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EXPLORATION THE MEANING OF "QUALITY" IN SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF SHOPPING

ISTRAŽIVANJE ZNAČENJA "KVALITETE" U SUBJEKTIVNOM ISKUSTVU KUPOVANJA

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ABSTRACT

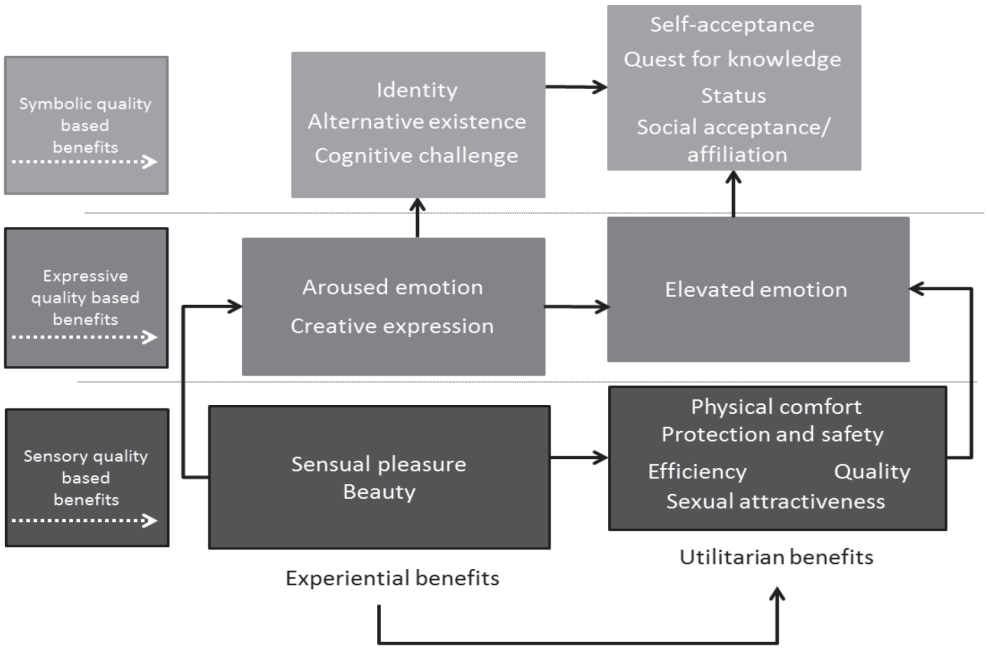
The present study focuses on exploring latent factors of quality perception in shopping experience. It is a very "soft" topic and hard to measure field with quantitative tools. Various and distinct parts of shopping experience are frequently studied, like consumer satisfaction in shopping places, preferences (or brand preferences), usability and environmental factors of the rental places, but in this article we want to examine a holistic aspect of sensory, symbolic and expressive quality based benefits in perceived shopping experience. Q-methodology is used to data collection and the sample is analysed with a modified factor analysis, because this method provides researchers a systematic and rigorously quantitative tool for examining human subjectivity.

Key words: Q-methodology, shopping experience, perception, sensory quality based benefits, symbolic quality based benefits, expressive quality based benefits.

1. INTRODUCTION

Before 1970s "consumption experience" researches were grounded in the information-processing approach.[1] That regarded the consumer to be a logical thinker, who aimed to purchase the best product from available product choices. After Hirschmann and Holbrook[2] presented a new model for understanding consumer's way of thinking and decisions. Fiore and Ogle[3] presented a similar modell of Holbrook. Fiore and Ogle's typology is adapted for this paper, their shopping experience model based on a value derived approache.

Figure 1. Typology of value derived from shopping experience



Source: Made by author.

[1] James R. Bettman, "An information processing theory of consumer choice" Regarding, MA, Addison-Weseley 1979.

[2] Elizabeth C. Hirschman and Morris B. Holbrook, "Hedonic consumption: Emerging concepts, methods propositions", Journal of Marketing, No. 46, 1982, p. 92-101.

[3] Ann Marie Fiore, and Jennifer Paff Ogle, "Facilitating the integration of textiles and clothing subject matter by students. Part I: Dimension of model and taxonomy." Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2000, p. 31-45.

(Figure 1.) This value derived model distinguish experimental and utilitarian benefits in subjective shopping experience, and these benefits based on 3 different level. These are: sensory quality, expressive quality and symbolic quality based benefits.

2. Q-METHODOLOGY

The theoretical basis of the present work is the concept of Q-methodology. Q-methodology is primarily an exploratory technique, it cannot prove hypotheses. However, it brings a sense of coherence to research questions that have many, potentially complex and social contested answers.[4]

2.1. Historical background

The idea behind the development of this methodology was to inquire into the subjectivity of human mind. The examples of such subjectivity are limitless and include aesthetic judgment, appreciation of art, preferences for music, families' experiences after tragic events, and attitudes towards political groups. These were difficult, if not impossible, areas that could not be measured and reported scientifically by the conventional quantitative methods available at 30's. Q-methodology emerged as a direct result of that deficiency. In the 1970s and 1980s advanced computer programs were developed to perform statistical analysis of data derived by the Q methods. Authors have built up a model that deals with question of environmental awareness and individual attitude. Nowadays, Q-sorting has several benefits:[5]

- Q-sort offers a means for an in-depth study of small sample populations;
- It can help with exploratory research;
- A well-developed theoretical literature guides and supports its usage;
- It captures subjectivity in operation through a person's self-reference;
- Participants need not be randomly selected;
- It may be administered over Internet;
- Its analysis techniques help protect respondent self-reference from researcher influence.

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[4] Simon Watts and Paul Stenner, "Doing Q methodology: Theory, method and interpretation", Qualitative Research in Psychology, No. 2, 2005, p. 67-91.

[5] Domic M. Thomas and Richard T. Watson, "Q-Sorting and MIS Research: A Primer," Communications of the Association for Information Systems, No, 8, 2002, p. 141-156.

Q methodology "combines the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research traditions"[6] and in other respects provides a bridge between the two.[7] As such, subjectivity is always anchored in self-reference, that is a person's internal frame of reference, and, Q studies from conception to completion adhere to the methodological axiom that subjectivity is always self-referent.[8]

2.2. Statistical background

Statistical Analysis typically involves the sequential application of three sets of statistical procedures to the Q-sort data – correlation, factor analysis and the computation of factor scores.[9] Factor analysis is a statistical method of data reduction used to identify a small number of latent constructs (factors) that explain underlying, unobservable relationships among a large number of interrelated variables. The main applications of factor analytic techniques are: (1) to reduce the number of variables and (2) to detect structure in the relationships between variables, that is to classify variables. Therefore, factor analysis is applied as a data reduction or structure detection method. Firstly, Q-methodology inverts the direction of factor extraction and correlates the persons over a set of variables instead of the variables over a set of persons. Secondly – and this distinction is much more important than the mere difference in statistical procedure – Q-methodology follows a completely different approach to scientific reasoning. This becomes especially clear when looking at the way the isolated factors – which in the case of Q-methodology unite and represent persons, or, more precisely, their Q-Sorts – are rotated. While conventional factor analysis is used in scale development and tries to group items or variables, Q method tries to group subjects. Therefore, people of the same group or having the same factor will have a similar pattern of chosen statements. Q method is participant-led and seeks to understand the subjective expressions and viewpoints of participants.[10]

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[6] Dennis, K. E. and Andre Paul Goldberg, "Weight control self-efficacy types and transitions affect weight-loss outcomes in obese women", Addictive Behaviors, No. 21, 1996, 103-116..

[7] Sell, D. K. and Steven R. Brown, "Q methodology as a bridge between qualitative and quantitative research: Application to the analysis of attitude change in foreign study program participants", In J.L. Vacca & H.A. Johnson (Eds.), Qualitative research in education (Graduate School of Education Monograph Series) (pp. 79-87). Kent, OH: Kent State University, Bureau of Educational Research and Service, 1984.

[8] Bruce F. McKeown and Dan B. Thomas, *Q methodology*, Sullivan, J. L. & Niemi, R. G. (Eds.), *Quantitative applications in the social sciences,* Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1988.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Simon Watts and Paul Stenner, "Doing Q methodology: Theory, method and interpretation", Qualitative Research in Psychology, No. 2, 2005, p. 67-91.

The population, in the conventional research methodological term, refers to the group of people in which the results of the study can be applied. The sample refers to those people on which the study is actually been conducted. Classical test theory assumes that each person has a "true score" (T) that would be obtained if there were no errors in measurement. A person's true score is defined as the expected number-correct score over an infinite number of independent administrations of the test. Unfortunately, test or questionnaires never observe a person's true score, only an observed score, X. It is assumed that observed score = true score plus some error:

$$X=T+E \quad (1)$$

Where:
X: observed test score [-]
T: true test score [-]
E: error [-]

In Q methodology, the population and the sample is not as rigidly defined as in quantitative research. The sample needs not to be randomly drawn from the population. Often times, the persons are chosen for the research because they have special relevance to the topic or hold strong views about the topics of interest. Also the sample size is relatively small and it is not unusual to have one case study in detail. In fact, the subjective distortion (the "error") can be study with Q methodology.

2.3. Steps in Q-methodology

The first reason to adopt the Q methodology in the field of product experience is that it allows the participants to express their subjectivity without confining them to the researcher's categories. A Q sort gives the sorter room to construct a picture of his or her own viewpoint and to interpret each statement in his or her own way. Of course, Q's merits on this count should not be exaggerated, as the researcher's priori assumptions still enter into the construction of the set of statements, the selection of participants, and factor selection and rotation.[11] Q is better able to encompass the full range of ideas that participants may have because the selection of statements is approached as sampling from a universe of possible statements on the topic—as opposed to R method, which typically approaches the selection of statements as designing

[11] Paul Robbins and Robert Krueger, "Beyond bias? The promise and limits of Q-method in human geography", Professional Geographer, Vol. 52, No. 4, 2000, p. 636-648.

measurements of specific hypothesized characteristics.[12] Q methodology is usually carried out in six stages:[13]

1. Researchers identify a particular discourse, which is the subject of exploration, and the relevant population. Research hypothesis as it applies to quantitative research is not necessary in Q methodology. A hypothesis reflects the viewpoint of the researcher and what he/she expects to prove or disprove by the particular research. As Q methodology is based on an individual respondent's viewpoint and not the researchers viewpoint, each of the respondent is taken valid and as a valuable source of information research.
2. The researcher conducts structured interviews or any sources with a sample of the population. A selection of statements comes from these interviews. This set of statements is usually enlarged with additional statements originating from other sources, such as newspaper or expert literature, with the goal of gathering a collection of statements that represent a relevant communication concourse that express a range of perspectives that exist for a particular area of interest. At this stage the researchers typically work with a set of 100–200 statements.
3. The investigator then constructs a Q sample. This refers to a selection of statements that will be shown to respondents, and form the basis for sorting and selection by respondents. The structure of the Q sample reflects a given research question. A typical Q statement set usually includes 30–60 items (stimuli).
4. Selected individuals are asked to evaluate and order statements on a pre-prepared scale, which is pyramid shaped, with placement or scores for each statement from the Q sample ranging from ''Agree with most strongly'' to ''Disagree with most strongly.'' Q studies commonly use 9 or 13-point scales. Usually a smaller number of respondents is adequate; more important than the size of the sample is the structure.
5. The researcher statistically analyzes the data, based on Q sorting by respondents, in order to reveal patterns across the participants. Q methodology is based on person-by-person correlation and factor analysis process. The aim of the analysis is to identify a few

[12] Thomas, D. and Baas, L., The issue of generalization in Q Methodology, "Reliable schematics" revisited, Operant Subjectivity, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1992, p. 18-36.
[13] John Barry and Proops, 'Seeking Sustainability Discourses with Q Methodology, Ecological Economics, No. 28, 1999, p. 337-345.

"typical" Q sorts that point out common attributes of several individual Q sorts.

6. Typical Q sorts are interpreted to uncover the content of shared views (i.e., discourses) with regard to the theoretical framework of the given study. Since the typical Q sort comprises several actors' views, identified discourses are not representations of any particular individuals. They rather stand for the "bestestimate", "essential," or "ideal type" account of a view that is collectively shared within each group of actors.

3. OBECTIVE AND RESEARCH METHOD

Purchasing goods is subjective and situation-dependent experience for every individual, therefore the ideal methodology to be applied for the examination of shopping experience was one that maintained as much of this subjectivity as possible. Unlike traditional questionnaire surveys or quantitative and qualitative research methods based on representative samples, the Q methodology is based on a small sample, but enables quantitative examinations with keeping the individual subjectivity.

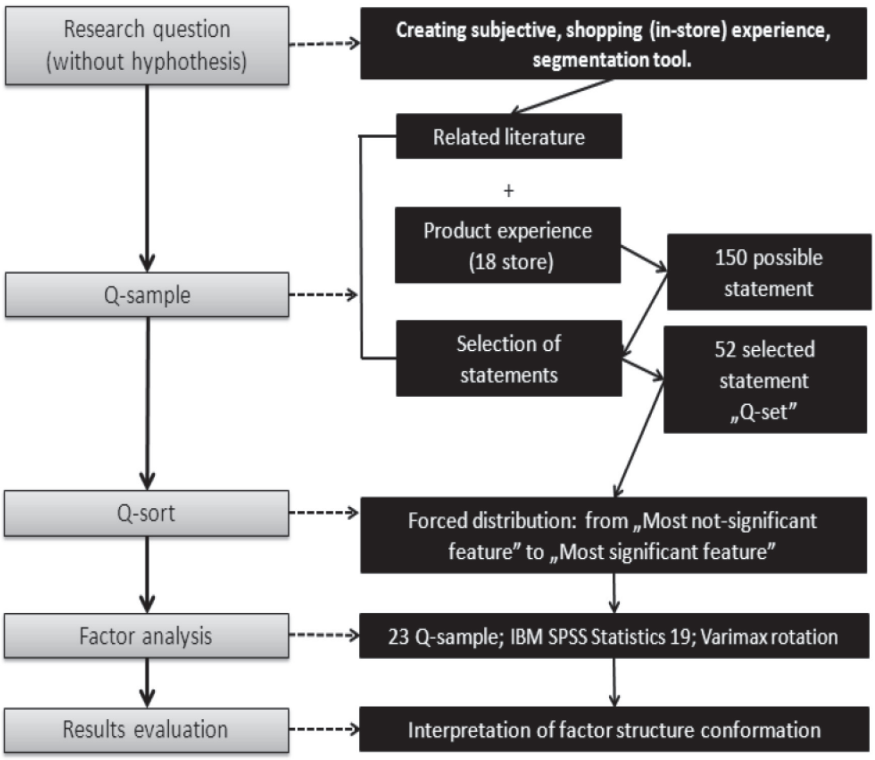
After collecting the relevant literature on the subject, we formulated own methodology related to the experience of shopping and with the help of it we performed the analyses on samples prepared by one „quick segmentation process."[14]The most sensitive spot in the development and application of the Q-methodology was the construction and selection of the stimulation material (Q-sample). For this, besides studying the related literature, we also performed an individual/special/extraordinary guerilla-kind of ethnographic field study, to be able to perform measurements with the most practical statements later on. As a result of this, presented the outcome of 294 Q-sample.

For the calculations we established separate subsamples based on the theory of Limbic Type® model and then divided them by gender. The Limbic Type® model created by the Nymphemburg group is based on several thousands of brain research tests and their evaluations. The model published in 2004 was established on the fMRI results of over twenty thousand examined individuals. The model is extremely popular in German-speaking regions, as it is a comprehensive study that showcases how customers actually think and act, at the same time providing knowledge that can easily be applied in the marketing practice. The Limbic Type® model is only one

[14] Emma Lógó and Balazs Peter Hámornik, *Develop a market segmentation tool, based on consumer behavior and motivation,* 2014.

from a line of customer behaviour models, but its main strength is that it is not based on questionnaires but on brain research data obtained at the location of customer decision.

Figure 2. Steps in our research method



Source: Made by author.

Based on Häusel (2008) – in a slightly simplified form – it was accepted that besides vital necessities there are three more emotional systems of great extent which determine our everyday lives and which are relevant from the point of view of customer behaviour. This so-called "Big 3" that is continuously at work in our mind and psyche is the following:

- The balance system is based on the customer's desire for safety.
- The **stimulant** system is based on the customer's desire for experiences, novelties and individuality.
- The **dominance** system is based on the customer's desire for power, status, superiority and autonomy, accordingly.

Based on these three emotional systems[15] the notion of the so-called Limbic Map® was introduced that has already been proven to be well-applicable in approaching the experiences connected to the usage of different products, and, on its basis, the deeper understanding of customer decisions and sometimes even for making predictions about them. The background for its name is that there are of our brain from the brain-stem to the cerebrum that is divided into many subcenters is the so-called limbic system that is primarily responsible for all of our emotional reactions. The limbic map connects the motivational and emotional systems with the values, so it is considered a useful tool in providing a clearer overview of purchase decisions of customers and consumers.

4. RESULTS EVALUATION

Our results shows that percived quality or some synonyms are appeared is shoppers most and least prefered in-store experiences.

Table 1. Shopping experience factors derived from Q-methodology

	Male		Female	
	The most preferd in-store experience	The least preferd in-store experience	The most preferd in-store experience	The least preferd in-store experience
Balanced	„Demanding and customer oriented"	„Undemanding and frustrating" „Sluggish but correct" „ Depressing extraneous " „Unfriendly Scamming"	„Positive group experience " „ Reliable " „Multicolored" „ Available luxury"	„ Unfriendly discount" „ Inelegant" „Unpleasant physical evidences"
Stimulatio	„Quality oriented"	„Scamming" „Elegant but depressing" „Too cheap, undemanding"	„Reliable group experience "	„Crovded depressing" „Without positive feelings"
Dominant	„Elegant fashionable"	„RUN!" „Zippy Scamming " „Exclusive but jarring"	„ Reliable and kind"	„ Bad physical evidences " „Tesco" „Low status" „Unfriendly"

Source: Made by author.

[15] Hans Georg Häusel and F.Brain, View: Warum Kunden kaufen, Haufe Mediengruppe Rudolf Haufe Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, Niederlassung Planegg/München, 2008.

The most significant percived quality factor reflects in the group of Stimulation "Seeking" Male participants.

They had only one significant so-called Quality oriented factor, because they most prefered for high quality store environment with high percived quality products, with the experience of expert staff and services.

Sažetak:

ISTRAŽIVANJE ZNAČENJA "KVALITETE"
U SUBJEKTIVNOM ISKUSTVU KUPOVANJA

Ovaj rad usmjeren je na istraživanje skrivenih faktora percepcije kvalitete u iskustvu kupovanja. To je veoma „kratkotrajna" tema i teško mjerljiva kvantitativnim alatima. Različiti i posebni dijelovi iskustva kupovanja stalno se izučavaju, kao zadovoljstvo kupca na mjestu kupovanja, prioriteti (ili brend prirориteti), iskoristivost i faktori okruženja iznajmljenog mjesta, ali u ovom radu želimo ispitati cjeloviti aspekt osjetila, simboliku i izraženu kvalitetu koja se temelji na koristima i spoznajnom iskustvu kupovanja. Q-metodologija se koristi za prikupljanje podataka i uzorka analize primjenom modificirane faktorske analize, budući ta metoda pruža istraživačima sustavan i precizan kvantitativni alat za istraživanje ljudske subjktivnosti.

Ključne riječi: Q-metodologija, iskustvo kupovanja, percepicija, koristi koje se temelje na osjetilima kvalitete, koristi koje se temelje na simbolici kvalitete, koristi koje se temelje na izražavanju.

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