ambient conditions:
(Hopkins, et al. 2009),
aesthetic appeal
(Harris & Goode,
2010a)

**Spatial layout and
functionality:**
(Hopkins, et al. 2009;
Harris & Goode,
2010a)

**Signs, symbols and
artefacts:** (Hopkins, et
al. 2009)
Financial security:
(Harris & Goode,
2010a)

Online Fashionscape

Visual scape: product
images (default,
flikers, zoom in, 3D,
colour change),
catwalk videos, and
virtual fitting rooms

Verbal scape: written
product information,
size guide, and
delivery and return
policy

Social scape: social
network, customer
reviews, and star
ratings

Educational scape:
trendy looks, matching
outfits, inspiration and
adaptation, and blogs

Figure 11-2 Fashionscape vs. e-servicescape

Figure (11-2) shows that the fashionscape elements do not replicate any of the e-servicescape factors. Indeed ambience, web functionality and layout (Hopkins, et al. 2009; Harris & Goode, 2010) are still important factors in the online-shopping environment, whether the shopping is for fashion or something else. However, in the case of fashion, online fashion items are intangible (Perry et al., 2013), and consequently, product presentation and closeness to real-life experiences seem to play a major role in the online fashion-shopping experience.

Furthermore, the fashionscape is different from the servicescape concept in that in the servicescape physical surroundings are essential (e.g. staying in a hotel). In

online fashion shopping, even if environmental atmospherics are important, the focus is the garments rather than the environment.

Similarly, the e-servicescape concept also places greater emphasis on design and layout. The e-servicescape is not intended for the study of product presentation in a fashion context. The factors neglected in the previous concepts are the visual and verbal presentation of items, and the communication of social inputs and educational values accounted for in the fashionscape concept. Therefore, fashionscape fits this context more than servicescape.

The fashionscape, as proposed in this thesis, comprises the visual, verbal, social and educational dimensions on a fashion website.

The educational fashionscape helps the shoppers to 'learn' about the latest trends and fashion hits. It may inspire their choice of clothing and fashion taste, and it is indeed the vital interaction in a purposeless browsing experience. On the other hand, in a purposeful browsing experience where a specific task is set, the visual fashionscape becomes vital.

As the visual fashionscape includes all modes of product presentations via zooming, 3D, videos, etc., it is essential in assisting the shopper's assessment of the garments that they browse in order to make a purchase decision. As supported in this research, in situations of high involvement, e.g. buying a dress for an important occasion, the visual presentations of products is critical to show all the details of the item under inspection

The role of the social fashionscape remains trivial in the context of fashion shopping. As discussed in the findings, shoppers did not show much attention or desire to be involved in social network pages of fashion websites.

Exclusivity is one of the reasons for avoiding social network sites when it comes to sharing and liking outfits, as there was very little desire to share one's own outfits and purchases with the 'world'.

Furthermore, star ratings and customer reviews have also showed mixed results. Unlike previous research that suggested positive customer reviews are perceived to be more helpful than negative ones (Schindler & Bickart, 2012), in this thesis and in

the specific context of fashion, the shoppers have paid hardly any attention to reviews. Yet, they explained they would be more likely to consider a negative review than a positive one if the review type is relevant.

This is in line with the research of Laczniak, DeCarlo, and Ramaswami (2001) that shows how the 'relevance' of the review is important in the effectiveness of customer reviews and brand evaluations. This thesis provides important insights into the social dimension of online fashion shopping, but further research is deemed essential to study specifically the social fashionscape rather than social media in different industries.

Finally, let's consider the verbal fashionscape, which includes all verbal written information on the website. The thesis highlights the trivial role of verbal product information as the participants almost always ignore reading text based information about the products.

Indeed visual fashionscape is so well developed. The highly advanced digital zooming and 3D views, in addition to a variety of product displays, make the shoppers less reliant on reading a product description that is easily communicated in visuals. This is partially supported in existing research advocating the preference of visuals over verbal (e.g. Kim & Lennon, 2008; Townsend & Kahn, 2014).

However, this thesis' vital finding on the verbal fashionscape is the different role the verbal plays on the website. For example, although verbal product information is not deemed central to the shopping experience, and may only be supportive in some cases, the role of verbal information becomes essential when communicating non-visual information such as delivery and return policy, care details, and size guide information. Indeed, delivery and return policy are central in online fashion shopping both in the cases on purposeless and purposeful browsing.

Accordingly, the importance of the dimensions of the fashionscape (visual, verbal, social, and educational) varies according to the situational contexts in which the online fashion-shopping experience takes place.

The term fashionscape allows for such detailed identification of different dimensions that are usually referred to in generic terms such as the web environment, or web atmospherics (Kim & Lennon, 2010; Manganari, Siomkos, & Vrechopoulos, 2009;

Sautter et al., 2004), online servicescape or e-servicescape (Harris & Goode, 2010; Hopkins et al., 2009; Jeon & Jeong, 2009; C. Lee & Park, 2013; S. Lee & Jeong, 2012), cyberscape (Rosenbaum, 2005; Williams & Dargel, 2004), and the virtual environment (Papadopoulou & Andreou, 2001).

Equally important, the fashionscape concept is introduced in this thesis for the specific context of online shopping. Shopping for fashion in brick-and-mortar stores and malls is arguably different for a variety of reasons: (1) it is an essentially different way of browsing and looking for items, (2) products are often available to touch and try on and so product presentations play a different role, (3) staff are usually more available in the store to answer questions. The differences in online and offline shopping are beyond the scope of this thesis, but these issues are highlighted to emphasise the application of the term fashionscape only in the context of fashion websites.

The concept of the fashionscape can be considered, for several reasons, an important contribution to the literature of atmospherics.

First, with the rapid evolving nature of technology, various experiences have moved completely or partly to the digital world. Fashion shopping is one of those phenomena that have been growing in the digital world. As previously explained, various endeavours have been made in the literature of atmospherics to adapt existing theories and concepts of store atmospherics to the online environment.

However, such endeavours were not deemed sufficient for our understanding of the web environment especially in the specific context of fashion shopping. Studying virtual environments is inevitable with the increasing use of technology in daily life. Mari & Poggesi (2013, p.185) comment: *'One of the most promising research streams concerns the virtual servicescape'*. The fashionscape concept is not an adaptation of existing concepts; it is a novel naturalistic approach built through the participant's experiences and constructions.

Second, the approach followed in this thesis accounts for a holistic perspective on the entire atmosphere and not on specific parts of it. As highlighted in the literature reviews, Turley and Milliman (2000, p.208) suggest *'The need for a 'macro' level theory that would explain how consumers process the entire atmosphere'*. This suggestion was a conclusion of a review of all the experimental relevant literature on

atmospherics and shopping behaviour. Under an experimental design, certain atmospherics have to be controlled in order to test for the effect of one or more atmospherics.

However, the naturalistic approach that has been adopted in this thesis allowed for exploration of the entire atmosphere as the participants explored it. As a result, this thesis introduces the concept of the fashionscape as a holistic concept that accounts for the entire atmosphere rather than the parts.

Third, the fashionscape concept is formulated to explain online fashion-shopping environments rather than any generic shopping environment. This issue has been highlighted in existing literature. Mari and Poggesi, for example, conclude that *'an understudied research area concerns how physical environments can influence customers in certain service industries'* (2013, p.181).

Although fashion is not a service industry, their comment is indeed relevant to other industries. As explained previously, fashion shopping is unique in its nature because of its strong links to identity and culture (Levy, 1959; McCracken, 1986; Solomon & Douglas, 1987). Arguably, it is also unique in the need to touch and try fashion items before purchasing them (Perry et al., 2013; Styvén, 2010). Therefore, the fashionscape is a more fitting concept for future research into online fashion shopping.

Moreover, in introducing the fashionscape as a concept, four dimensions have been highlighted. These dimensions are the visual, verbal, social, and educational scapes.

The educational fashionscape is an important perspective that has not gained much attention in the literature.

This section (11.1.2) presented a thorough discussion on the stance of the fashionscape, a term that is conceptualised in this thesis to answer the second research question: What is the composition and role of the environment in online fashion-shopping experiences?

The section also highlighted the importance of this concept against other similar concepts of existing research such as the servicescape and e-servicescape concepts. Equally important was the section's discussion on the important theoretical contributions made in addressing RQ2 to further our understanding of web atmospherics in the specific context of online fashion shopping.

Up until this point, the chapter has revisited the first and second research questions and the answers that were made throughout the findings chapters of the thesis. Next, the following section (11.1.3) revisits the third research question on the construction of the experience and discusses the answers provided and their relation to existing research.

11.1.3 Experience as a Concept

As the previous sections discussed the answers this thesis present to RQ1 (section 11.1.1) and RQ2 (section 11.1.2), this section revisits the third research question: how do consumers construct their online fashion shopping experiences? And discuss the answers this thesis present and the contribution these answers make to existing research in this area.

To answer the aforementioned question, the construction of the online fashion shopping experience was discussed in detail in chapter 10 – based on the repertory grid study and its detailed multi coder analysis explained in chapter 6.

Chapter 10 presented five groups of constructs of the online fashion shopping experience, fashionscape constructs, emotional constructs, risk and trust, behavioural and situational constructs. This section presents a general discussion on the concept of the experience as it is proposed in this thesis and differentiated from other similar concepts, and it further advocates the rationale for this concept. The section also emphasises individuality along with the dynamics and the situational contexts as critical aspects that shape the experience.

To provide a better understanding of the online fashion shopping experience, this thesis in its two studies and two findings chapters aims to conceptualise the meaning of the experience of online fashion shopping as it is constructed and lived by the consumers. As the literature review of this thesis, particularly chapter 2, argued, in spite all the scholarly efforts made in studying the experience, the approach to this term is still not unified mainly because of the multidisciplinary nature of the term (Petermans, et al., 2013).

Research on consumption and shopping experiences has grown and has certainly advanced in recognising the subjective and personal nature of the experience. This is especially apparent in the definitions of the experience highlighted in the literature such as Rose, Clark, Samouel, and Hair's conceptualisation: *'customer experience is conceptualized as a psychological construct, which is a holistic, subjective response resulting from customer contact with the retailer and which may involve different levels of customer involvement'* (2012, p.309). Similarly, Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007) advocates the personal nature of customer experience which originates from a

set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization.

In such conceptualisations, it is apparent that endeavours have been made to emphasise the role of the individual or the customer rather than the environment itself in the experience. Therefore, such concepts attempt to advance our understanding of the experience of the shopping environment 'or in general, the touch-points' by placing less emphasis on the stimuli part of the SOR model and a greater emphasis on the individual's inner processes and responses.

However, methodological approaches to studying the experience have not advanced enough to give the ultimate power to the individuals in their own experiences. The use of traditional research methods has kept the power of understanding the experience in the hands of the researcher rather than the individual living such experiences. Consequently, although such endeavours further our understanding of the experience, they still fall short of giving individuals the power to shape their own experiences. The customer's role is still merely a psychological process followed by a response to the given stimuli.

The methodological choices made in this thesis have, arguably, allowed for a shift in power from the researcher to the participants, both in the repertory grid study where they constructed their experiences with a minimal intervention, and in the videography study where they were given the freedom to behave without any restrictions or interruption.

Therefore, following these methods, and by efficiently summarising the most important points of my findings the following conceptualisation of the experience in the specific concept of online fashion shopping:

*This experience is a **process** that begins from the psychological construction and anticipation of events a person makes prior to an intentional or unintentional visit to an apparel website. This **construction of emotions, situations, and perceptions** of trust and of the environment shape a journey of interactions, of approaches and avoidances. This **individualistic journey** is defined by **a situational context** whether or not a specific task defines such context. The online fashion-shopping **environment** should always be viewed in terms of the specific constructions of an individual rather than an entity set in stone. Therefore, **the environment and the individual are***

*inseparable within the experience. The ultimate role of this environment is to bring the online fashion-shopping experience **closer to real-life experiences**.*

A number of important perspectives are highlighted in this conceptualisation. The following sub-headings highlight such perspectives.

- *A process of construction*

First, this conceptualisation emphasises the importance of viewing the experience as a dynamic process rather than a response to atmospherics. It is in line with the theoretical assumption of Kelly's fundamental postulate, *'a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events'* (1963, p.46). In fact, Kelly's outlook on the person is dynamic, as Bannister and Mair suggest:

> *Man is a form of perpetual motion with the direction of the motion controlled by the ways in which events are anticipated. The ways in which a person anticipates events are defined by his personal constructs. A construct is a way in which some things are interpreted as being alike and at the same time different from other things.* (1968, p. 13)

The construction of the experience, as presented in chapter 9, is a set of perceptual, emotional, situational, and behavioural variables as construed by the participants in the research. This construction is the psychological process of construing what an online fashion-shopping experience is to the individual.

Perceptual construction relates to the individual's perception of the environment and of trust. Therefore, as the findings of the repertory grid show, the environment may change according to way the customer perceives it, and the customer's experience maybe shaped differently. For instance, differences between what is perceived an essential element of the fashion website, and what is perceived a bonus or a useless extra, highlight different paths to the experience of such individuals. When a customer perceives a web element (e.g. catwalk videos) as a necessity, her or his experience may change if such expectations were not met. However, as explained in chapter 10, customers seem to have very high expectations on a scale of 'necessity vs. bonus' showing that they see most of the web elements discussed in this thesis as a necessary essential part of the fashionscape.

Emotional constructs of the experience have also been discussed and highlighted in chapter 10. Happiness, disappointment, satisfaction, reassurance, comfort, confidence, frustration and boredom have been highlighted as frequently used words in describing the emotional constructs of the experience.

Consequently, various emotional states may be relevant to online fashion-shopping experiences depending on the individual, her or his circumstances, and the environment in which the experience is taking place. The view of emotions in this thesis is in line with the pragmatist perspective summarised by Simpson and Marshall (2010, p.356):

> *William James asserted that emotion can only be understood in relation to the unfolding of experience (James, 1890/1950), whereas Dewey (1894, 1895) and Mead (1895) soundly rejected claims that emotion may be explained in terms of a simple stimulus-response causality. They shared James' view that emotion must be located within the holistic flow of experience.*

This view is in line with the approach used in this thesis of studying emotion as experiences unfold. It is also in line with Kelly's (1955) proposition that emotions arise when a difference between anticipation of events and how such events unfold. Simpson and Marshall (2010, p.357) explain this perspective further by saying:

> *Emotions arise when a difference is recognized between what was intended by an inquiring gesture and what was interpreted from it. As such, emotion is not only felt as an embodied experience but also it acts as a communicative gesture in the on-going flow of experience.*

As chapter 10 highlighted, a variety of emotions already coexist in the construction of the experience. Therefore, such emotions arise, for example, when a difference between what an individual anticipates (e.g. ease of filtering to find a grad ball dress) and how events unfold (e.g. failure to filter down to a collection of dresses that suits a graduation ball).

It is not the stimulus, 'e.g. the filter', that causes an emotional status and a response, but it is the imbalance between the participant's expectation and how events unfold that allows certain emotional states of frustration and disappointment to arise. Such emotional states seem to guide the participant's journey through the experience,

which moves from that intensive task failure to a more relaxed browsing for inspiration and education on how to dress.

Another noteworthy issue when discussing the construction of emotions is the variability in the meaning of the aforementioned emotions from one individual to another, which is in line with Kelly's (1955) individuality corollary. This leads to the next critical aspect of the conceptualisation of the experience proposed in this thesis.

- *The individuality of experience*

The individuality aspect of the experience places greater emphasis on individuals' role in shaping their own experiences through their construing systems. As mentioned above, the construction is highly individual. At no point could identical repertory grids be elicited from two different individuals. Therefore, the experience construction is bound to individual differences.

More importantly, as explained in chapter 10, even when two or more, individuals suggest a variable such as happiness, the meaning of 'happiness' seems to differ every time the contrast changes. This issue of individuality goes against mainstream research of emotions that suggest universality of emotions.

It seems, according to the findings of this thesis and in line with Kelly's (1955) theory, happiness may range from being a state of satisfaction to a state of excitement. Therefore each of the constructs of the experience may be viewed as a spectrum; for instance, the happiness spectrum therefore would begins as a state of neutrality and then changes according to contrasts until it reaches extreme excitement at the other end of the spectrum.

As a consequence of the individuality perspective, the process of online fashion-shopping experience is directed not by stimuli according to the SOR framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Russell & Mehrabian, 1977), but by the ultimate power of the individual who makes numerous decisions about the 'approach and avoidance' of stimuli.

As the findings of this thesis show, certain stimuli or atmospherics in the web environment may become trivial or central according to the individual's construction. It is apparent, as the previous section of this chapter explains; the fashionscape or the online fashion-shopping environment varies from one individual to another. It may seem difficult to accept such perspective when the matter is a website that is exactly

the same for every customer. However, in the individual experience, the individual's construction of this website is what matters.

In other words, the ASOS website carries very many educational and inspirational fashion tips and lessons for the customers who construe such matters and actually click on the relevant links on the website. To another customer who may use the 'new in' section only to view products, the fashionscape is completely different. Therefore, only when a customer decides to approach a particular element or part of the website, does that element become part of the environment of this person's experience.

Consequently, the inseparability of the environment and the individual within his or her experiences is asserted and emphasised in this thesis. This argument is in line with the core principle of pragmatism as an anti-dualistic philosophy (Dewey, 1958; James, 1975). Such perspective is further advocated by Simpson and Marshall (2010, p.354) who comment on the consequences of dualism: *'the application of dualisms, which are pairs of irreducible and mutually excluding principles, precludes any understanding of the dynamics of processes because they cut through the very temporal continuities from which processes are constituted'*.

Through the lens of individuality, therefore, the fashionscape is unique as each individual construes it. It is this individuality that makes it impossible to separate the environment (the fashionscape) from the individual (the customer).

- *The situational context of experience*

The final aspect of the experience is the situational context as previously discussed in chapter 10. Indeed the situational context is key in shaping the experience as a whole. Situations of purposeless and purposeful shopping (chapter 8), and situations of 'necessity' and 'luxury' shopping, determine the types of decision made by an individual in interacting with a website.

This is supported by Belk's (1975) proposition of the influence of situational variables in the SOR framework, in which the situation influences the individual just as stimuli do. However, unlike Belk's (1975) proposition, this thesis shows that the situation acts as a contextual whole to the experience. Therefore, the situation itself influences what stimuli becomes part of the experience as mentioned in the previous example.

The situation becomes a contextual whole that changes and reshapes the experience, according to Dewey (1938). This thesis has shown how primarily two different situational contexts, namely purposeless and purposeful browsing, are responsible for shaping the experience as a whole as they influence what the individual approaches and avoids within the fashionscape.

For instance, in the case of purposeful or task-oriented browsing, everything within the experience becomes part of achieving the task, the individual's emotions especially in cases of important occasion shopping. Indeed, in such circumstances, and even in general terms, the concept of the online fashion-shopping experience becoming closer to real-life experiences has been highlighted throughout.

In other industries, the very possibility of online shopping has changed the life of human beings dramatically. It is now much easier to buy flight tickets online after comparing prices and condition of all competitors. It is also much easier now carrying out such transactions as buying software packages or transferring money.

However, in an industry such as the fashion industry, and according to the findings of this thesis, closeness to real-life experiences was highlighted throughout the interviews and the videos to describe an ultimate state. Indeed, 'real-life' fashion shopping is still the optimum level that even experienced online shoppers look for. This becomes critical in the case of task-oriented browsing when an item for a specific occasion is sought. In such instances, the ability of the fashionscape to bring the experience closer to real life is essential in reassuring the customer about their judgement and purchase.

The other distinctive situation that has been addressed in this thesis is purposeless browsing. Unlike the argument of existing research that purposeless browsing is negative, and wastes time and effort (e.g. Lai & Yang, 2000), this thesis shows purposeless browsing as the most popular and most successful type of online fashion shopping.

Such a situation shapes the experience differently, as the focus in such cases is not on finding a particular item, but more is on exploring, learning, and being inspired for fashion styles and trends. Therefore, in such context, the educational and inspirational parts of the website are most important. The individual is less likely to

be stressed out about finding the right product for an important occasion. Therefore, the types of emotions experienced as such events unfold are also different.

The perspective of situational contexts and of the thesis' conceptualisation of the experience is arguably more inclusive than popular existing theories that are constantly used in studying online experiences. For instance, as explained in the literature review (chapter 2), flow theory is posited by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and introduced to the studies of online experiences by Hoffman and Novak (2009) and Novak, Hoffman, and Duhachek (2003).

Although flow theory is invaluable in explaining the state of complete immersion in the experience, the theory states conditions of specific goal-directed experience and complete immersion to reach a state of flow. Therefore, this theory fails to account for the most popular pattern of online fashion shopping in the form of purposeless browsing where a goal is not set at all in such experiences. It also falls short of explaining other experiences where complete immersion is not necessarily common.

This is also evident in the most popular model of the experience in the literature, Pine and Gilmore's (1998) 4Es of the experience on a dimension of 'immersion–absorption' in which different experiences do not account for a state of immersion.

This section discussed the concept of experience as presented in this thesis to answer the third research question: how do consumers construct their online fashion shopping experiences? The section highlighted important aspects of the experience such as individuality, dynamic construction, closeness to real life, and the situational contexts. The section also discussed the relevant literature which this conceptualisation is in line with or different from.

The contribution made by answering this third research question is manifested in the outlook on the experience as a concept and the construction that has been built using the participants' words and constructs.

Using Kelly's (1955) PCT theory, the thesis has introduced a conceptualisation of the online fashion-shopping experience as it is lived and constructed by the individuals. This approach, as mentioned above, has given the individuals the ultimate power in conceptualising their experiences. Therefore, this contribution adds to existing research on the experience.

It further develops Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) experiential consumption by showing how emotions seem to play a major role in shaping the experience journey. The thesis' approach to emotions, however, highlights the individual nature of emotions rather than the universal approach to emotion that the literature usually adopts (e.g. Ekman, 1992; Plutchik, 1980; Richins, 1997; Russell & Mehrabian, 1977).

Unlike such approaches, this thesis contributes to the emotion literature by showing the changing nature of emotional states between individuals in accord with the type of constructs they have about certain phenomena. For instance, this has been highlighted throughout chapter 10 by showing how a word such as happiness seems to change from one individual to another according the contrasts it is used with.

This contribution is indeed in line with the pragmatic stance adopted in the thesis. Simpson and Marshall (2010, p.354) comment, *'Indeed, the discovery of absolute and universal truths has never been part of the pragmatist agenda, which seeks instead to better understand the social dynamics of day-to-day practice'*. Emotions are therefore introduced in the context of the individual experiencing them.

Emotions in themselves have shown no support of a 'positive-emotion – positive-behaviour/negative-emotion – negative-behaviour' argument. Instead, emotions are shown as gestures that guide the journey of the experience. For instance, when Kat experienced frustration and disappointment in her search for a grad ball dress, her behaviour did not become negative as if she had stopped shopping. However, her emotions led her to the more easy going activity of browsing already matched outfits that require no effort on her part.

This stance is in line with the view of Simpson and Marshall (2010) of emotion experiences as processes rather than entities. This stance indeed contributes to our understanding of emotions in the concept of online fashion shopping. It would be interesting to see how future research may further study the universal vs. individual nature of emotions.

Another point worth highlighting here is that this thesis has indeed shown support for the non-separation of emotion and cognition argument as it shows the experience as whole rather than separate parts. This has been apparent in constructs that combined both emotional and cognitive contrasts (e.g. keep you informed–confused). Although

this research does not entirely solve this argument, which may always be ongoing, but it adds to the debate and reinforces the non-separation of the two concepts.

To sum up, this section has discussed the concept of experience as presented in this thesis and against other conceptualisations of the term in existing research. Equally important was the section's discussion on the important theoretical contributions made in addressing RQ3 to further our understanding of online fashion shopping experiences as constructed by the shoppers and using their own words.

To this point, the three research questions have been revisited and fully discussed. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis that was detailed in the three research questions has been fully addressed and the theoretical contributions have been emphasised.

In addition to what section 11.1 brings in terms of the thesis contribution to existing research on a theoretical level, it is important to discuss the methodological contributions the thesis has made to address the research questions. Consequently, the next section (11.2) addresses these methodological contributions.

11.2 <u>Methodological Contributions</u>

This section highlights the contributions made on the methodological level by introducing a novel form of videography as well as by adopting Kelly's (1955) PCT and the repertory grid technique.

11.2.1 Screencast videography

This thesis has introduced a novel method of studying online fashion-shopping experiences by means of using screencasts. As chapter 7 discussed, the increasing use of videography in consumer research is evident in the work of a number of scholars (Belk & Kozinets, 2005; Gibson, Webb, & vom Lehn, 2011; vom Lehn, Heath, & Hindmarsh, 2002). Belk and Kozinets (2012) argue that:

> *'As industry increasingly embraces videographic techniques for representing consumer realities and portraying their marketing research findings, it is useful for our field to follow suit and, in many ways, lead the charge towards finding new, rich forms for understanding the consumer.'*

Indeed the ACR film festival has showcased impressive research that highlights the importance of videography, the rich data it provides and the captivating presentation and storytelling of consumer research (e.g. Hietanen, Schouten, & Vaniala, 2013; Kawaf, 2014; Rokka, Rousi, & Hämäläinen, 2014; Seregina, Campbell, Figueiredo, & Uotila, 2013; Veer, 2014).

This thesis has taken videography to a new level in consumer research, an inevitable move toward studying the ever-growing arena of digital consumption. A screencast, as previously discussed, is an invaluable tool that is widely used for educational purposes (Brown, Luterbach, & Sugar, 2009). However, screencasts have never been employed as a data collection method before.

The researcher has verified this statement by a thorough exploration of research methods outlets and a discussion with a number of academic communities. The following were consulted: the Association for Consumer Research Film Makers initiated by Russell Belk and Robert Kozinets and currently chaired by Marylouise Caldwell and Paul Henry (Belk & Kozinets, 2012), and the International Network for Visual Studies in Organizations (inVisio).

If visual ethnographies and videography research such as Burning Man (Kozinets, 2002a; Kozinets et al., 2004; Penaloza, 1998) allowed such rich understanding of observable experiences, so far the same has not been possible in the context of online experiences. The experience of browsing, shopping, or interacting with websites occurs in the individual's personal and private space.

The advantages of videographic research, as discussed in chapter 7, are that video recordings appear more detailed, more complete and more accurate compared to observations made by the naked human eye. Videos capture 'interactions' and produce 'natural data' as, for example Knoblauch, Schnettler, Raab, & Soeffner (2006) suggest. Arguably, the use of screencast videos in this thesis has allowed the gathering of somewhat natural data. Knoblauch, et al. (2006, p. 11) explain: '*Natural data refers to data collected when the people studied act, behave and go about their business as they would if there were no social scientists observing or taping them*'.

The approach in which screencasts were captured allowed the maximum level of freedom to the participants to go on about their experiences and to behave without intervention unless needed by the participants.

Criticism of the notion of 'natural data' is expected and is present in the comment by Belk and Kozinets (2005, p. 129) that, *'the camera can prove an unwelcome hindrance to the formation of interviewer-interviewee rapport. Shoving a camera in a person's face is both unnatural and obtrusive',* which is something important to take into account when employing videographic research.

Screencast videography does not have to deal with the influence of the camera unless the researcher made a conscious decision to include camera recording with the screencast. In this thesis, screencasts were captured on a desktop, the screen looked exactly as any other PC screen, and therefore the issue of camera bias is not relevant. Therefore, screencast videography is more user-friendly and less obtrusive than camcorder videography. This is because in screencasts, the participant can see no difference on the screen while shopping and the effect of a camera is not present.

The introduction of this method was well received among the ACR film making community in the form of a film titled: *Capturing Online Fashion Shopping Experiences: A Screencast Videography* at the ACR North American conference

(Kawaf, 2014). In this section, the theoretical and managerial implications of this contribution are discussed.

As this thesis adopts a pragmatic philosophical stance, it is useful to emphasise James's (1907a) notion of the experience as 'a continuous stream of consciousness'. This thesis has argued for the importance of studying the experience as a whole and to adopt openness to learn from the individuals about their experiences. The use of screencast allows the individuals to share their live experiences. Moreover, it allows capturing what the pragmatists call 'the continuity of the stream' as Rylander (2012) argues:

> *'We tend to overlook the continuity of the stream of thought because we typically focus on the substantive parts rather than the transitive parts. Although we cannot express the qualities of the latter in words, it does not mean they are not important.'*

In agreement with Rylander's comment, focusing on the 'transitive' parts may have not been possible without the use of such dynamic methodology. Consequently, screencast videography has allowed the capture of the dynamic and live experiences of online fashion shoppers.

Section 11.2.1 has discussed the important methodological contribution this thesis makes by introducing screencast videography as a research method to studying online fashion shopping experience in its live and dynamic form. The following section discusses another methodological contribution that is the adoption of PCT and the repertory grid to studying the experience as constructed by the consumers and using their own words.

11.2.2 PCT and repertory grid

The previous section discussed what could be considered as the thesis' novel contribution on a methodological level in the form of screencast videography. The thesis has also adopted PCT and employed the repertory grid technique as its main study. This thesis did not invent the method or modified it in a manner that can be claimed as a contribution. However, the use of this approach is in itself uncommon in marketing and consumer research.

By using this methodology, the researcher joins a small number of distinguished scholars in the field who have successfully adopted the same method in approaching topics such as customer experience quality and consumption emotions (Easterby-Smith et al., 1996; Hair, Rose, & Clark, 2009; Lemke et al., 2011; Marsden & Littler, 2000a, 2000b; Yassim, 2011; Zinkhan & Biswas, 1988).

The use of such methodology is invaluable in providing great insights into the experiences of individuals using their own words. This approach of empowering the participants to speak about their experiences in such systematic manner is extremely useful because (a) it allows the participants to deeply think of issues that may not seem obvious initially such as their emotions when they shop for fashion online, (b) it only discusses what is relevant to each individual as it puts constructs in context, and (c) the repertory grid in itself can be considered a form of visual representation of one's construction system (Easterby-Smith et al., 1996).

Furthermore, on a theoretical level, PCT (Kelly, 1955;1963) is 'a psychology of the human quest' (Bannister, 1970). It is a theory that accounts for the role of the person in the study; it accounts for the person as a whole as a person who is capable of learning through her or his experiences and constructions of the world (Carroll & Carroll, 1981).

This perspective views 'man as a scientist', as the expert in his or her own experiences and feelings (Bannister & Fransella, 1986). Such an approach affects our theoretical understanding of the experience from the perspective of the person who lives it rather than the perspective of the researcher. This approach views the person and his or her experiences as a dynamic process. It is in line with the pragmatic philosophical stance adopted in this thesis.

Up until this point the chapter has revisited the purpose of this thesis highlighting the theoretical contributions made in answering the research questions (Section 11.1). Additionally, the chapter has also discussed the important methodological contributions of the introduction of screencast videography a research method as well as the use PCT and the repertory grid technique (Section 11.2).

Before bringing this thesis to an end, it is important to discuss the overall managerial implications (Section 11.3) of the findings of this thesis as well as the limitations and future research opportunities identified as a result (section 11.4).

11.3 <u>Managerial Implications</u>

This research in its entirety is inspired by a practical dilemma that is of interest to online fashion-shopping providers. This dilemma is summarised in the research questions (1&2) as to what is the role of the web environment of a fashion website in the shopping experience. Indeed, the adoption of the screencast method has not only contributed to the theoretical understanding of consumer experiences but also it has offered invaluable insights for online fashion retailers and web developers.

Marketers have always been interested in research on usability, technology acceptance, and commercial site evaluations. Therefore, this managerial implications section provides marketers with a set of do's and don'ts for site development. This is discussed in detail in this section.

11.3.1 *The managerial implications of the Fashionscape*

The fashionscape is the term coined in this thesis to refer to a specific shopping environment, that is, the online fashion-shopping environment. Therefore, practitioners within the area of online fashion shopping should use the fashionscape's four dimensions (visual, verbal, educational, and social) as a model for designing a successful web environment for the purpose of online fashion shopping. Within this concept the following recommendations apply:

First, the design of fashion websites should not only account for the generic atmospheric rules of layout, navigations, colours, etc. Instead, it is important that fashion websites are dedicated to solidly build a fashionscape that carefully uses the four dimensions abovementioned.

Second, the visual fashionscape should highly emphasise visual product presentations rather than explicit verbal description. Customers' expectations of fashion website are extremely high, and failure to show high quality product images from different angles and with various colours and display models is considered as failing in the essentials. Thus, practitioners are advised to invest in high quality product presentation atmospherics that aim to seamlessly aid the flow of the experience.

Third, technological advances in web design must be approached with great care. As this research showed, advancements such as virtual fitting rooms were perceived as complex and unnecessary distractions rather than a useful tool that might facilitate

their shopping experience. Interestingly, the flexible delivery and return policies were more important, as the participants explicitly admitted they would prefer to buy a number of items, try them on, and then choose what they would like to keep and return. Therefore, this moves to the next recommendation.

Fourth, to support the experience of buying fashion products online, practitioners are recommended to invest in free delivery and return as this approach has been found more effective in helping the shopper to buy than any complex technological advances such as virtual fitting rooms.

Fifth, practitioners should minimise the use of the verbal dimension of the fashionscape to only non-visual information such as information that relates to care, sizes, and delivery and return information. Therefore, verbal description of products are no longer found to be effective no desirable in the online fashion shopping experience.

Sixth, careful consideration should be given to the social dimension in which fashion websites may encourage participation in social network websites. This research has shown that the participants had no interest in engaging in social network liking and sharing of outfits. One participant called it 'online begging', and many others resisted sharing their outfits with the 'world' to maintain exclusivity. Thus, practitioners are highly advised to carefully study their social media marketing strategy in order to steer away from possible damage to a brand image.

Seventh, the educational fashionscape has been highlighted as an important asset of fashion websites. Even the use of social media becomes more welcome when it involves educational values, for example, showing information about the new trends in summer clothing, rather than explicitly advertising products. Learning about fashion is one of the most interesting phenomena of online fashion-shopping experiences. This learning does take place outside the retailers' websites on blogs and increasingly on fashion hauling Vlogs (Jeffries, 2011; Keats, 2012; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Accordingly, a recommendation for practitioners can be made to invest in incorporating educational and learning related sections within their online fashion-shopping environment to guide their shoppers and to encourage more visits and interest in their websites.

This section highlighted the important managerial implications that relate to the fashionscape and how practitioner may use the findings of this research to design a better online fashion-shopping environment. The following section discusses another set of managerial implications that relate to the experience itself.

11.3.2 *The managerial implications of the experience*

The conceptualisation of the experience as it is developed in this thesis highlights the importance of addressing the individualistic nature of the experience; something practitioners are advised to adopt. The managerial implications of this are explained below.

First, the experience is deemed essential for fashion websites and practitioners within this industry must find a way to focus on the individual level rather than a universal understanding of the shopping experience. Personalisation and mass customisation are considered as valuable approaches to serve the individualistic nature of experience thus offering a personalised experience to every customer is highly recommended.

Second, practitioners should focus on designing a website that brings the online fashion-shopping experience closer to real life. This includes not only the advanced visual technologies, but also layout and navigation issues. In spite of the great possibilities that online shopping offers to customers (e.g. speed, accessibility, richness of information), it is still essential that the online fashion shopping experience is made as close to an offline shopping experience as possible. The thesis recommends the use of high quality of visual product presentations in order to bring the experience of buying fashion products as close as possible to an offline experience. For example, being able to zoom in to the texture of cloth makes it easier for a shopper to experience such a product as if this product is experienced in a brick and mortar store.

Third, because practitioners need to take into account the absence of 'helpful staff' on websites, all measures should be taken to ensure easy navigation. Throughout the videography study of this research, a number of extremely simple issues were ignored by major online fashion retailers, which resulted in frustration and disappointment. Examples of this include the absence of useful filters that indicate a simple issue such as dress or sleeve length on a leading fashion e-tailer's site.

The section above highlights crucial points for the improvement of the online fashion-shopping experience. The final set of managerial implications relates to the identified types of browsing (purposeless and purposeful), these are discussed below.

11.3.3 The managerial implications of browsing types

The use of screencast has allowed for identifying two types of browsing of online fashion shopping websites. These are purposeless and purposeful browsing. Practitioners are advised to distinguish between these two types of browsing as they account for different types of experiences. The details of this discussion have been presented in chapter 8, however, this section summarises the most important points practitioners should pay attention to in web-design and customer experience management.

First, practitioners should note the variations between visitors to their websites who are coming for a purposeless browsing session as opposed to those seeking a purposeful, task driven experience. Indeed, as the thesis shows, a user that comes on a website to actively engage with search filters is most likely seeking a purpose of finding a specific item. This is different from another user who may engage with sections such as 'trends', 'best buys', 'the look book', etc.

Second, unlike the negative outlook that existing research carries toward purposeless browsing as a time wasting activity, this thesis recommends to practitioners an environment that facilitates this types of browsing and welcomes it instead. The rationale to this recommendation is linked to the educational experiences discussed above. A purposeless browsing experience will most likely carry an educational value in which the shopper learns about fashion products from the website. Indeed, as such browsing is not defined by a set of criteria for a certain product, the shoppers usually perceive lower risks in buying items in this relaxed experience.

Third, purposeful browsing or task driven experiences are complex experiences that usually require multiple visits to a number of websites. It is understandable that a customer who is looking for a specific piece of clothes is likely to want to touch and try such items before buying them especially in situations of high involvement (e.g. buying a wedding dress). Therefore, it is possible that the fashionscape in this case only provides educational values about products, trends, prices, etc. rather than being a channel of purchasing such items.

Consequently, the understanding of the differences between purposeless and purposeful experiences of online fashion shopping is key to managing a successful customer experience. Indeed, the possibility of web personalisation in these instances is paramount.

This section (11.3) presented the managerial implications of this thesis's findings. The section summarised a list of important recommendations for practitioners organised in three sections, (1) the fashionscape implications, (2) the experience implications, and (3) the implications of purposeless and purposeful browsing. The following section discusses the research limitations and future research suggestions.

11.4 Limitations and Future Research

Although this research has contributed a number of interesting points on the theoretical and managerial level, limitations of such a contribution are inevitable. Therefore, this section highlights these limitations and suggests how future research may tackle them. The limitations draw on choice of methods as well as the research approach and sample.

11.4.1 Limitation of the screencast method

Screencast videography is a novel contribution on the methodological domain, and a number of limitations must be highlighted when considering this method. Screencasting is still in its infancy, and various improvements are called for to advance this method.

First, screencast videography calls for the production of natural data. One could argue that the use of someone else's computer to perform the shopping sessions is itself unnatural from the participant's perspective. A number of steps were taken to reduce such bias: (1) the main web browsers such as IE, Chrome, and Firefox were all available to ensure that the participants had a similar interface to the one they usually interact with, (2) the participants were given the option to stay alone in the office without any intervention throughout. While most participants preferred to chat through their sessions, some were left to perform the task alone, as they wanted.

No matter what steps were taken to ensure the capture of close to natural data, the participants were not using their own devices and were indeed not in a place they would usually shop from. This is considered one of the limitations of the approach. Future research could look into installing screen-capture software onto the participants' own devices. The participants may then click on 'record' before they start one of their usual online-shopping/browsing sessions.

Second, screencast videography was used only to capture online fashion-shopping experiences. The reader may wonder how such methodology may be used outside the context of online shopping. However, the use of screencasts can be extended to study any type of online behaviour or process. In fact, the method is in the process of being published as a methodology paper in which various other uses are highlighted. For instance, studying search behaviour, behaviour on a bidding or gambling website,

video gaming, and dating websites are all immediate obvious possibilities. Additionally, the method is currently in the development process to be used as a means of discourse analysis of the multicultural consumer's shopping behaviours.

11.4.2 Limitation of the PCT and the repertory grid

Kelly's PCT along with its companion, the repertory grid technique, is invaluable in studying experience, as this thesis shows. However, some limitations and potential improvements are bound to exist in any research project let alone one using a less common method.

Perhaps the most noteworthy issue as a limitation of the use of PCT is the extremely systematic manner of the technique. It may become overwhelming and exhausting, as the participants need to make considerable efforts thinking deeply into their experiences and construction of events (Jankowicz, 2005). To overcome this issue, Jankowicz (2005) suggests that the process of generating the grid should be very flexible and that it should be changed if the participant wishes to do so.

This issue was apparent when some participants preferred to get away from the grid to discuss their experiences freely without the limit of the grid. The participants, of course, were encouraged to do so as and when needed.

However, one of the limitations of this high flexibility is flagged in this thesis as discussing double paralleled states of elements. For example, in some instances, the participants referred to an element, customer reviews for example, as a positive part of the website. However, as they discussed their experiences further, they started to discuss scenarios, which then referred to negative customer reviews instead of positive ones. Consequently, this resulted in almost double elements (1) positive customer reviews and (2) negative customer reviews both as one element called 'customer reviews'.

This issue has limited the choice of analysis that could be performed on the dataset, because ratings were made both for positive and negative states of the same element.

To overcome such limitations, this thesis employed qualitative analysis in order to understand the interviews and to draw out the main themes. This was then followed by a validation of coding of the constructs using the multi-coding approach of Lemke et al. (2011).

Future research may need to consider this issue and perhaps use two or more elements to account for positive and negative states of the same element. For instance, instead of customer reviews as one element, future research may choose to list at least two elements as positive customer reviews and negative customer reviews. This solution, however, is not practical when attempting to explore the holistic experience, as the choice of elements would then be much bigger than what one repertory grid could employ. Nevertheless, this may be extremely useful in studying in depth one part of the website, e.g. the social fashionscape.

11.4.3 Limitation of research approach and sample

The research population of this thesis is online fashion shoppers who already have experience of online fashion shopping. Therefore, familiarity with websites makes these findings only relevant to existing customers and not to new ones. Indeed, issues of perceived risk in online fashion shopping may still be vital to individuals who have no experience of shopping online. However, this is beyond the scope of this thesis. Future research may further investigate this matter in order to better understand how non-online fashion shoppers could be encouraged to engage in online shopping.

Another issue that may be considered a limitation is that the online fashion-shopping experience in this thesis is limited to the online fashion-shopping websites. Various other resources may contribute to this experience. Indeed, blogs and YouTube vlogs seem to be a major resource for a variety of customers. Future research may further incorporate the influence of fashion haulers and the effectiveness of their integration of online fashion websites.

Finally, the thesis has attempted a holistic approach in studying the experience and the environment of online fashion shopping. As mentioned above, existing research deems this important; yet, it may be considered a limitation because of the inability to focus deeply on interesting aspects such as the educational fashionscape, or the resistance to the social fashionscape. However, this is an expected trade-off between drawing the big picture and examining each part in detail. Therefore, future research in invited to perform a 'pixilation' of this big picture to further enhance our understanding of online fashion-shopping experiences.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 SOR Literature Review Table

Author	Method	Sample size	Sample Source	Area of Field Work	Independent variables	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Findings
Ballantine and Fortin (2009) IJIMA	Web-based experiment	360	Web Users	Simulated site for digital cameras	Interactivity, amount of information	Emotions PA P: pleasure A: arousal	The likelihood of purchase	Higher interactivity leads to pleased shoppers. Pleased and aroused shoppers might have a higher likelihood of purchase.
Chang and Chen (2008) OIR	Web-based survey	628	No specification	No specification	Online environment cues: website quality, brand	Trust and perceived risk	Purchase intention	Brand is a more important cue than web quality in influencing purchase intention. However, intention, as well as trust and perceived risk, is influenced by website quality and brand though.
Chen, Hsu, and Lin (2009) JBR	Experiment	1567	Students	computer, communication, electronics, cosmetics, furniture, books, DVD, luxury items, and travel	Technology, shopping and product factors	–	Online consumer purchase intention	Shoppers are categorised according to their preferences and computer expertise. Etailers targeting new customers, possibly who lack computer expertise, must take this into account when designing websites.

Author	Method	Sample size	Sample Source	Area of Field Work	Independent variables	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Findings
Childers, Carr, Peck, and Carson (2001) JR	Survey	274+ 266	Students + Grocery shoppers	Online book and food shopping	Navigation, convenience, sub-experience	Usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment	Attitude	Enjoyment is a strong predictor of attitudes in hedonic and utilitarian shopping settings; yet, it is much stronger in hedonic ones. In contrast, ease of use and usefulness are stronger predictors than enjoyment in utilitarian shopping.
Eroglu et al. (2001) JBR	Conceptual model	–	–	Online retailing	Online environment cues: High/ low task	Involvement, response to atmospheric, affect, cognition	Shopping outcome: approach/ avoidance	A need to systematically develop a comprehensive taxonomy of online atmospheric cues and to identify their major dimensions as in traditional retail store environment.
Éthier, Hadaya, Talbot, and Cadieux (2006) I&M	Survey	215	Business school students	CDs and DVDs websites (Amazon, Renaud-Bray, Archambault, Future Shop)	Technical and visual aspects, navigation, search, contact with the site	Cognitive appraisal	Emotions: liking, joy, pride, dislike, frustration, and fear	Shoppers made positive cognitive appraisals for higher web quality and that had influenced their emotions (liking, joy, pride, dislike, and frustration) but fear! Although, liking and joy are felt more intensely.
Y. Ha, Kwon, and Lennon (2007) JFMM	Websites content analysis	100	US and Korean apparel websites	Online apparel retailing	VMD: Visual merchandising elements of the apparel website	–	–	Most VMD features of offline stores have been implemented online, it can be studied under the SOR VMD comprises of online path finding model (search engines, sitemaps,), environment and product presentation.

Author	Method	Sample size	Sample Source	Area of Field Work	Independent variables	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Findings
Harris and Goode (2010) JSM	Survey	257	Dataset from a brokerage agency	Online retailing websites chosen by respondents	Aesthetic appeal, layout, functionality, financial security	Trust in the website	Purchase intention	Among online servicescape factors, aesthetic appeal of the website is arguably the most influential. Shoppers purchase intention is strongly influenced by website trustworthiness.
Holzwarth Janiszewski, and Neumann (2006) JM	Experiment	996	Consumers and online shoppers	Simulated footwear site	Avatar presence, Avatar type (attractive, expert)	Entertaining informative site, likeability and credibility of avatars	Satisfaction attitude (retailer/ product), purchase intention	Using avatar to present product information leads to satisfaction with the retailer, a positive attitude toward the product and a greater purchase intention. Attractive avatars are better than expert ones when involvement is not high.
Jayawardhena and Wright (2009) EJM	Email survey	626	UK consumer Panel	No specification.	Convenience, attributes of the web site, merchandising, involvement	Emotion: shopping excitement	Intent to return and word of mouth	All the independent variables resulted in excited consumers and those had higher intention to return and to spread positive WOM.
Jeon and Jeong (2009) IR	Experiment	196	Female students	Female fashion website anthropologie.com	Product presentation features	Entertaining, educational, escapist, and aesthetic experiences and emotion PA	Website patronage intention	Entertaining and aesthetically appealing websites makes shoppers pleased and aroused. Pleasure, arousal, entertainment, and aesthetic experiences had direct effects on web site patronage intention.

Author	Method	Sample size	Sample Source	Area of Field Work	Independent variables	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Findings
Kim and Lennon (2008) P&M	Experiment	145+ 150	Female students	Online apparel shopping	Visual and verbal information	Information processing, affective and cognitive attitudes	Purchase intention	Shopper attitude is influenced by visual and verbal information about the product of interest. However, verbal information seems to have the main influence of shopper intention.
Kim and Lennon (2010) JFMM	Experiment	230	Female students	Simulated fashion website	The use of a model, colour swapping on clothing, and image enlargement	Emotion PA Cognition: perceived information, perceived risk	Purchase intention	Shoppers who were able to enlarge product images felt more pleased. Additionally, those who were pleased and aroused perceived less risk and had higher intention to purchase.
J. H.H. Kim, Kim, and Lennon (2009) DM	Experiment	272	Female students	Simulated fashion website	Product presentation Music	Emotional states, attitude toward the site	Purchase intention	Presenting garments on a virtual model enhances consumers' emotional responses. The latter is positively related to cognition. However, music has no effect on shopping experiences.
Koo and Ju (2009) CiHB	Questionnaire	356	South Korean Experienced online shoppers	No specification	Graphics, colours, links and menus	Perceived curiosity	Purchase intention	Colours, graphics and links on a website influenced shoppers' emotions, yet, shoppers with higher perceived curiosity felt higher intense emotions.

Author	Method	Sample size	Sample Source	Area of Field Work	Independent variables	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Findings
H. Lee, Kim, and Fiore (2010) CTRJ	Experiment	206	College students	Online fashion shopping	Image interactivity technology, Experimenting with appearance	Enjoyment, perceived risk	Attitude toward the online retailer	Image interactivity technology positively influenced shoppers' enjoyment and lower risk perception. Also, enjoyment and risk directly affected users' attitudes toward the e-retailer.
Manganari, Siomkos, Rigopoulou, and Vrechopoulos (2011) IR	Experiment	241	Business school students	A fictitious air travel website	Virtual layout perceived ease	Pleasure, attitude, atmospheric responsiveness	Satisfaction, trust	Perceived virtual store layout's ease of use influences consumers' internal states (i.e., pleasure and attitude) which in turn influence consumers' online response.
Mummalaneni (2005) JBR	Survey	250	Consumer behaviour students	Apparel and footwear websites	Online store environment (design and ambience factors)	Emotional states PA	Shopping outcome and behaviour	E-atmospherics make shoppers pleased and aroused. They influence satisfaction, loyalty and number of items purchased; but, they do not affect time or money spent by users.
Park, Lennon, and Stoel (2005) P&M	Experiment	244	Female students	Simulated apparel websites	Product presentation	Mood, perceived risk	Purchase intention	Rotating product images influence shopper positive mood and lower their perceived risk. Positive mood and low risk perception, of course, lead to higher purchase intention.

Author	Method	Sample size	Sample Source	Area of Field Work	Independent variables	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Findings
Park, Stoel, and Lennon (2008) JCB	Experiment	234	College students	Simulated apparel websites	Product rotation	Mood, perceived information, attitude	Purchase intention	Product rotation elevates the amount of information perceived and mood, which then increases attitude leading to increases in purchase intention.
Sautter, Hyman, and Lukosius (2004) JECR	Conceptual	_	_	Online retailing	Environmental cues: virtual store, operator environment	Affect, cognition, Telepresence Involvement, atmospheric responsiveness, motivation	Shopping outcome: approach/ avoidance	This research posits the concept of dual environments: the online environment and the shopper environment in which the HCI is taking place.
Wang, Hernandez and Minor (2010) JBR	Experiment	320	Us online shoppers	Simulated e-tailing sites	Web aesthetic formality, aesthetic appeal	Perceived e-service quality, satisfaction. Purchase task-oriented, free	Behaviour: purchase, repurchase, loyalty, complaints, service switch	Shoppers with or without specific purchase tasks are more satisfied with aesthetically appealing website. Similarly, both shoppers perceive higher online service quality for aesthetically formal sites.

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Author	Method	Sample size	Sample Source	Area of Field Work	Independent variables	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Findings
Williams and Dargel (2004) MIP	Conceptual	_	_	Online retailing	Ambient conditions, function, signs, symbols, artefacts	Emotion PA, cognition beliefs,	Approach, avoidance	There is a need to understand site's target market and design according to the expectations of the target shoppers. This is in addition to site vividness and interactivity.
Yun and Good (2007) MSQ	Survey	203	Students	Online retailing	E-tail store image	E-patronage intention	E-loyalty behaviours	Websites with favourable e-store image (e-merchandise, e-service, e-atmosphere) are more likely to win shoppers patronage and loyalty.

Appendix 2 Research Participants Information Sheet

Researcher: Fatema Kawaf

Doctoral researcher at the department of Marketing, Strathclyde University

Room 3.18, Stenhouse Building

173 Cathedral Street, Glasgow, G4 0RQ

Fatema.kawaf@strath.ac.uk

Research (working title): Web atmospherics and consumer's emotion in online fashion shopping

About the research: This research is a part of a PhD project of the researcher. It aims at understanding how customers perceive web atmospherics (website design, layout, and atmosphere). Additionally, to reveal what are consumers' emotions during this experience and how their behaviour is affected.

The interview: You are invited to participate in a one-to-one interview with the researcher (named above) to discuss your online-shopping experiences. This is expected to last between 45 minutes to an hour approximately.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary. You are invited to participate in this study, as I believe that you can make an important contribution to the research. Together we can shape a better online shopping experience in the fashion world.

If you do not wish to participate you do not have to. Also, you are free to decline answering any questions and to terminate the interview at any point in time.

Will my participation in the study be kept confidential?

All information provided in the interview will be kept confidential. Personal information will not be linked to participant's responses.

All data collected will be only used for the purpose of the research abovementioned and other research publications. However, participants will not be identified in any way in the thesis or in any research paper.

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. Should you have any further questions regarding the study or your participation, please feel free to ask at any point during the interview or you can contact the researcher by email after the interview.

Participant Consent

I wish to participate in the above named project □

I have read the participant information sheet for the above research project and understand the following:

1. That my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason □

2. That all information I provide will be dealt with in a confidential manner □

3. I agree that the researcher may contact me (prize draw) □

Signed……………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………….

Email…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………...

Date……………………………….....................…………

Interview No.…………………………………………..

Appendix 3 Interview Guide

Interview No. …………………….   **Date**: …. /…. /……….

1. How often do you **browse** online clothes websites?

2. How often do you **shop** for clothes online?

3. Approximately**, how many fashion websites** are you familiar with?

4. Your **occupation**

Full time job   Part time job   Self employed   Student

Unemployed

5. Male or female

6. **Age** : 18-24   25-35   36-50   >50

7. Please take a few minutes to think about **website characteristics** that affect your shopping experiences? (Please provide some good and not so good ones to make comparing easier)

(Write elements on cards)

8. Can you tell me **something that two of these have in common that makes them different from the third**, in terms **of how they make you feel**?

9. **Laddering** (down and up)

What do you mean by this? How? Why? In what way? Can you describe it in one word?

10. Repeat 5, 6 for three levels.

11. Is there **anything else you would like to add**?

Appendix 4 The Corollaries of PCT

Construction corollary

'A person anticipates events by construing their replications' (p.50)

Individuality corollary

'Persons differ from each other in their construction of events.' (p.55)

Organization corollary

'Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs.' (p.56)

Dichotomy corollary

'A person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs.' (p.59)

Choice corollary

'A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system.' (p.64)

Range corollary

'A construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only' (p.68)

Experience corollary

'A person's construction system varies as he successively construes the replications of events' (p.72)

Modulation corollary

'The variation in a person's construction system is limited by the permeability of the constructs within whose range of convenience the variants lie.' (p.77)

Fragmentation corollary

'A person may successively employ a variety of construction subsystems which are inferentially incompatible with each other.' (p.83)

Commonality corollary

'To the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his psychological processes are similar to the other person.' (p.90)

Sociality corollary

'To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person.' (p.95)

Appendix 5 Example of Repertory Grid

Construct's Emergent Pole	Search Facilities	Customer Reviews	Catwalk Videos	Product Image +/3D	Web Layout	Filter	Written Product Info.	Virtual Fitting Rooms	Chat With Adviser	Delivery	Construct's Implicit Pole
More attractive	2	3	2	1	1	5	2	4	1	1	A nice Extra
Happier Overall	5	4	1	1	3	3	4	5	4	1	Focused
Confident about my purchase decision	5	1	1	1	3	4	1	2	2	5	Not guaranteed I get what I am looking for
Clear	2	5	1	1	1	3	1	2	2	5	Unnecessary
Certain	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	2	3	1	Uneasy/ Uncertain
Make me interested	2	5	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	I tend to ignore
I see it as a benefit	1	4	1	1	1	2	1	5	2	1	A drawback! It's unnecessary

Grid Elements header spans the element columns.

Colour Code (See Findings Section 4.6.1 for more details):

	Element Description Constructs
	Emotional Constructs
	Risk Perception Constructs
	Behavioural Constructs
	Situational Constructs

Appendix 6 WebGrid Analysis

Display Interview3
"Pilot: change of elements"

Necessity (I need the product)	2 3 4 2 1 1 3 3 5 3	Luxury (looking for something not necessary)
Risk free purchase decision	1 3 2 2 3 3 5 2 3 4	High risk of purchase (inability to purchase)
Happy	2 3 3 1 1 3 4 4 3 4	Frustration
Bride	3 2 4 3 2 4 4 3 3 3	Guilt
Easy access	2 3 2 2 2 1 4 4 3 3	Difficult accessibility
Comfortable (at peace, at ease)	1 1 3 3 4 4 3 2 3 3	Doubtful, unsettelled, confused
Achivement (happy you got it)	2 2 3 3 3 2 3 3 5 4	Consciousness (unhappy and thinking about it)
Precise (focused)	2 2 4 2 2 2 3 4 5 4	Imprecise (lost, but can get back on track)

Filter search
Save a list option
Social network pages
Mobile access
Website layout
Product information
Collection variety
Catwalk videos
Customer reviews
Keyword search

Cluster analysis

Focus Interview3
"Pilot: change of elements"

100 90 80 70

Bride	4 2 3 3 2 4 3 3 4 3	Guilt
Comfortable (at peace, at ease)	4 4 3 1 1 3 3 2 3 3	Doubtful, unsettelled, confused
Risk free purchase decision	3 3 2 1 3 5 4 2 2 3	High risk of purchase (inability to purchase)
Happy	3 1 1 2 3 4 4 4 3 3	Frustration
Easy access	1 2 2 2 3 4 3 4 2 3	Difficult accessibility
Necessity (I need the product)	1 1 2 2 3 3 3 3 4 5	Luxury (looking for something not necessary)
Precise (focused)	2 2 2 2 2 3 4 4 4 5	Imprecise (lost, but can get back on track)
Achivement (happy you got it)	2 3 3 2 2 3 4 3 3 5	Consciousness (unhappy and thinking about it)

100 90 80 70 60

Save a list option
Catwalk videos
Social network pages
Filter search
Mobile access
Customer reviews
Keyword search
Collection variety
Product information
Website layout

Visual Map of a repertory grid

PrinGrid Interview3
"Pilot: change of elements"

Percentage variance in each component
1: 48.1% 2: 20.6% 3: 15.8% 4: 9.2% 5: 3.3% 6: 2.0%
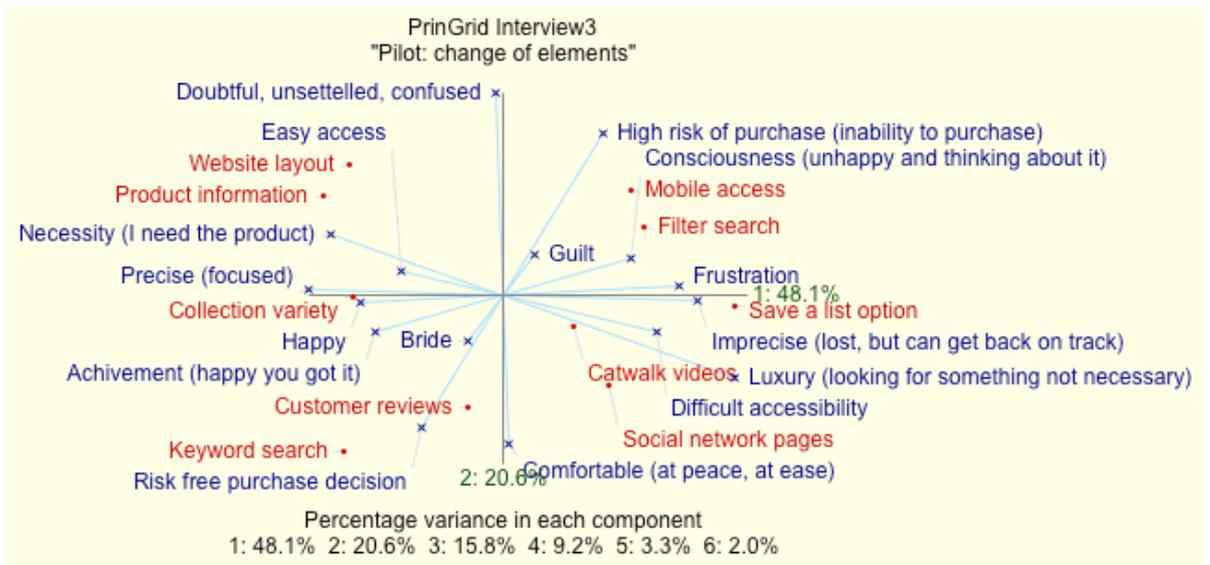
Crossplot (Constructs x: 2, y: 3, z: 1)

Crossplot Interview3
"Pilot: change of elements"
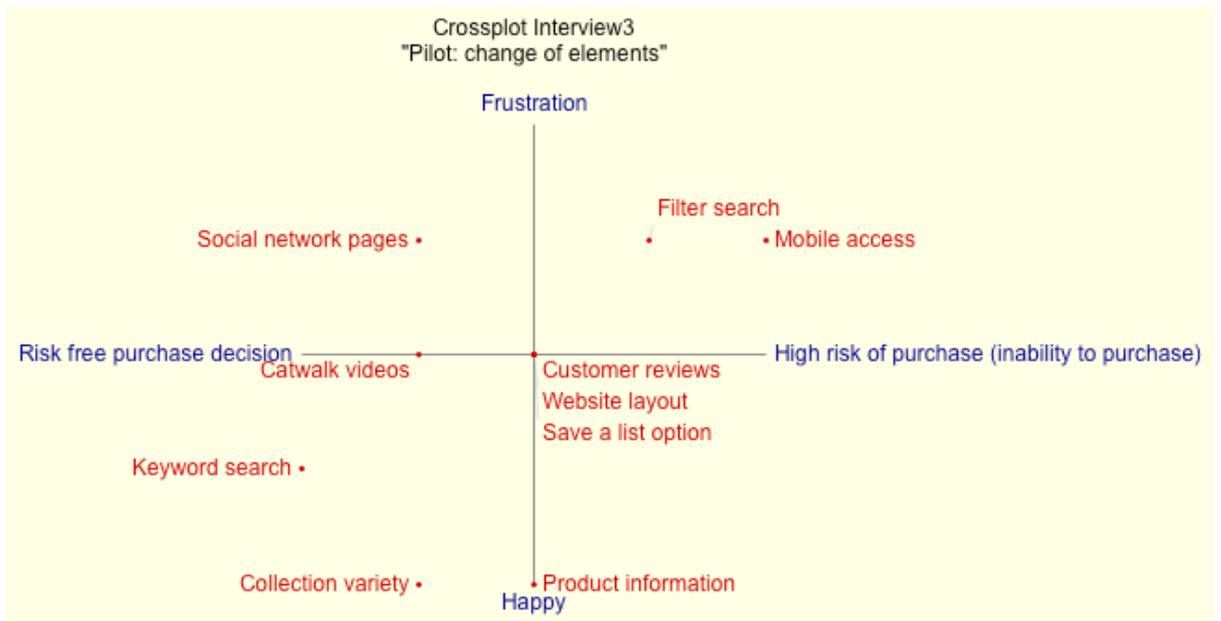
Crossplot (Constructs x: 4, y: 3, z: 1)
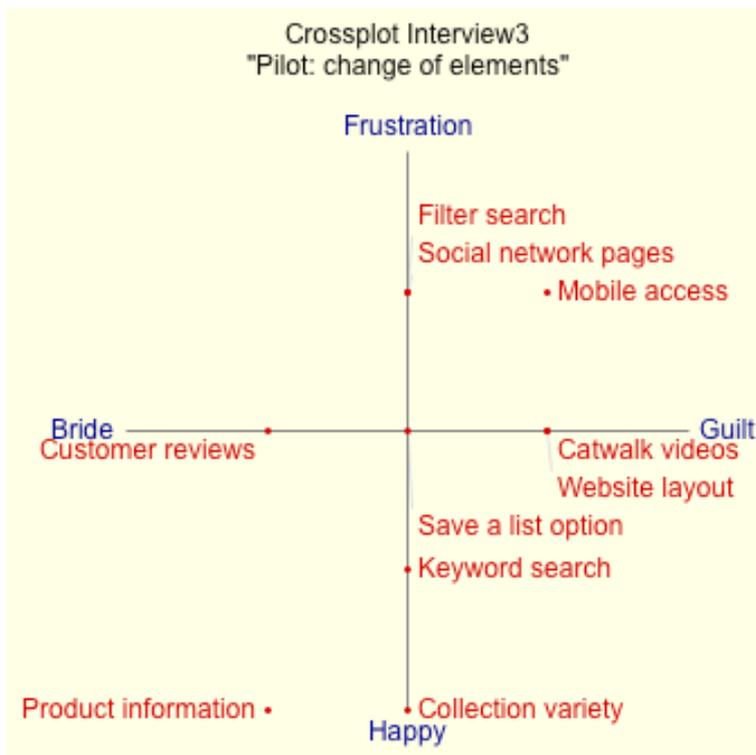
Crossplot (Constructs x: 5, y: 6, z: 7)

Crossplot (Constructs x: 7, y: 8, z: 6)

Crossplot Interview3
"Pilot: change of elements"

Imprecise (lost, but can get back on track)

• Save a list option

Social network pages
Catwalk videos

• Filter search

Achievement (happy you got it) — Consciousness (unhappy and thinking about it)

Mobile access

Keyword search •
Customer reviews
Website layout

• Collection variety
Product information

Precise (focused)
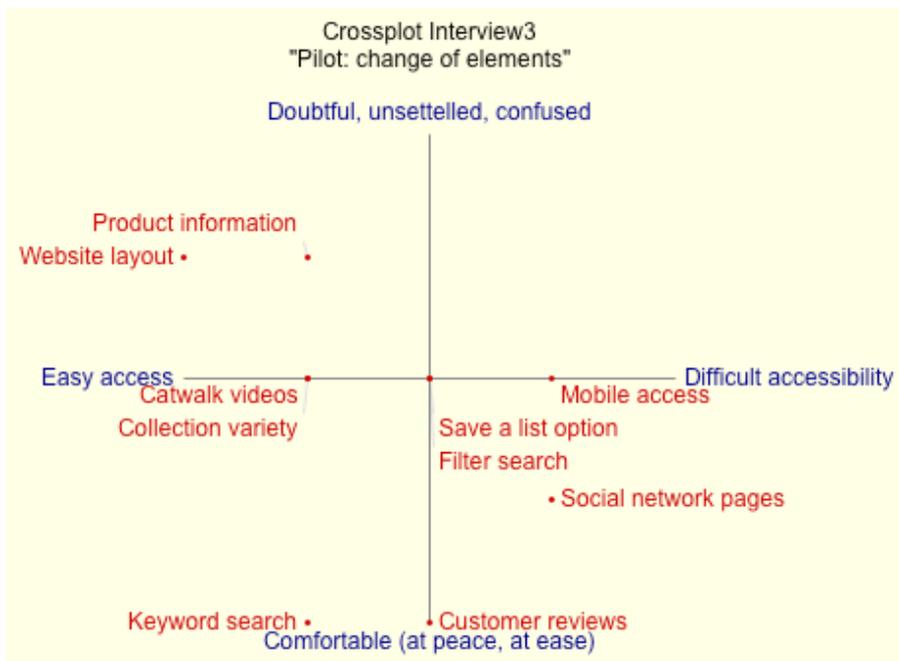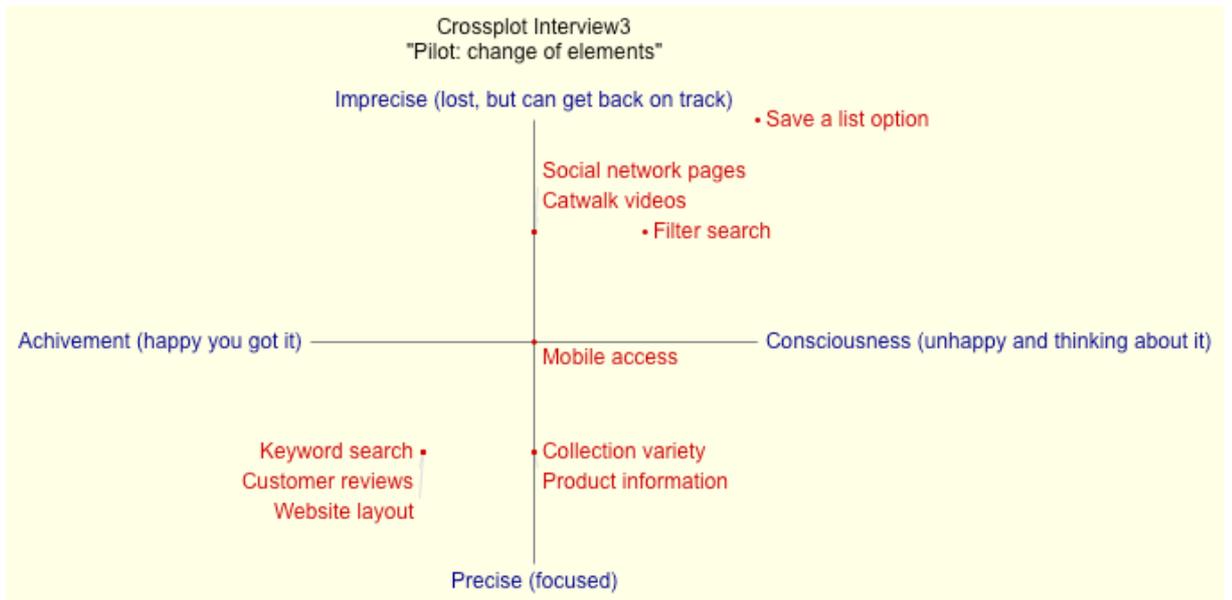
CATPCA - Principal Components Analysis for Categorical Data

Case Processing Summary

Valid Active Cases	10
Active Cases with Missing Values	0
Supplementary Cases	0
Total	10
Cases Used in Analysis	10

Iteration History

Iteration Number	Variance Accounted For		Loss		
	Total	Increase	Total	Centroid Coordinates	Restriction of Centroid to Vector Coordinates
0[a]	4.910407	.000008	7.089593	4.122773	2.966820
21[b]	5.549331	.000009	6.450669	4.259310	2.191359

a. Iteration 0 displays the statistics of the solution with all variables, except variables with optimal scaling level Multiple Nominal, treated as numerical.
b. The iteration process stopped because the convergence test value was reached.

Model Summary

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	Variance Accounted For	
		Total (Eigenvalue)	% of Variance
1	.904	4.050	67.507
2	.399	1.499	24.981
Total	.984[a]	5.549	92.489

a. Total Cronbach's Alpha is based on the total Eigenvalue.

Correlations Transformed Variables

	extra bonus vs. basic	impressive vs. boring	wanted/valued vs. put you off	make it closer to real life vs. 2obvious not impressive	glamorous vs. expected	interesting/appealing vs. desperational
extra bonus vs. basic	1.000	.936	.367	.729	.845	.708
impressive vs. boring	.936	1.000	.088	.644	.963	.860
wanted/valued vs. put you off	.367	.088	1.000	.580	-.095	-.165
make it closer to real life vs. 2obvious not impressive	.729	.644	.580	1.000	.542	.337
glamorous vs. expected	.845	.963	-.095	.542	1.000	.865
interesting/appealing vs. desperational	.708	.860	-.165	.337	.865	1.000
Dimension	1	2	3	4	5	6
Eigenvalue	4.050	1.499	.267	.139	.035	.009

Objects

Object Points Labeled by Casenumbers
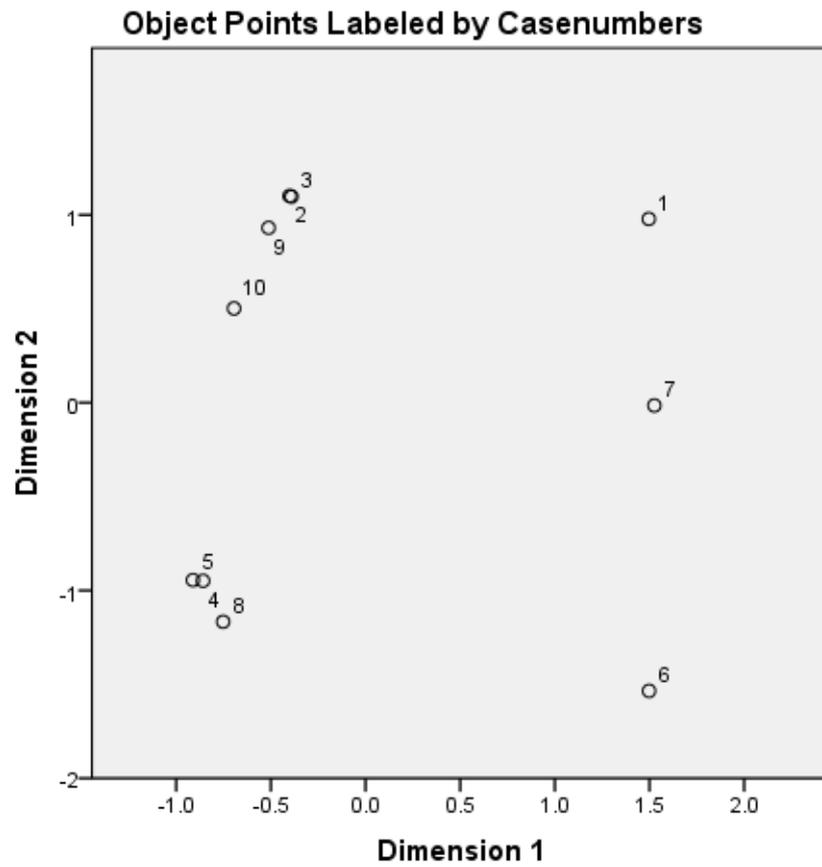
Variable Principal Normalization.

Component Loadings

Component Loadings

	Dimension	
	1	2
extra bonus vs. basic	.957	.160
impressive vs. boring	.986	-.125
wanted/valued vs. put you off	.209	.938
make it closer to real life vs. 2obvious not impressive	.735	.555
glamorous vs. expected	.937	-.292
interesting/appealing vs. desperational	.836	-.431

Variable Principal Normalisation

Biplot Component Loadings and Objects
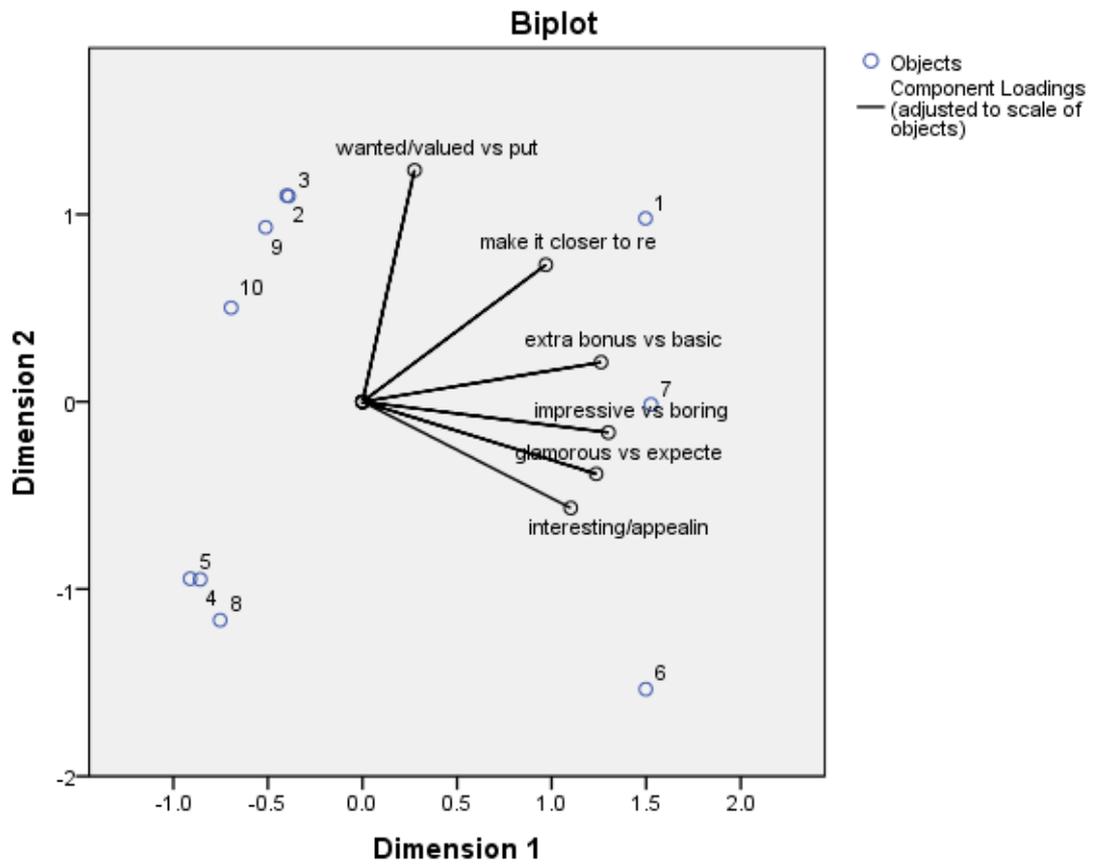
Biplot

Variable Principal Normalization.

Closer to real life experience	A good service-time saver
Satisfied	Nervous-angry
Happy	Confusion
Willing to buy more	Might choose another website
Facilitate my choice	Anxious about my choice
Advanced elements	Basics
Neutral (tend to ignore)	Dissatisfied-upset
Advise/info coming from 3rd parties	Info on the actual product
Useless	Very important
Pay no attention	Assurance
They let you see the clothes in action	Finding a store in the first place
A good extra	Vital-essential
Neutral-don't care	Happy
High-risk purchase	Low risk purchase
Unhappy	Confident
Confident	Inspired
More likely to buy	Might look for alternatives
Gives you good impression	Disappointment
Important	Useless
Keep you informed	Confusion
More attractive	A nice extra
Happier overall	Focused
More confident	Not guaranteed you get what you're looking for
Clear	Unnecessary
Certain	Uneasy
Interested	Ignore
A benefit	Drawback
Help you choose product	Help you choose company
Enjoyment-satisfaction	Dislike it
Trust	Distrust
Not bothered	Motivated
Put you off	More likely to spend time-buy
Essential	A bonus

More confident that the product is right for me	Easier-simpler
It would tell you more about the product	It would make you confused
It comes to you	You go to them
Inspires me	Reassures me -but might put me off
Closer to real life experience	Can't see or feel the product
Satisfied	Disappointed
An impression about the overall experience	Being specific about a particular product
I want it easy to navigate	I shop somewhere else
Happy	Frustration
Satisfied	Annoyed
Involved	Don't bother
Motivate me to buy	Difficult to judge on
Buy more	Put you off
Closer to real life experience (natural)	You need to imagine things
Essential	Bonus
Trust	Not reliable
Extra bonus	Basics
Impressive	Boring
Wanted-valued	Put you off
Closer to real life experience	Not impressive
Glamorous	Expected
Interesting-appealing	Desperational
Help you buy	Put you off
Reassured	Distracted
Interested	Bored
Go back to the website	Find an alternative
Closer to real life experience (realistic)	Far away-discard
Motivate me to buy	Tempted to visit the website
Initial liking	Actual purchase decision
Bonus	Necessity
Influence my purchase decision	Give information
Important	Don't bother
Reassuring	Irritating
Motivate me to buy	Put you off

Trust	Doubtful
More info-advice on products	Useful as an extra
More confident about my choice	Trust the company
Feel at ease	Disappointed
Help me buy	Look for alternatives
Motivate me to buy	Make me informed
Excited	Guilt
Realistic	Fun
Concerned	Happy
Confused	Enjoyment
Too complicated	Closer to real life
High-risk purchase	Low risk purchase
Base my decision on	Initial steps
Influence my purchase decision	It doesn't matter
Confident	Unsure
Trusting the website	Annoyed-disappointed
Comfortable	Stressful
Search for cheaper or buy	Give up
Interesting	Challenging-too complicated
Influence my purchase decision	Keep you informed
Confident	Unsure
Important	Extra
Satisfied	Disappointed
Give you more details	Make products closer to real life
More likely to buy	Put you off
A bonus	Does not appeal
Encourage me to buy	Put me off
Reassuring	Annoying
Initial step	Deal breaker
Happy-motivated	Unsure
Encourage me to buy	Irritate me
Better feel of the product-closer to real life	I don't care
Confident	Don't trust
Motivate me	Disappointed-distracted

More likely to buy	Leave the website
Essential	A bonus
Influence my purchase decision	I won't be affected
Help me decide later	Initial liking
Trust	Not reliable
Closer to real life experience	Ignore it
Encourage me to buy	Put you off
Affording	Fit-suitable
Make me imagine the product	Make me closer to obtain it
Initial liking	Reassures me -make me calm
Perceiving attention-caring	Perceiving carelessness of the company
Satisfaction	Contempt
Trust	Disappointment-frustration
Help me buy	Put me off
Trust	Don't pay attention
Less important	Important
Inspired	Bored
Reassured	Dissatisfied
Biased	Trustworthy
Put you off	Make you want to explore more
Assessment	Usage
Comfortable	Disappointed
Essential	Re enforcing
Professional	Amateur
Put you off	More likely to buy
Motivated	Frustrated
Feel valued	Feeling like 'a till number'
Necessity (I need the product)	Luxury (looking for something not necessary)
Risk free purchase decision	High-risk purchase
Happy	Frustration
Pride	Guilt
Easy access	Difficult accessibility
Comfortable	Doubtful-unsettled-confused
Happy you get it (achievement)	Unhappy & thinking about it (consciousness)

Precise-focused	Imprecise-lost
It is a good alternative to store service	The minimum basics
Glad-happy	Disappointed
Easily buy more	Only buy it if the product is really good
Low risk	High risk
Essential-vital	Useless
At ease	Scared
Comfortable	Unsettled
Being sure-confident	Doubtful
Closer to real life experience	Biased
Enjoyable-having fun	Irritated
Motivated	Confused
Interested-happy	Unsure-try to imagine
Buy-visit more often	Put me off
Good customer involvement	No involvement

Appendix 9 Repertory Grid Analysis: NVivo Word Frequency

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
Buy	3	21	3.91%	Buy
Put	3	13	2.42%	Put
Product	7	12	2.23%	Product, Products
Closer	6	11	2.05%	Closer
Purchase	8	11	2.05%	Purchase
Life	4	10	1.86%	Life
Real	4	10	1.86%	Real
Confident	9	9	1.68%	Confident
Happy	5	9	1.68%	Happy
Disappointed	12	9	1.68%	Disappointed, Disappointment
Trust	5	9	1.68%	Trust, Trusting
Motivate	8	9	1.68%	Motivate, Motivated
Liking	6	9	1.68%	Like, Likely, Liking
Experience	10	8	1.49%	Experience
Risk	4	8	1.49%	Risk
Decision	8	7	1.30%	Decision
Make	4	7	1.30%	Make
Confused	8	6	1.12%	Confused, Confusion
Reassured	9	6	1.12%	Reassured, Reassures, Reassuring
Bonus	5	6	1.12%	Bonus
Essential	9	6	1.12%	Essential
Good	4	6	1.12%	Good
Help	4	6	1.12%	Help
Important	9	6	1.12%	Important
Feel	4	5	0.93%	Feel, Feeling
Extra	5	5	0.93%	Extra
Initial	7	5	0.93%	Initial
Interested	10	5	0.93%	Interested, Interesting
Website	7	5	0.93%	Website
Alternative	11	4	0.74%	Alternative, Alternatives
Bother	6	4	0.74%	Bother, Bothered
Comfortable	11	4	0.74%	Comfortable
High	4	4	0.74%	High
Impression	10	4	0.74%	Impression, Impressive
Influence	9	4	0.74%	Influence
Look	4	4	0.74%	Look, Looking
Satisfied	9	4	0.74%	Satisfied
Unsure	6	4	0.74%	Unsure
Frustration	11	4	0.74%	Frustrated, Frustration
Give	4	4	0.74%	Give, Gives
Informed	8	4	0.74%	Information, Informed
Annoyed	7	3	0.56%	Annoyed, Annoying
Bored	5	3	0.56%	Bored, Boring
Care	4	3	0.56%	Care, Caring
Enjoyment	9	3	0.56%	Enjoyable, Enjoyment

Inspired	8	3	0.56%	Inspired, Inspires
Involvement	11	3	0.56%	Involved, Involvement
Irritate	8	3	0.56%	Irritate, Irritated, Irritating
Want	4	3	0.56%	Want, Wanted
Attention	9	3	0.56%	Attention
Basics	6	3	0.56%	Basics
Choice	6	3	0.56%	Choice
Choose	6	3	0.56%	Choose
Company	7	3	0.56%	Company
Doubtful	8	3	0.56%	Doubtful
Encourage	9	3	0.56%	Encourage
Ignore	6	3	0.56%	Ignore
Imagine	7	3	0.56%	Imagine
Info	4	3	0.56%	Info
Low	3	3	0.56%	Low
Might	5	3	0.56%	Might
Useless	7	3	0.56%	Useless
Access	6	2	0.37%	Access, Accessibility
Actual	6	2	0.37%	Actual
Appeal	6	2	0.37%	Appeal, Appealing
Biased	6	2	0.37%	Biased
Comes	5	2	0.37%	Comes, Coming
Complicated	11	2	0.37%	Complicated
Difficult	9	2	0.37%	Difficult
Dissatisfied	12	2	0.37%	Dissatisfied
Distracted	10	2	0.37%	Distracted
Ease	4	2	0.37%	Ease
Easy	4	2	0.37%	Easy
Find	4	2	0.37%	Find, Finding
Focused	7	2	0.37%	Focused
Fun	3	2	0.37%	Fun
Get	3	2	0.37%	Get
Guilt	5	2	0.37%	Guilt
Keep	4	2	0.37%	Keep
Necessity	9	2	0.37%	Necessity
Need	4	2	0.37%	Need
Neutral	7	2	0.37%	Neutral
Overall	7	2	0.37%	Overall
Pay	3	2	0.37%	Pay
Perceiving	10	2	0.37%	Perceiving
Realistic	9	2	0.37%	Realistic
Reliable	8	2	0.37%	Reliable
Satisfaction	12	2	0.37%	Satisfaction
See	3	2	0.37%	See
Service	7	2	0.37%	Service
Step	4	2	0.37%	Step, Steps
Store	5	2	0.37%	Store
Time	4	2	0.37%	Time
Unhappy	7	2	0.37%	Unhappy

Unsettled	9	2	0.37%	Unsettled
Valued	6	2	0.37%	Valued
Visit	5	2	0.37%	Visit
Vital	5	2	0.37%	Vital
3rd	3	1	0.19%	3rd
Achievement	11	1	0.19%	Achievement
Action	6	1	0.19%	Action
Advanced	8	1	0.19%	Advanced
Advice	6	1	0.19%	Advice
Advise	6	1	0.19%	Advise
Affected	8	1	0.19%	Affected
Affording	9	1	0.19%	Affording
Amateur	7	1	0.19%	Amateur
Angry	5	1	0.19%	Angry
Another	7	1	0.19%	Another
Anxious	7	1	0.19%	Anxious
Assessment	10	1	0.19%	Assessment
Assurance	9	1	0.19%	Assurance
Attractive	10	1	0.19%	Attractive
Away	4	1	0.19%	Away
Back	4	1	0.19%	Back
Base	4	1	0.19%	Base
Benefit	7	1	0.19%	Benefit
Better	6	1	0.19%	Better
Breaker	7	1	0.19%	Breaker
Calm	4	1	0.19%	Calm
Carelessness	12	1	0.19%	Carelessness
Certain	7	1	0.19%	Certain
Challenging	11	1	0.19%	Challenging
Cheaper	7	1	0.19%	Cheaper
Clear	5	1	0.19%	Clear
Clothes	7	1	0.19%	Clothes
Concerned	9	1	0.19%	Concerned
Consciousness	13	1	0.19%	Consciousness
Contempt	8	1	0.19%	Contempt
Customer	8	1	0.19%	Customer
Deal	4	1	0.19%	Deal
Decide	6	1	0.19%	Decide
Desperation	11	1	0.19%	Desperation
Details	7	1	0.19%	Details
Discard	7	1	0.19%	Discard
Dislike	7	1	0.19%	Dislike
Distrust	8	1	0.19%	Distrust
Drawback	8	1	0.19%	Drawback
Easier	6	1	0.19%	Easier
Easily	6	1	0.19%	Easily
Elements	8	1	0.19%	Elements
Else	4	1	0.19%	Else
Enforcing	9	1	0.19%	Enforcing

Excited	7	1	0.19%	Excited
Expected	8	1	0.19%	Expected
Explore	7	1	0.19%	Explore
Facilitate	10	1	0.19%	Facilitate
Far	3	1	0.19%	Far
First	5	1	0.19%	First
Fit	3	1	0.19%	Fit
Free	4	1	0.19%	Free
Glad	4	1	0.19%	Glad
Glamorous	9	1	0.19%	Glamorous
Guaranteed	10	1	0.19%	Guaranteed
Happier	7	1	0.19%	Happier
Imprecise	9	1	0.19%	Imprecise
Judge	5	1	0.19%	Judge
Later	5	1	0.19%	Later
Leave	5	1	0.19%	Leave
Less	4	1	0.19%	Less
Let	3	1	0.19%	Let
Lost	4	1	0.19%	Lost
Luxury	6	1	0.19%	Luxury
Matter	6	1	0.19%	Matter
Minimum	7	1	0.19%	Minimum
Natural	7	1	0.19%	Natural
Navigate	8	1	0.19%	Navigate
Necessary	9	1	0.19%	Necessary
Nervous	7	1	0.19%	Nervous
Nice	4	1	0.19%	Nice
Number'	7	1	0.19%	Number'
Obtain	6	1	0.19%	Obtain
Often	5	1	0.19%	Often
Particular	10	1	0.19%	Particular
Parties	7	1	0.19%	Parties
Place	5	1	0.19%	Place
Precise	7	1	0.19%	Precise
Pride	5	1	0.19%	Pride
Professional	12	1	0.19%	Professional
Really	6	1	0.19%	Really
Right	5	1	0.19%	Right
Saver	5	1	0.19%	Saver
Scared	6	1	0.19%	Scared
Search	6	1	0.19%	Search
Shop	4	1	0.19%	Shop
Simpler	7	1	0.19%	Simpler
Something	9	1	0.19%	Something
Somewhere	9	1	0.19%	Somewhere
Specific	8	1	0.19%	Specific
Spend	5	1	0.19%	Spend
Stressful	9	1	0.19%	Stressful
Suitable	8	1	0.19%	Suitable

Sure	4	1	0.19%	Sure
Tell	4	1	0.19%	Tell
Tempted	7	1	0.19%	Tempted
Tend	4	1	0.19%	Tend
Things	6	1	0.19%	Things
Thinking	8	1	0.19%	Thinking
Till	4	1	0.19%	Till
Trustworthy	11	1	0.19%	Trustworthy
Try	3	1	0.19%	Try
Uneasy	6	1	0.19%	Uneasy
Unnecessary	11	1	0.19%	Unnecessary
Upset	5	1	0.19%	Upset
Usage	5	1	0.19%	Usage
Useful	6	1	0.19%	Useful
Willing	7	1	0.19%	Willing

Appendix 10 Initial Coding: NVivo's Nodes

▼ ◯ Risk, confidence and trust
   ▼ ◯ Risk
      ◯ Low risk~High risk
      ◯ Risk free purchase decision~High risk purchase
      ◯ High risk purchase~Low risk purchase (2)
      ◯ High risk purchase~Low risk purchase
   ▼ ◯ Confident
      ◯ Being sure–confident~Doubtful
      ◯ Confident~Don't trust
      ◯ Confident~Unsure
      ◯ More confident about my choice~Trust the company
      ◯ More confident that the product is right for me
      ◯ More confident ~Not guaranteed that you get what you're looking for
      ◯ Confident~Inspired
      ◯ Unhappy~Confident
   ▼ ◯ Trust
      ◯ Trust~Don't pay attention
      ◯ Trust~Disappointment–frustration
      ◯ Confident~Don't trust
      ◯ Trusting the website~Annoyed–disappointed
      ◯ More confident about my choice~Trust the company
      ◯ Trust~Doubtful
      ◯ Trust~Not reliable
      ◯ Trust ~Distrust

- ▼ Reassurance
  - Reassured~Dissatisfied
  - Initial liking ~Reassures me –make me calm
  - Reassuring~Annoying
  - Reassuring~Irritating
  - Reassured~Distracted
  - Inspires me~Reassures me –but might put me off
- ▼ Confusion
  - Motivated~Confused
  - Comfortable~Doubtful-unsettled-confused
  - Confused~Enjoyment
  - It would tell you more about the product~It would make you confused
  - Keep you informed~Confusion
  - Happy ~Confusion
- ▼ Disappointment
  - Comfortable~Disappointed
  - Glad-happy~Disappointed
  - Trust~Disappointment-frustration
  - Motivate me~Disappointed-distracted
  - Satisfied ~Disappointed (2)
  - Trusting the website~Annoyed-disappointed
  - Feel at ease~Disappointed
  - Satisfied ~Disappointed
  - Gives you good impression~Disappointment
  - ▼ Happiness Constructs
    - Interested-happy~Unsure-try to imagine
    - Glad-happy~Disappointed
    - Happy you get it (achievement)~Unhappy and thinking about it (consciousness)
    - Happy-motivated~Unsure
    - Concerned~Happy
    - Happy ~Frustration
    - Neutral-don't care~Happy
    - Happy ~Confusion
- ▼ Interested
  - Interested-happy~Unsure-try to imagine
  - Interested~Bored
  - Interested ~Ignore
- ▼ Perception of element's helpfulness
  - Help me buy ~Put me off
  - Help me decide later~Initial liking
  - Help me buy ~Look for alternatives
  - Help you buy ~Put you off
  - Help you choose product~Help you choose company

▼ ◯ Perception of element's importance
  - ◯ Important~Don't bother
  - ◯ Important~Useless
  - ◯ Useless~Very important
  - ◯ Essential-vital~Useless
  - ◯ It is a good alternative to store service~The minimum basics
  - ◯ Essential ~Re enforcing
  - ◯ Less important~Important
  - ◯ Essential ~A bonus (2)
  - ◯ A bonus~Doesn't appeal
  - ◯ Important~Extra
  - ◯ More info-advice on products~Useful as an extra
  - ◯ Bonus~Necessity
  - ◯ Extra-bonus ~Basics
  - ◯ Essential ~Bonus
  - ◯ Essential ~A bonus
  - ◯ More attractive~A nice extra
  - ◯ A good extra ~Vital-essential
  - ◯ Advanced elements ~Basics

▼ ◯ Motivation
  - ◯ Motivated~Confused
  - ◯ Motivated~Frustrated
  - ◯ Motivate me~Disappointed-distracted
  - ◯ Happy-motivated~Unsure
  - ◯ Motivate me to buy~Make me informed
  - ◯ Motivate me to buy~Put you off
  - ◯ Motivate me to buy~Tempted to visit the website
  - ◯ Motivate me to buy~Difficult to judge on
  - ◯ Not bothered ~Motivated

Appendix 11 My Coding

Categories	Construct
Perception of elements importance and influence	A Benefit--Drawback
Perception of elements importance and influence	Advanced Elements --Basics
Situational context	Affording --Fit-Suitable
Perception of elements importance and influence	Assessment--Usage
Emotions	At Ease--Scared
Perception of elements importance and influence	Base My Decision On --Initial Steps
Risk, trust and Confidence	Being Sure-Confident--Doubtful
Perception of elements importance and influence	Better Feel Of The Product-Closer To Real Life--I Don't Care
Risk, trust and Confidence	Biased --Trustworthy
Perception of elements importance and influence	Bonus--Necessity
Behaviour	Buy More --Put You Off
Risk, trust and Confidence	Certain--Uneasy
Perception of elements importance and influence	Clear--Unnecessary
Perception of elements importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Ignore It
Perception of elements importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Biased
Perception of elements importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience--A Good Service-Time Saver
Perception of elements importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Can't See Or Feel The Product
Perception of elements importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Not Impressive
Perception of elements importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience (Realistic)--Far Away-Discard
Emotions	Comfortable--Disappointed
Emotions	Comfortable--Doubtful-Unsettled-Confused
Emotions	Comfortable --Stressful
Emotions	Concerned--Happy
Emotions	Confident--Inspired
Emotions	Confident--Unsure
Emotions	Confused--Enjoyment
Perception of elements importance and influence	Encourage Me To Buy --Irritate Me
Perception of elements importance and influence	Encourage Me To Buy --Put Me Off
Emotions	Enjoyable-Having Fun--Irritated
Emotions	Enjoyment-Satisfaction--Dislike It
Perception of elements importance	Essential --Re Enforcing
Perception of elements importance	Essential-Vital--Useless
Emotions	Excited--Guilt
Emotions	Facilitate My Choice --Anxious About My Choice
Emotions	Feel At Ease--Disappointed
Emotions	Feel Valued--Feeling Like 'A Till Number'
Perception of elements importance and influence	Give You More Details--Make Products Closer To Real Life

Emotions	Glad-Happy--Disappointed
Perception of elements importance and influence	Glamorous --Expected
Behaviour	Go Back To The Website--Find An Alternative
Emotions	Happier Overall--Focused
Emotions	Happy --Frustration
Emotions	Happy --Confusion
Emotions	Happy You Get It (Achievement)--Unhappy And Thinking About It (Consciousness)
Emotions	Happy-Motivated--Unsure
Perception of elements importance and influence	Help Me Buy --Put Me Off
Perception of elements importance and influence	Help Me Decide Later--Initial Liking
Perception of elements importance and influence	Help You Choose Product--Help You Choose Company
Risk, trust and Confidence	High-Risk Purchase--Low Risk Purchase
Perception of elements importance and influence	Important--Extra
Perception of elements importance and influence	Important--Don't Bother
Perception of elements importance and influence	Important--Useless
Perception of elements importance and influence	Influence My Purchase Decision--It Doesn't Matter
Perception of elements importance and influence	Influence My Purchase Decision--I Won't Be Affected
Perception of elements importance and influence	Influence My Purchase Decision--Give Information
Perception of elements importance and influence	Initial Liking--Actual Purchase Decision
Perception of elements importance and influence	Initial Liking --Reassures Me -Make Me Calm
Emotions	Inspired--Bored
Emotions	Inspires Me--Reassures Me -But Might Put Me Off
Emotions	Interested--Bored
Emotions	Interested--Ignore
Emotions	Interested-Happy--Unsure-Try To Imagine
Emotions	Involved--Don't Bother
Perception of elements importance and influence	It Is A Good Alternative To Store Service--The Minimum Basics
Perception of elements importance and influence	It Would Tell You More About The Product--It Would Make You Confused
Perception of elements importance and influence	Make Me Imagine The Product --Make Me Closer To Obtain It
Perception of elements importance and influence	More Attractive--A Nice Extra
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident --Not Guaranteed That You Get What You're Looking For
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident About My Choice--trust The Company
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident That The Product Is Right For Me--Easier-Simpler
Behaviour	More Likely To Buy--Leave The Website
Behaviour	More Likely To Buy--Might Look For Alternatives
Emotions	Motivate Me--Disappointed-Distracted

Perception of elements importance and influence	Motivate Me To Buy--Difficult To Judge On
Perception of elements importance and influence	Motivate Me To Buy--Make Me Informed
Emotions	Motivated--Frustrated
Emotions	Motivated--Confused
Situational context	Necessity (I Need The Product)--Luxury (Looking For Something Not Necessary)
Emotions	Neutral (Tend To Ignore)--Dissatisfied-Upset
Emotions	Neutral-Don't Care--Happy
Emotions	Not Bothered --Motivated
Emotions	Pay No Attention--Assurance
Perception of elements importance and influence	Precise-Focused--Imprecise-Lost
Emotions	Pride--Guilt
Emotions	Reassured--Distracted
Emotions	Reassured--Dissatisfied
Emotions	Reassuring--Irritating
Emotions	Reassuring--Annoying
Emotions	Satisfaction --Contempt
Emotions	Satisfied --Disappointed
Emotions	Satisfied --Nervous-Angry
Emotions	Satisfied --Annoyed
Behaviour	Search For Cheaper Or Buy--Give Up
Perception of elements importance and influence	They Let You See The Clothes In Action--Finding A Store In The First Place
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Doubtful
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Not Reliable
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Distrust
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trusting The Website--Annoyed-Disappointed
Emotions	Unhappy--Confident
Behaviour	Willing To Buy More --Might Choose Another Website

Appendix 12 the 2nd Coding Round

Coding of readily identified categories (the 2nd coder) TG

Categories	Construct
Perception of elements importance and influence	A Benefit--Drawback
Perception of elements importance and influence	Advanced Elements --Basics
Perception of elements importance and influence	Affording --Fit-Suitable
Perception of elements importance and influence	Assessment--Usage
Perception of elements importance and influence	At Ease--Scared
Perception of elements importance and influence	Base My Decision On --Initial Steps
Perception of elements importance and influence	Being Sure-Confident--Doubtful
Perception of elements importance and influence	Better Feel Of The Product-Closer To Real Life--I Don't Care
Risk, trust and Confidence	Biased --Trustworthy
Perception of elements importance and influence	Bonus--Necessity
Emotions	Buy More --Put You Off
Risk, trust and Confidence	Certain--Uneasy
Emotions	Clear--Unnecessary
Risk, trust and Confidence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Ignore It
Risk, trust and Confidence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Biased
Risk, trust and Confidence	Closer To Real Life Experience--A Good Service-Time Saver
Risk, trust and Confidence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Can't See Or Feel The Product
Risk, trust and Confidence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Not Impressive
Risk, trust and Confidence	Closer To Real Life Experience (Realistic)--Far Away-Discard
Emotions	Comfortable--Disappointed
Emotions	Comfortable--Doubtful-Unsettled-Confused
Emotions	Comfortable --Stressful
Emotions	Concerned--Happy
Emotions	Confident--Inspired
Emotions	Confident--Unsure
Emotions	Confused--Enjoyment
Situational context	Encourage Me To Buy --Irritate Me
Situational context	Encourage Me To Buy --Put Me Off
Situational context	Enjoyable-Having Fun--Irritated
Situational context	Enjoyment-Satisfaction--Dislike It

Perception of elements importance and influence	Essential --Re Enforcing
Perception of elements importance and influence	Essential-Vital--Useless
Emotions	Excited--Guilt
Emotions	Facilitate My Choice --Anxious About My Choice
Emotions	Feel At Ease--Disappointed
Emotions	Feel Valued--Feeling Like 'A Till Number'
Perception of elements importance and influence	Give You More Details--Make Products Closer To Real Life
Emotions	Glad-Happy--Disappointed
Emotions	Glamorous --Expected
Behaviour	Go Back To The Website--Find An Alternative
Emotions	Happier Overall--Focused
Emotions	Happy --Frustration
Emotions	Happy --Confusion
Emotions	Happy You Get It (Achievement)--Unhappy And Thinking About It (Consciousness)
Emotions	Happy-Motivated--Unsure
Situational context	Help Me Buy --Put Me Off
Situational context	Help Me Decide Later--Initial Liking
Situational context	Help You Choose Product--Help You Choose Company
Perception of elements importance and influence	High-Risk Purchase--Low Risk Purchase
Behaviour	Important--Extra
Behaviour	Important--Don't Bother
Behaviour	Important--Useless
Perception of elements importance and influence	Influence My Purchase Decision--It Doesn't Matter
Perception of elements importance and influence	Influence My Purchase Decision--I Won't Be Affected
Perception of elements importance and influence	Influence My Purchase Decision--Give Information
Perception of elements importance and influence	Initial Liking--Actual Purchase Decision
Perception of elements importance and influence	Initial Liking --Reassures Me -Make Me Calm
Emotions	Inspired--Bored
Emotions	Inspires Me--Reassures Me -But Might Put Me Off
Emotions	Interested--Bored

Emotions	Interested--Ignore
Emotions	Interested-Happy--Unsure-Try To Imagine
Emotions	Involved--Don't Bother
Risk, trust and Confidence	It Is A Good Alternative To Store Service--The Minimum Basics
Risk, trust and Confidence	It Would Tell You More About The Product--It Would Make You Confused
Perception of elements importance and influence	Make Me Imagine The Product --Make Me Closer To Obtain It
Perception of elements importance and influence	More Attractive--A Nice Extra
Perception of elements importance and influence	More Confident --Not Guaranteed That You Get What You're Looking For
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident About My Choice--trust The Company
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident That The Product Is Right For Me--Easier-Simpler
Situational context	More Likely To Buy--Leave The Website
Situational context	More Likely To Buy--Might Look For Alternatives
Situational context	Motivate Me--Disappointed-Distracted
Situational context	Motivate Me To Buy--Difficult To Judge On
Situational context	Motivate Me To Buy--Make Me Informed
Situational context	Motivated--Frustrated
Situational context	Motivated--Confused
Emotions	Necessity (I Need The Product)--Luxury (Looking For Something Not Necessary)
Emotions	Neutral (Tend To Ignore)--Dissatisfied-Upset
Emotions	Neutral-Don't Care--Happy
Emotions	Not Bothered --Motivated
Emotions	Pay No Attention--Assurance
Risk, trust and Confidence	Precise-Focused--Imprecise-Lost
Emotions	Pride--Guilt
Behaviour	Reassured--Distracted
Behaviour	Reassured--Dissatisfied
Emotions	Reassuring--Irritating
Emotions	Reassuring--Annoying
Emotions	Satisfaction --Contempt
Emotions	Satisfied --Disappointed

Emotions	Satisfied --Nervous-Angry
Emotions	Satisfied --Annoyed
Behaviour	Search For Cheaper Or Buy--Give Up
Perception of elements importance and influence	They Let You See The Clothes In Action--Finding A Store In The First Place
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Doubtful
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Not Reliable
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Distrust
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trusting The Website--Annoyed-Disappointed
Emotions	Unhappy--Confident
Situational context	Willing To Buy More --Might Choose Another Website

Appendix 13 the 3rd Coding Round

Categories	Construct
Element's Importance and influence	A Benefit--Drawback
Element's Importance and influence	Advanced Elements --Basics
Emotions	Affording --Fit-Suitable
Situational context	Assessment--Usage
Emotions	At Ease--Scared
Element's Importance and influence	Base My Decision On --Initial Steps
Risk, trust and Confidence	Being Sure-Confident--Doubtful
Emotions	Better Feel Of The Product-Closer To Real Life--I Don't Care
Risk, trust and Confidence	Biased --Trustworthy
Element's Importance and influence	Bonus--Necessity
Behaviour	Buy More --Put You Off
Risk, trust and Confidence	Certain--Uneasy
Element's Importance and influence	Clear--Unnecessary
Element's Importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Ignore It
Emotions	Closer To Real Life Experience--Biased
Element's Importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience--A Good Service-Time Saver
Situational context	Closer To Real Life Experience--Can't See Or Feel The Product
Emotions	Closer To Real Life Experience--Not Impressive
Element's Importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience (Realistic)--Far Away-Discard
Emotions	Comfortable--Disappointed
Emotions	Comfortable--Doubtful-Unsettled-Confused
Emotions	Comfortable --Stressful
Risk, trust and Confidence	Concerned--Happy
Emotions	Confident--Inspired
Emotions	Confident--Unsure
Emotions	Confused--Enjoyment
Behaviour	Encourage Me To Buy --Irritate Me
Behaviour	Encourage Me To Buy --Put Me Off
Behaviour	Enjoyable-Having Fun--Irritated
Emotions	Enjoyment-Satisfaction--Dislike It
Element's Importance and influence	Essential --Re Enforcing
Element's Importance and influence	Essential-Vital--Useless
Emotions	Excited--Guilt
Situational context	Facilitate My Choice --Anxious About My Choice
Emotions	Feel At Ease--Disappointed
Emotions	Feel Valued--Feeling Like 'A Till Number'
Situational context	Give You More Details--Make Products Closer To Real Life
Emotions	Glad-Happy--Disappointed

Element's Importance and influence	Glamorous --Expected
Element's Importance and influence	Go Back To The Website--Find An Alternative
Emotions	Happier Overall--Focused
Emotions	Happy --Frustration
Emotions	Happy --Confusion
Emotions	Happy You Get It (Achievement)--Unhappy And Thinking About It (Consciousness)
Emotions	Happy-Motivated--Unsure
Behaviour	Help Me Buy --Put Me Off
Behaviour	Help Me Decide Later--Initial Liking
Situational context	Help You Choose Product--Help You Choose Company
Risk, trust and Confidence	High-Risk Purchase--Low Risk Purchase
Element's Importance and influence	Important--Extra
Element's Importance and influence	Important--Don't Bother
Element's Importance and influence	Important--Useless
Situational context	Influence My Purchase Decision--It Doesn't Matter
Situational context	Influence My Purchase Decision--I Won't Be Affected
Situational context	Influence My Purchase Decision--Give Information
Element's Importance and influence	Initial Liking--Actual Purchase Decision
Emotions	Initial Liking --Reassures Me -Make Me Calm
Emotions	Inspired--Bored
Emotions	Inspires Me--Reassures Me -But Might Put Me Off
Emotions	Interested--Bored
Behaviour	Interested--Ignore
Emotions	Interested-Happy--Unsure-Try To Imagine
Element's Importance and influence	Involved--Don't Bother
Element's Importance and influence	It Is A Good Alternative To Store Service--The Minimum Basics
Situational context	It Would Tell You More About The Product--It Would Make You Confused
Element's Importance and influence	Make Me Imagine The Product --Make Me Closer To Obtain It
Situational context	More Attractive--A Nice Extra
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident --Not Guaranteed That You Get What You're Looking For
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident About My Choice--trust The Company
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident That The Product Is Right For Me--Easier-Simpler
Behaviour	More Likely To Buy--Leave The Website
Behaviour	More Likely To Buy--Might Look For Alternatives
Situational context	Motivate Me--Disappointed-Distracted
Situational context	Motivate Me To Buy--Difficult To Judge On
Element's Importance and influence	Motivate Me To Buy--Make Me Informed
Emotions	Motivated--Frustrated
Emotions	Motivated--Confused
Element's Importance and influence	Necessity (I Need The Product)--Luxury (Looking For

	Something Not Necessary)
Emotions	Neutral (Tend To Ignore)--Dissatisfied-Upset
Emotions	Neutral-Don't Care--Happy
Emotions	Not Bothered --Motivated
Element's Importance and influence	Pay No Attention--Assurance
Element's Importance and influence	Precise-Focused--Imprecise-Lost
Emotions	Pride--Guilt
Emotions	Reassured--Distracted
Emotions	Reassured--Dissatisfied
Emotions	Reassuring--Irritating
Emotions	Reassuring--Annoying
Emotions	Satisfaction --Contempt
Emotions	Satisfied --Disappointed
Emotions	Satisfied --Nervous-Angry
Emotions	Satisfied --Annoyed
Behaviour	Search For Cheaper Or Buy--Give Up
Behaviour	They Let You See The Clothes In Action--Finding A Store In The First Place
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Doubtful
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Not Reliable
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Distrust
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trusting The Website--Annoyed-Disappointed
Emotions	Unhappy--Confident
Behaviour	Willing To Buy More --Might Choose Another Website

Appendix 14 the 4th Coding Round

Categories	Construct
Element's Importance and influence	A Benefit--Drawback
Element's Importance and influence	Advanced Elements --Basics
Element's Importance and influence	Affording --Fit-Suitable
Element's Importance and influence	Assessment--Usage
Emotions	At Ease--Scared
Behaviour	Base My Decision On --Initial Steps
Risk, trust and Confidence	Being Sure-Confident--Doubtful
Risk, trust and Confidence	Better Feel Of The Product-Closer To Real Life--I Don't Care
Risk, trust and Confidence	Biased --Trustworthy
Element's Importance and influence	Bonus--Necessity
Element's Importance and influence	Buy More --Put You Off
Risk, trust and Confidence	Certain--Uneasy
Element's Importance and influence	Clear--Unnecessary
Element's Importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Ignore It
Risk, trust and Confidence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Biased
Element's Importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience--A Good Service-Time Saver
Element's Importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience--Can't See Or Feel The Product
Emotions	Closer To Real Life Experience--Not Impressive
Element's Importance and influence	Closer To Real Life Experience (Realistic)--Far Away-Discard
Emotions	Comfortable--Disappointed
Emotions	Comfortable--Doubtful-Unsettled-Confused
Emotions	Comfortable --Stressful
Emotions	Concerned--Happy
Risk, trust and Confidence	Confident--Inspired
Risk, trust and Confidence	Confident--Unsure
Emotions	Confused--Enjoyment
Element's Importance and influence	Encourage Me To Buy --Irritate Me
Element's Importance and influence	Encourage Me To Buy --Put Me Off
Emotions	Enjoyable-Having Fun--Irritated
Element's Importance and influence	Enjoyment-Satisfaction--Dislike It
Element's Importance and influence	Essential --Re Enforcing
Element's Importance and influence	Essential-Vital--Useless
Emotions	Excited--Guilt
Element's Importance and influence	Facilitate My Choice --Anxious About My Choice
Emotions	Feel At Ease--Disappointed
Element's Importance and influence	Feel Valued--Feeling Like 'A Till Number'
Element's Importance and influence	Give You More Details--Make Products Closer To Real Life
Emotions	Glad-Happy--Disappointed

Element's Importance and influence	Glamorous --Expected
Behaviour	Go Back To The Website--Find An Alternative
Emotions	Happier Overall--Focused
Emotions	Happy --Frustration
Emotions	Happy --Confusion
Emotions	Happy You Get It (Achievement)--Unhappy And Thinking About It (Consciousness)
Emotions	Happy-Motivated--Unsure
Element's Importance and influence	Help Me Buy --Put Me Off
Element's Importance and influence	Help Me Decide Later--Initial Liking
Element's Importance and influence	Help You Choose Product--Help You Choose Company
Risk, trust and Confidence	High-Risk Purchase--Low Risk Purchase
Element's Importance and influence	Important--Extra
Element's Importance and influence	Important--Don't Bother
Element's Importance and influence	Important--Useless
Element's Importance and influence	Influence My Purchase Decision--It Doesn't Matter
Element's Importance and influence	Influence My Purchase Decision--I Won't Be Affected
Element's Importance and influence	Influence My Purchase Decision--Give Information
Element's Importance and influence	Initial Liking--Actual Purchase Decision
Element's Importance and influence	Initial Liking --Reassures Me -Make Me Calm
Emotions	Inspired--Bored
Element's Importance and influence	Inspires Me--Reassures Me -But Might Put Me Off
Emotions	Interested--Bored
Emotions	Interested--Ignore
Emotions	Interested-Happy--Unsure-Try To Imagine
Element's Importance and influence	Involved--Don't Bother
Situational context	It Is A Good Alternative To Store Service--The Minimum Basics
Element's Importance and influence	It Would Tell You More About The Product--It Would Make You Confused
Element's Importance and influence	Make Me Imagine The Product --Make Me Closer To Obtain It
Element's Importance and influence	More Attractive--A Nice Extra
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident --Not Guaranteed That You Get What You're Looking For
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident About My Choice--trust The Company
Risk, trust and Confidence	More Confident That The Product Is Right For Me--Easier-Simpler
Element's Importance and influence	More Likely To Buy--Leave The Website
Element's Importance and influence	More Likely To Buy--Might Look For Alternatives
Emotions	Motivate Me--Disappointed-Distracted
Element's Importance and influence	Motivate Me To Buy--Difficult To Judge On
Element's Importance and influence	Motivate Me To Buy--Make Me Informed
Emotions	Motivated--Frustrated
Emotions	Motivated--Confused
Situational context	Necessity (I Need The Product)--Luxury (Looking For

	Something Not Necessary)
Element's Importance and influence	Neutral (Tend To Ignore)--Dissatisfied-Upset
Emotions	Neutral-Don't Care--Happy
Emotions	Not Bothered --Motivated
Risk, trust and Confidence	Pay No Attention--Assurance
Element's Importance and influence	Precise-Focused--Imprecise-Lost
Emotions	Pride--Guilt
Element's Importance and influence	Reassured--Distracted
Element's Importance and influence	Reassured--Dissatisfied
Emotions	Reassuring--Irritating
Emotions	Reassuring--Annoying
Element's Importance and influence	Satisfaction --Contempt
Emotions	Satisfied --Disappointed
Emotions	Satisfied --Nervous-Angry
Emotions	Satisfied --Annoyed
Behaviour	Search For Cheaper Or Buy--Give Up
Element's Importance and influence	They Let You See The Clothes In Action--Finding A Store In The First Place
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Doubtful
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Not Reliable
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trust--Distrust
Risk, trust and Confidence	Trusting The Website--Annoyed-Disappointed
Risk, trust and Confidence	Unhappy--Confident
Element's Importance and influence	Willing To Buy More --Might Choose Another Website

<u>Appendix 15 Video Instructions</u>

<u>Video Instructions</u>

Dear Participant,

You are about to start demonstrating a shopping experience that will be recorded and analysed for this research purposes. Please read the following.

- Recording will be made using screen recording software called Camtasia, this software only records what happens on screen so no camera will be used and you will not appear in the video.

- The software has the ability to record your voice. Therefore, please make sure you put the headset on and feel free to comment whatever comes to your mind when seeing items, choosing or ignoring them. If you do not wish to record your voice, please tell the interviewer immediately to mute the microphone or feel free to do so from the mini menu.

- You may choose your preferred web browser from the desktop.

- Please feel free to start shopping the way you like. Whether you start from a particular website or from a search engine is up to you.

- Please feel free to open multiple tabs or pages or a single page as you wish.

- Please feel free to play music, use your Facebook or email if this is how you usually shop.

- You may do anything you would like to do but you are kindly asked not to pay for an order. This is for your own safety to not share your bank information.

- Please make sure you understand that this video will be recorded and kept secure and will only be used for research purposes.

- At no time will the participant name be linked to their videos therefore videos will be given numbers when saved securely.

- If you are unsure or unhappy about anything, please feel free to let the interviewer know.

Thank you,

Fatema Kawaf

Appendix 16 Short Video Segment Transcription

Video 15

	Times pan	Content	Speaker.	Analytical Notes
1	0:00.0 - 0:33.0	Starting with Topshop	Okie, usually I look at the new stuff..	The participant didn't start from a search engine instead she went directly to her favourite websites
2	0:33.1 - 0:44.5	She chooses the maximum number of products displayed per page (200)	Ehhh, think usually when I went on this when you put your mouse over something they have the stars??	Web layout: she preferred to see the maximum number of item on one screen instead of having to click from one page to another
3	0:42.6 - 0:47.6	Clicking on the first product	Oh no these are new products!	Web layout: automatic rating stars appearing on items
4	0:48.0 - 0:57.2	Choosing a different product with stars	Like this for example.	
5	0:57.3 - 1:05.1	First thing she looked at is customer reviews, she clicked the link to read the reviews written		Checking the rating and reading the review came before using the image zooming but this might be because of the discussion we had before the video session on customer reviews etc. However, the participant did say that she looks at high rated items
6	1:05.1 - 1:10.8	Moving the mouse over the image and looking at a quick zooming in for details on the top she chose	Oh yeah that's quite good!	Only when she used the zooming in (automatic zooming display by moving the mouse over the item), she commented that it was quite good.
7	1:10.8 -	Pointing the mouse to the link to share the review on Facebook or Twitter (Share	I've never seen this before, that's quite good.	The initial liking of the product was followed by reading details. Social network links were on the

	1:20.4	this review: Facebook Twitter Was this helpful? Yes, No, Report)		page with a rating the review option, the participant thought it was good although she never paid attention to it
8	1:20.4 - 1:41.1	Moved back to the new in section and now clicked on 'Spotted' *(Spotted: seen an incredible Topshop piece in your favourite magazine? Maybe you've spied a super stylish blogger or girl-about-town wearing something you just have to have? This is the place to find it! Be sure to check back for updates every week.)* Scrolling down the page and the next page has only few items	It's kinda making me want to go shopping now, hehehe (laughing).	Using the spotted section, she is even more enthusiastic about her shopping. This is maybe due to the type of products she is looking at.
9	1:41.1 - 1:58.8	Moved to type ASOS over Topshop so leaving the first website... scrolling down the left side menu (product categories), and clicked Petite	I will have a look on ASOS... I usually look in Petite because I am quite small hehehe.	Spent less than two minutes on the first website. Again web layout seems very important and she is looking to filter items to her preferred category
10	2:00.1 - 2:20.9	Petite products are organised in a grid style on the screen with a brief title and price under each thumbnail product...	Yeah this is emmm, I like this, but emmm I always find there's just so many pages of stuff to look through can't now be really bothered.	Web layout, she sounds unsure and bothered by the too many items (stressed, confused)
11	2:20.9 - 2:25.3	Scrolling down the page looking at items	See a Petite is not so bad it's just got a few things.	Filtering option put her at ease because she focuses on fewer items (she is more relaxed)
12	2:25.3 - 2:47.5	Choosing a top, clicking on catwalk video. The participant is moving the mouse pointer all over the video side of	I'll do a catwalk.. is this (heheheh laughter, catwalk video sound volume is too high; participant is wearing a headset!)	Happiness and excitement are obvious in watching the catwalk video. It forms part of the fun in the experience. Although, too loud sound made the

the screen and was pointing to the menu section (women) just so she could stop the video, she eventually turned the sound volume down

situation different and after a good laugh the participant was ready to quickly leave the page!

13	2:41.0 - 3:19.2	Going back to the previous page as soon as the video stops. Looking around...	Yeah that is basically what I do!	Feeling that she is satisfied with her shopping to this point and that she has done (although no product was placed in the basket
14	3:19.3 - 3:30.4	Moving the mouse around, responding to the prompt by going to the last item she viewed	Prompt: so when you find something interesting, what would you do then?	
15	3:30.4 - 3:44.0	clicking back on the top, and moving the mouse over the sizing information and waving at the colour option	I'd probably check which sizes they have in stock… When seeing the colour option: oh and I'd look if they have any other colours! and then sizes.	Checking back product information like colour and size. It seems like the participant would struggle to explain how she goes shopping and she would forget things. For instance, she didn't mention the different colours of the item until she found it on the page.
16	3:44.1 - 3:51.2	Clicking on the tab delivery, showing the delivery information	Oh and it's good they have this here (delivery information).	A very quick look on delivery (not much attention) maybe because she knows the site's delivery policy anyway.
17	3:51.2 - 3:54.0	Waving at the 'ADD TO BAG' button	yeah and then I'll just add to the bag if I want to buy.	Adding an item to the bag is a decision that was made just before 4 minutes of shopping were done and after visiting two websites.
18	3:54.0 - 4:03.0	Typing a different website title	I think I quite like Urban Outfitters.. you can tell I am a shopaholic (hehehe).	Visiting one more website is probably a way of comparing two options before buying the item(s) in the shopping basket
19	4:03.4 - 4:13.9	She goes directly to the women section choosing tops (Grid style page), she is waving at the different items with the mouse	I think it's.. I quite like Urban outfitters.. if you just put your mouse over things, they do a quick view!	Web layout and site functionality, she is specifically looking for a quick view option when the mouse goes over an item image in the main page.

| 20 | 4:14.0
-
4:28.9 | Quick view is not displaying over items..
Looking around at items and scrolling up
and down the page. | Maybe it wasn't this actually! nah it wasn't
this.. some websites I can't remember
which one it is now but you can just put
your mouse it has a quick view and you
can quickly check they had your size and
emmm if not it doesn't mean you have to
go BACK. | Quick view is a convenient function for the
participant because it reduced the amounts of
clicks and click back she would do and saves time.
As the site does not have the option she decides to
stop. |
| 21 | 4:40.4
-
4:41.4 | End of the session | | |

Video 16

	Time span	Content	Speaker	Analytical Notes
1	0:00.0 - 0:27.0	Typing Boohoo web address	OK I usually go on Boohoo first.. that's probably the one I always go to	
2	0:20.4 - 0:31.8	She clicked on the new in and scrolled up and down the page of the items (grid style)	I always go to the new in first, huh I don't know why I just think a lot of people are influenced by that... just, the newest clothes, the best clothes! Almost!	Although the web page has huge photo with a discount on the main page and many other sections underneath, the participant still preferred to click on the tiny icon on the top 'New In'.
3	0:31.8 - 0:34.1	Moving the mouse to the top right corner to choose the maximum number of products per page	I will be able to view 80 so I don't have scroll through too many pages!	Web layout and people wanting to view as many items as they could to avoid clicking through too many pages.
4	0:36.6 - 0:52.1	Moving down the page (not up and down just down as if the participant is scanning the items). She clicks on the colour icon under the product in the grid style to quickly change the product colour	Then I just kinda gonna have a little look, anything takes my fancy	
5	0:52.1 - 1:06.2	As the participant move down the page, the mouse pointer go over an item for a little pause and then down again	Sometimes I do go on like add them into my shopping basket if I see it and then I'll come back and think about it. You kinda like, don't know if I liked....	The main attraction in a grid-organised page is the main picture of the item as this is the main step to make the participant willing to click on the product. When a little pause happens, it's a decision-making time whether the participant

would click to see further detail or whether this is where the initial liking stops and the pause ends.

6	1:06.4 - 1:10.3	Clicking on the first item (a dress), moving the mouse pointer over the stars rating (chosen item has five stars rating), then pointing over read review	See this dress.. Yeah I'd just go like that and I'd look at it for like a little bit and just think.... I'd quickly add that to my basket (not added it though)	
7	1:14.7 - 1:18.6	Moving over the basket link without actually clicking on it	and then you can come back because it saves it ALL DAY!	There's a feeling of temptation to add items to the basket as this is not a stressful decision because the basket saves items all day and the participant could come back at any point
8	1:18.6 - 1:32.3	Moving down to the customer reviews session and pointing over the star rating and the title of the review	I always look through the customer reviews, and look you gonna get five stars and people were saying it's very nice that really does influence what you're buying	Review title with star ratings are important because they quickly give an idea as to what to expect in the review itself, this participant didn't read the reviews but she quickly scanned the stars ratings and the titles.
9	1:32.3 - 1:37.9	Moving up the page again and moving the pointer randomly in the middle of the screen and then quickly going to the back button	ermm I don't want to add that to my basket	The random movement of the mouse pointer suggests uncertainty about the product and then she decides not to add it.
10	1:37.9 - 1:44.9	Moving around the items (grid style) again pausing at trousers then moving to click on another product (shoes)		
11	1:44.9 -	Moving over the information section and pointing at the big pick add to	Like if I am buying shoes I'd always go and then look at the heel height	Although she is commenting that she would look at the heel height it seems like she cannot

	1:48.7	basket		find it straight away on the product description (as this is important piece of information it might be more sensible to have it displayed clearly in the main description of the item)
12	1:48.7 - 1:55.8	Moving down the page as she didn't find the heel height information (looking for customer reviews)	and I'd look at what other people have said about them if there's reviews on it	There are no customer reviews and it is clear that the participant is a little bit confused or uncertain because she didn't quickly see the product information that she is interested in (heel height)
13	1:55.7 - 1:59.5	back to the information section on the product there are different tabs and clicking on the middle one (details and care)	I'd go on to delivery... 14 cm	Although she is saying she is looking at delivery information but it seems that she found another tab in the middle that she wanted to check and this included the heel height information that she was looking for
14	1:59.5 - 2:13.4	Looking at delivery information and moving the mouse pointer over some of the delivery options.. then pointing at the big pick coloured (Hurry! only 4 hours 44 minutes remaining to order for UK next day delivery)	and it's kinda important to look at the delivery information usually it's like a standard 3-4 working days but sometimes you can get a next day delivery and it's telling you on there that you can get the next day delivery	The whole session looking at the shoes lasted only for 23 seconds
15	2:13.4 - 2:22.7	Moved the mouse pointer to the new in section (automatic menu appears) moving to clothing but before clicking on it the pointer quickly jumped to the back button to go to the previous page	I don't know I am quite indecisive when I go online shopping I just sort of scroll about not really..	It can be implied that the participant feels unsure what to do.. then suddenly founding a way to get back on track (it might be that in real life she experience she would have distracted herself with something else and came back later or maybe not) she seems to like the products that she found but she is not determined enough to add them to the basket

16	2:22.7 - 3:00.0	Browsing the different products again and not clicking on anything specific on the page... then moving to page number 2 of items and scrolling about again	I never really go shopping looking for something, if I am looking for something I will shop in a shop you know I will actually go shopping I won't do it online cause if you're actually looking for something specific you want to buy it, you want to try it on you want to buy it knowing that you know what it looks like on you know what the materials like you know how much it costs you know that you don't have to spend extra for delivery or whatever! So I would never really look for... (that's just me though I know other people do) but I find it easier to go shopping, actual shopping!	Very important perspective from the participant on when she would go online shopping or physical stores shopping... it links this to product risk especially in case of a special occasion with time and/or money limits.
17	3:00.0 - 3:33.3	Mouse pointer is paused as the participant is discussing her perspective with the interviewee.. Then she moves on to browsing items again	Prompt: So, when you're shopping online usually you'd shop for anything? I am just browsing yeah just browsing really.. Some... I mean sometimes you can look for things and you can think OK I'm looking for some holiday clothes so I want a couple of pairs of shorts and a top or whatever but you know there are times when you think OK I need a dress to wear for this weekend, I wouldn't.. I just kinda scroll I just browse really... I don't know just.. browse just kind of have a little look	

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18	3:35.6 - 4:14.3	Moving down the page then suddenly she decided to go on another section (Trends), and chose a particular trend section.. Moving up and down the trends with the mouse pointer going in a circle motion few times	I like as well going on the trends one to see what they've kind of put together, like they always have, they're kind of... it's like their look for the season.. so I always go on to them... I don't exactly buy everything in here or buy two things from the same one it's just nice to see what they're kind of thinking what... the company cause they are the ones making the clothes they are the ones selling them, what they would sell them with?!	Trends section seem to be an important inspiration for the participant although it does not make her buy more clothes but certainly make her interested and willing to spend more time.
19	4:14.3 - 4:47.4	Scrolling about then responding to the prompt by choosing an item	Prompt: so usually when you add items to your basket, would you go back again...? Yeah I would go back… not so much every time I add one, I would probably... I don't always add them and come back to it later sometimes I just think just kind of add it there… and I will come back to it maybe an hour later if I've changed my mind or something	The function of the basket that saves item for 24 hours seems appealing and encouraging to revisit the website again. However, on their Facebook page, customers were asking for the option of favourite lists so they can save their items for longer. It seems to be important for customers not to be rushed into buying and to be able to get time to think. It is also the idea of giving the customers motivation to go back on the website instead of closing the site and never coming back,.
20	4:47.4 - 4:58.4	She chose her size and a colour and click add to basket... moved the mouse pointer to open the basket and show how the product is displayed in it	So I would just kind of do that.. it comes up there and it shows you all these things	Placing items in the bag does not suggest a definite buying decision

21 4 8	4:58.-5:41.	Clicked on the 'home' icon and went again from the new in and scrolled down to view two tabs 'best sellers' and 'recently viewed'	Some websites as well shows you.. I don't know if.. I can't remember Boohoo do it… they show what you'd recently viewed (yeah they do) and what their best sellers are.. so it's kinda nice to look at what's been selling the best cause we are all influenced by what other people are buying	The participant raised the importance of the recently viewed and best sellers sections. These sections seem to increase the temptation to buy products and keep customers inspired

Video 18

	Time span	Content.	Speaker	Analytical Notes.
1	0:01.8 - 0:26.6	Starting at ASOS and logging in to personal account.		Personal account allows the participant a more customised experience and the ability to save items for later.
2	0:26.6 - 0:34.3		So, first if I went on ASOS then I tend to look at the saved items, cause these are the saved ones and then it helps you if they go down in price.	
3	0:33.9 - 0:42.3	She moves straight to Women, New in clothing section and choose to view all items.		The majority of the participants prefer to view all or the maximum number of items on one page.
4	0:42.3 - 1:37.9	Moving down the page and when she finds an item she right-click and open it in a new tab and continue browsing items.		
5	1:37.9 - 2:33.6	At the bottom of the page, she quickly scrolls up and goes to Women, New in shoes and Accs. Then she follows the exact same steps.	So, usually once I looked through the new items, I just go on the ones on the open tabs	
6	2:33.6 - 2:37.	There are five new tabs (so five products to look at), Looking at the images of the first item 3 images then	and take a closer look	

5	she decided that she does not want this item and closed the first tab after 4 seconds only!		
7	2:37.5 - 2:47.0	Looking at the second item. This is a T-shirt, after looking at the three images of the product, the participant decided to check the size. She chose her size and saved the item for later on.	I then check the size and you can save it for later on so...	
8	2:46.9 - 3:08.6	Checking the third item, a blazer. Looking at all the images and then choosing to view a zoom in for the images. She looks at all the details and decides to play a catwalk video.	Here you go, hehehehe (loud music). I also hate it when they have sound on the videos; It's quite annoying!	Music on catwalk videos is often too loud that it annoys the customers.
9	3:08.6 - 3:12.7	She chose her size and preferred colour and saved the item in her list.		
10	3:12.7 - 3:18.6	Checking the images of the accessory product (pack of stack bangles) and saving the item for later.		
11	3:18.6 - 3:22.7	Checking the images of the last product (shoes) she quickly decides she does not like it and close the tab.	Whispering (I don't like this one so)	

12	3:22.7 - 3:42.6	After checking all the new items she decided to go back again and click on Women, up to 70% discount. on the discount page she chooses the new in and view all items and start browsing.	
13	3:42.6 - 4:03.4	She goes up again and decrease the upper price limit and start looking again.	As these are sales items the chances of them going down are minimal therefore the participant decides to restrict the maximum price range unlike the case of new items where she was happy to save the items knowing that they will go down later on.
14	4:03.4 - 4:22.5	Spotting an item and right-click to open in a new tab and continue looking down the page.	The importance of the image chosen as the main image that goes in the grid of all items is very important as it's the main gate for the participant to decides to look at a particular product or not.
15	4:22.5 - 4:46.1	Moving to the discounted page, new in: Shoes and Accs and following the same routine.	
16	4:46.1 - 4:53.9	Viewing the images of the first item, then she decides to play a catwalk video. Once the model walks closer to the camera, the dress is clearer and the participant decides that she does not want it.	Apparently catwalk videos seem to be important to the participant but it seems that they put her off more than encouraging her to buy.
17	4:53.	Looking at the final item (shoes) and	

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	9 4:58. 1	-	after viewing the images she chooses her size and save the item.		
18	4:58. 1 5:18. 5	-	Checking her saved items. She decides to delete a blazer that was the most expensive item in her list.	So, once I can go through all those ones, I just tend to go and see what ones I've saved. I usually end up changing my mind about something (laughing). Usually the ones that are too expensive. Prompt: (and do you usually buy from the saved list?) Aha, yeah! Most the time yeah.	Although she deleted the most expensive product, it's interesting to note that this is the second product that she viewed on a catwalk video.
19	5:18. 4 5:29. 1	-	On the saved items list. Sign out.	See if it's still on. Because it saves it for I think it's 30 days. So if it's during there if I still quite like it so I then tend to just buy it (hehehe) and usually you get free delivery and return so it's quite useful	

Video 23

	Times pan	Content.	Speaker	Analytical Notes
1	0:00.0 - 0:26.1	Starting with Boohoo.		
2	0:26.1 - 0:33.3	Going directly to the clearance section.		Most participants chose to look at the new in first, but this participant went straight on the clearance section. This reflects the important of the price range to the participant or maybe the willingness to get a bargain because the participant also sorted clearance items on a low to high price basis
3	0:33.3 - 0:43.1	Changing the sort by to 'price: low to high', and choosing the maximum number of product displayed.		
4	0:43.1 - 0:56.9	Using the filter search facility to narrow selection to dresses only.	I'd like to see the dresses	
5	0:56.9 - 1:17.1	Moving down the page (one way no up and down).		
6	1:17.1 - 1:25.1	Choosing the first product (a dress).		
7	1:25.1 - 1:39.7	Using image zooming and viewing the product from different angles.		
8	1:39.7 - 2:03.9	Clicking to watch a catwalk video.		

9	2:03.9 - 2:10.0	The video is not playing, the participant tried to click a few times but no luck.	Prompt: So let's assume it works! yeah OK hehehe WOW	Although the video didn't work that didn't stop her interest in the product and this is the crucial role of product images in reflecting the product beautifully. Catwalk videos seem to be a nice extra for the participant because she wanted to view it but although it didn't work that didn't stop her deciding to place the item in the basket.
10	2:10.0 - 2:11.0	Before choosing product size, she chooses the size guide first.	Let's see the sizes	
11	2:11.0 - 2:55.0	Looking over the size guide. The size guide consists of three tables of size measurements, international size equivalents, etc. and on the right hand side of the page there's a visual sizing guide, a shadow model image with size instructions on it.	That's OK, 10. Prompt: what do you usually look at for the sizes? Well, I see like the UK size over here… it's the same.. It's not exactly the same. I mean waist can be a little bit more but as it's size 10, I am OK with the overall over here	
12	2:54.9 - 3:03.4	Moving backward to the product page, pointing to price and quickly moving down the page to read customer reviews.	So that's for the size.. Price is good, let's see the reviews	
13	3:03.4 - 3:40.1	Skimming through customer reviews... (some reviews are negative with one star ratings). Moving further down and again some good reviews.	Oh... someone is not happy with it.. Ohhh... Mmmmm, that's OK! (accepting the product)	Customer reviews in general suggesting that the dress is of poor quality and cheap materials as the sequins fall off the dress very easily. Exposure to negative reviews made the participant a little disappointed, however, once she started analysing the reviews she realised that she is happy to trade-off quality with low prices hence this didn't bother her and she decided to add it to the basket in the end
14	3:40.1 - 3:56.9	Looking back at the product images (side, back, front and on a model front) shots.	I mean yeah I know the quality might not be good but it's the same for these type of dresses they might like those (what do you	

			call it?) (Sequin) might come off.. But, it's actually stunning I think so!
15	3:56.8 - 4:34.7	Clicked 'add to basket' and waved over delivery info (but as she is familiar with it, she did not read the details).	Let's just add it to the basket… well, I know the delivery information.. I know them all, I've bought from this site before.