

Tailoring a Fashionable Self: Sartorial Practices in an Emerging Market Context

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ABSTRACT

This study consists in a quantitative analysis of fashion preferences, examining various factors influencing clothing personalization. The first part of the paper sets out the theoretical framework, discussing the historical relationship between the emergence of modernity and the configuration of fashion industry. The study proceeds with detailing the regional context where the empirical research is grounded, paying particular attention to the development and current status of the region's clothing industry. After presenting the data and the methodology, the paper discusses the empirical findings followed by their interpretation. Based on the results we argue that the level of education, marital status, shopping frequency, and the importance of clothing quality are the most important predictors in fashioning individuals' sartorial choices as well as their preference for clothing personalization.

Introduction

Sociology of fashion, to which this study belongs, has not always been a fashionable topic in sociological thought. With the noticeable exception of Georg Simmel (1950, 1957 [1904]), whose intellectual affinity for eccentric topics such as flirtation, coquetry and eroticism directed his attention towards the world of fashion, few other classical sociologists have shown a

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keen interest in the study of fashion (Duduciuc 2012). Fashion studies have long been the unjust victim of 'academic devaluation' (Kawamura 2011, 11). Despite the pervasiveness of fashion in social life - reaching far beyond clothing styles and dress codes to include phenomena as ranging from manners, culinary tastes, and leisure activities to political ideologies, currents of thought, and even scientific theories - fashion has generally been considered as an unworthy topic of serious sociological research. Going against the grain of this tradition, this study will take fashion at face value, as a serious subject matter for sociological reflection. In this study, we look at how impersonal forces of standardization in the context of an emerging market such as Romania interact with personal strivings towards sartorial distinctions in shaping individuals' clothing preferences. Along the way, we also aim to challenge this intellectual legacy of academic devaluation.

As a research domain, sociology of fashion articulates itself at the crossroad between sociology of culture and economic sociology. Trying to shed light on the dialectic of standardization and personalization in clothing preferences, our study aims, on the one hand, at unravelling the interplay between economic forces of standardization residing in the industrial mode of production and, on the other hand, at the individuals' strives to fashion their selves by personalizing their clothing. The paper will first set the theoretical frame of reference and provide the historical context for understanding the emergence of a modern 'fashionable society'. After setting up the conceptual framework, we will proceed by presenting the data and the methodological approach underpinning the study. The paper offers a quantitative approach of clothing preferences based on a survey conducted with the use of a questionnaire. The remainder of the paper will consist in presenting the two logistic regression models built to determine the factors influencing the preferences for personalized clothing. The implications of our findings in relation to the theoretical framework are discussed in the concluding section of the paper.

Discussing the challenges of fashion studies, Yuniya Kawamura (2011) has made the point that research on fashion is encumbered by a semantic

confusion between two different understandings: ‘fashion as change’, which highlights the dynamic quality of various phenomena of undergoing a sequential transformation in reaction to ecological conditions (e.g., artistic tastes or music preferences), and ‘fashion as dress’ respectively, which focuses attention on the changing patterns of clothing behaviours and preferences. Avoiding the pitfalls of this semantic trap set up by the inherent imprecisions of vernacular language, this study makes it clear from the very outset that it uses ‘fashion’ in the second sense mentioned by Kawamura (2011), i.e., fashion as clothing.

Fashion and the Three Paradoxes of Modernity

It has become a sort of a cliché in sociological circles to assert the impact of the industrial revolution in shaping modern society. However, the modernization thesis expressed by this disciplinary cliché is supported not only by a wide theoretical consensus within the scholarly community of sociologists but also by strong empirical facts. Within the boundaries of this consensus, what differ are the interpretations concerning the specific path undertaken by the modernizing process as well as the factors that brought about the change in the first place. Enriching Karl Marx’s materialist approach with Max Weber’s cultural critique, it can be safely argued that modernity arose in Western history as a societal configuration driven by an intricate matrix of factors combining an economic mode of production (capitalism) and a specific belief-system (protestant ethos) (Marx 1992; Weber 2005). Whereas Weber emphasized instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) and calculability as the key factors underpinning modernization with its ‘disenchantment of the world’ through rationalization, other theorists have highlighted complementary factors.

Weber’s contemporary, Frederick W. Taylor, pinpointed *standardization* as the essence of modern production. In his pioneering monograph on *The Principles of Scientific Management*, Taylor (1911) indicated the strive for standardization as one of the main driving forces propelling

economy and society in the dawn of modernity. Thoroughly applied throughout the economic cycle of mass production, distribution, and consumption, the principles of scientific management came to be translated in society at large into routinized patterns of interaction and standardized social activities.

Textile industry certainly made no exception. It provided yet another classical example of using standardization as a means of organizing mass cloth production as well as a powerful means of structuring the market (Weber 2005). The modern revolution brought about by the consequences of industrialization that changed the face of Western societies at the brink of the 19th century set in motion a sequential revolution in fashion. In fact, textile manufacture and cloth trade were at the heart of the industrial revolution, spinning the wheels of commerce throughout Western and Central Europe (Braudel 1992; Chapman 1972). Fashion's intense relationship with modernity can be read in the key of three major paradoxes in whose light intriguing insights into the nature of modern fashion could be made.

The first paradox consists in the essential tension lying at the very centre of modern fashion between *standardization* and *diversification*. As already mentioned, industrial revolution was driven by a production imperative urging for increased standardization. The need for standardization became a technical prerequisite of mass production of goods delivered on a mass market. However, this trend towards ever-increased standardization did not prevent a wide diversification of mass-produced products to occur at an unprecedented pace. A testimony for the bewildering proliferation of textile patterns during the industrial revolution is The Board of Trade Design Register. Kept at The National Archive in London, the Design Register was opened in 1839 for protecting the copyright and patents of various designers of Victorian England. Its textile register containing samples cut straight from the actual bulks of cloth reveals the multitude and intricacy of the designs used in the textile industry (Ghosts in the Machine 2010).

A related paradoxical feature of modern fashion in mass societies lies in the uneasy relationship between a pressure for *conformity* and a just as powerful thrust for continual *innovation*. On the one hand, modernity has brought about a 'revolt of the masses', which came with the establishment of a dictatorship of social conformity. As José Ortega y Gasset (1957, 18) poignantly pointed out with reference to the American society, 'to be different is to be indecent'. Then, voicing out his elitist attitudes, he goes on scourging the democratic thrust of mass societies which he accuses of having have crushed under the burden of mass conformity 'everything that is different, everything that is excellent, individual, qualified and select' (Gasset 1957, 18). However, this social conformity is constantly refashioned by another constitutive principle of modernity, i.e., the continual search for innovation which can lead to a tyranny of novelty. It is what Zygmunt Bauman (2000) labelled as 'newism' by which modernity could be described as a never-ending quest for novel forms, experiences, and ideas. Applied to the clothing industry, this interplay between the forces of innovation and the pressures to conformity translated into the development of *serial fashions*, as a temporary consensus on what to wear is succeeded by another sartorial consensus which, just as the previous one, is doomed to be replaced by the following trend.

A third tension inherent in the market fashion developed in mass societies is the paradox between *democratization* and *stratification*. In the pre-industrial Europe, a sartorial regime had prevailed that imposed strict a dress code acting as a semiotic system for indicating the social standing of each person based on his or her clothing. Sumptuary laws were enacted forbidding lower classes of wearing the clothing of the nobles and thus to sartorially encroach upon their privileged status (Hunt 1996). Modernity and industrial revolution all but flouted this clothing regime designed to keep the members of the unprivileged classes to their station socially designated by birth. With the meritocratic shift from status ascription to status attainment (Parsons 1951, 180-200), fashion and clothing underwent a consequent democratization. The democratization of clothing is best

symbolized in the three piece men's suit, which, by early twentieth century, has become so popular in all of society's strata that it managed to blur the lines between the social classes. However, within this sartorial democratic regime, a more discrete stratification emerged with the appearance of fashion houses along with the advent of the 'cult of the designer' (Etcoff 2000, 220). Simultaneously, fashion industry divided into a mass oriented clothing production model of standardized wearables – *prêt-à-porter* – and an avant-gardist model of customized items – *haute couture*. This split along the lines of the elite-mass demarcation re-enacted the struggle for sartorial distinction of the upper classes who could afford to buy *haute couture* designer clothes, but who were now deprived in a democratic setting of their juridical means of protection (i.e., sumptuary laws). One explanation for the fast pace of the fashion change in modern societies consists exactly in this democratization of sartorial practices: deprived of their repressive legal means of ensuring their distinction, the upper classes were now struggling to keep their distance from the imitative lower classes which were now always emulate their clothing behaviour by constantly and rapidly changing the fashion. Whenever a critical mass was forming that threatened the distinction of the wealthy classes, fashion designers who had them as their main clientele turned the fashion in another direction (for the dynamics of social imitation, see Tarde 1899; for the 'trickle-down' theory of fashion's diffusion across class lines, see Simmel 1957, 545; for the power struggle to maintain fashion boundaries along class lines, see Bourdieu's theory of social distinction – Bourdieu 1986). This cyclical pattern of renewal kept an upper hand in terms of sartorial distinction in favour of the privileged classes. Fashion is thus a game of 'catch me if you can' played between the haves and the have nots. The competition between classes is reproduced at the scale of each and every class, within which individuals engage in the same struggle for sartorial distinction against his or her class peers.

Further enhancing this trend, contemporary postmodern society accentuated the blurring of class lines, which fuelled what we have already termed as the *struggle for sartorial distinction*. The proliferation of clothing

brands along with the flood of the market with fake designer clothes (which are ever difficult to discern from their authentic counterparts) further encourage people to distinguish themselves by tailoring a particular clothing style. A recent sociological analysis of fashion and clothes as expressions of material culture has pointed out to the bewildering diversification of tastes and preferences in current postmodern society. 'As a result of the enormous variety of mediated styles and forms of culture in contemporary society', argue Diana Crane and Laura Bovone (2006, 323), 'post-subcultures' emerge that 'are more diffuse and differentiated in their tastes' than ever before. The technological advancement and information technologies available today answer nowadays to the different tastes and aesthetic stances of consumers, merging in a mass customization trend. New developments such as Adidas Mi Innovation Centres, in which the consumer is increasingly becoming a co-creator, suggest that clothing industry is following the digital trends, where the Web 2.0 has all but erased the dividing line between data producers and data consumers. As consumers are increasingly co-opted into producing fully customized wearables, the clothing industry is starting to shift towards what could be labelled as Fashion 2.0.

Throughout the economy, from the production lines through the service sector and to the marketing industry, the transition from modernity to postmodernity has brought about a change from mass (standardized) production to mass customization. More recently, this shift was further accentuated, as it moved into the direction of 'mass personalization' (Kumar 2008). The latter is a 'limiting case of mass customization' (Kumar 2008, 536), since it pursues the dual aim of satisfying the economic criteria of affordability and mass-production efficiency in the same time as it manages to adapt the products with respect to the targeted segment of the market.

Conceptual Framework: Patterns of Personalization

After the modern revolution transformed the social world, change has become a dynamic principle of contemporary society. Not a single

dimension of social reality, including its political, economic, and cultural aspects, is immune to this pervasive principle of continual change inaugurated by modernity. With the emergence of consumer society in the second half of the 20th century, consumption behaviours and preferences have become the prime subjects of this process (Baudrillard 1998). After it shaped the expectations of its customers so as to anticipate rapid changes in the world of fashion, the clothing industry is at pains in trying to cope with the fluctuating desires of their clients. This is the result of an intensified global competition on the profile market which necessitates a special attention to the potential clients' needs and preferences. At the same time this process is influenced by the emergence of new types of postmodern consumers who are harder to satisfy by conventional standards. In contrast to their modern counterparts who were primarily interested in the 'material' aspects of life (see Inglehart 1977) and thus of clothing, postmodern consumers have a 'post-material' concern with an entire series of new details regarding also the apparel industry. For the latter category of consumers, it is not only the cloth quality or the brand's image that matter, but these are superseded by a preoccupation with ethical and ecological concerns, such as sustainable production of raw materials, fair trade, or avoiding labour exploitation and animal harming. All these aspects do not remain inconsequential. They produce important effects in both consumers and producers' mind-set: for the former, they modify the way people think about their clothes, while for the latter, they transform how the industry thinks and markets its products.

Taking stock of the entire collection of articles published in the *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* between 1993 and 2012, Jung E. Ha-Brookshire and Jana Hawley (2014) have found the articles addressing humans' social needs and wants as having the highest average annual percentage. Bio-psychological needs and wants totalled an annual average of 43.1, while the socio-cultural summed the rest of 56.9 percent of the articles (Ha-Brookshire and Hawley 2014, 255). Social and cultural needs and wants are extensively researched because the clothes do not just have functional

value and fulfil pragmatic purposes of dressing the body, but, more importantly, as we have already mentioned in the previous section, are status markers as they communicate the station of their wearer in the stratified social structure. They also convey various cultural meanings and are loaded with symbolic values that tell something important about their possessor. Moreover, as media of symbolic communication, clothes can be conceived as sartorial devices through which the wearer tries to speak something important about himself/herself through the clothes he/she wears (Simmel 1957; Baudrillard 1998; Bourdieu 1996).

The questions remain, 'what motivates people to personalize their clothing?' 'What make individuals spend extra money on customizing their wardrobe?' The most plausible answer supported by the literature in sociological studies of fashion and clothing behaviour points out to the need for social distinction. Individuals are psychologically driven and culturally encouraged to engage in a sartorial struggle for social distinction and they resort to clothes and various accessories for asserting both their class membership and their in-group individuality.

After establishing that people are driven to personalize their clothing by both psychology and culture, what still needs to be clarified is the semantics of 'personalization.' As many other notions used in social sciences in general and sociology in particular, the term 'personalization' is a multifaceted concept. From a biological point of view, clothing personalization can be seen as a means of compensating for some physical defects or as a way of advertising some other favourable bodily aspects. Seen from a cultural viewpoint, personalization could be understood as an expression of specific tastes or as a sign of cultural capital. Indeed, 'clothing can be a liberation from cultural constraints,' as Diane Crane and Laura Bovone (2006, 320) argue. Redirecting the analytical angle towards adopting a social point of view, clothing personalization could be seen as a means of communication by which people transmit their real or aspired social status via the garments they wear. Not least, clothing personalization can express political values and ideological commitments. Defying the conventional

dress code embraced by the social majority could be interpreted as a political act of rejection of the status quo (Bovone 2006, 373).

All these considerations point out to the need of a broader framework for addressing the question of clothing personalization. Clothing preferences constitute a privileged lens that offers an intriguing insight into people's lifestyles and their consumption behaviours. As pointed out by Georg Simmel (1957, 543), fashion 'satisfies in no less degree the need of differentiation, the tendency towards dissimilarity, the desire for change and contrast, on the one hand by a constant change of contents [...] on the other hand because fashion differ for different classes.' Even if our data do not allow for making a deep probing into people's motivations behind their preferences for personalizing clothing, our study will take into consideration the aspects discussed above. In the remainder of this paper, economic, social, cultural, as well as demographic factors will be analysed in relation with individuals' preferences towards clothing personalization. At the same time as it addresses these aspects, our study points out some structural factors related to market features that can influence peoples' attitudes towards clothing. For instance, in Romania, the city's dimension measured in number of inhabitants is a strong demographic indicator of market diversity. In general, people residing in small towns have a less diversified area of opportunities for shopping in comparison to their counterparts living in large cities. Moreover, producers and brands, usually present in shopping centres from larger cities, dispose of powerful marketing means for influencing peoples' fashion attitudes and clothing behaviours.

The Regional Context: From Clothing Production to Fashion Consumption

The geographical frame of reference of our study is constituted by Sibiu region. Situated in south-eastern Transylvania, the region forms a cluster of urban and rural settlements all networked around the historical town of Sibiu. Sibiu is a medium size Romanian county with a long tradition in the textile industry. During the communist period the textile industry was one

of the main industries of the city and large factories produced clothes for the national and other former USSR markets. There were well-known local brands in the textile industry, such as 7 Noiembrie (7th of November, later rebranded as Mondex), Drapelul Roșu (Red Flag), Steaua Roșie (Red Star), and Libertatea (Liberty). During the communist period the Romanian clothing market was quite isolated and people's range of options was limited to only a few materials, colours and models. Economic restraints, the scarcity of textile resources, and ideological factors have concurred in creating a specific Socialist style, with minor variations across the Soviet bloc (Bartlett 2010).

However, even during that time of growing economic hardship especially in the late 70s and 80s, increased social control, and constant ideological conformity, young people were at pains to express their sartorial selves against the regime's officially sanctioned Socialist fashion (Bartlett 2010). In the 1980s, a black market of blue-jeans, which were taken as fashion icons symbolizing the Western value of freedom, flourished in urban centres, including Sibiu. Youth forming what came to be known as 'Blue Jeans Generation' (*'generația-n blugi'*) were willing to spend up to half of their monthly salaries in communist factories for wearing a Levi Strauss denim (Roman 2007, 59-78).

This situation changed dramatically after the toppling of the communist regime in the Winter of 1989. The disappearance of political social control and ideological censorship extended over clothing behaviour, combined with the emergence of a liberal market society, opened up a wide variety of possibilities. As local factories were experiencing the difficulties that came with the transition from a planned economy to a market economy – Romanian textile production plummeted by 1999 with 60% (Hanzl and Havlik 2003, 69) –, clothing imports flooded the new shopping ventures, at first limited to small shops. As the market developed, a shopping infrastructure emerged, including, besides these boutiques, malls and several large concept stores. Nowadays, internet shopping completes the customers' possibilities of clothing acquisition. Once the fall of the socialist

regime opened the floodgates for imports, besides the tones of second-hand clothing brought into the country, Romania's market fashion was also pervaded with faked brands (Crăciun 2013). Black markets were still around, but under the new political economy of liberal democracy, the clothing market was now teeming with fake apparel. In this context, authentic brands commercialized in malls and large concept stores were taken as strong indicators of clothing quality.

The globalized flow of capital in the world system ruled out the possibility of economic autarky (Wallerstein 2004). Globalization has not spared the fashion industry, where the international division of labour between sites of production and markets of consumption is one of the most obvious. The outward-processing model of production (OTP – *sistemul lohn*) has become the standard in the clothing industry especially after Romania's 2007 accession to the European Union (Smith *et al.* 2005). Since OPT is based on a geographical division of labour between design and production, the former being done in the high developed countries while the latter is relocated in underdeveloped or developing countries, the room for local creativity in fashion design and consequently the opportunities for personalization are limited.

Data and Methodology

The empirical section of the paper addresses to the women's attitudes towards personalized models of clothing. In our attempt to elucidate which are the main drivers for choosing personalized clothes, we pay attention to economic, social, cultural and demographic characteristics. The analysis is performed using survey data. Purposive sampling was used to select 300 women living in the city of Sibiu and other seven smaller cities located within a 100 km radius from Sibiu. The size of the sample used in the analysis is 281 (12 missing cases and 7 outliers were excluded). The method employed for analysing data is logistic regression. To this end, we have use IBM SPSS Statistics version 21.

Two regression models are built to test what are the factors influencing clothing personalization. Personalization is operationalized as both the preference for unique models of clothing (Model 1) and the willingness to pay more for unique models of clothing (Model 2).

Dependent variables

The preference for unique models of clothing is measured on a scale from 1 to 4 where '1' means 'strongly disagree' and '4' stands for 'strongly agree.' The exact phrasing of the question is 'Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?... I prefer unique models of clothing.' We constructed a dummy variable recoding the answers as follows: the first two categories of answers were merged so as to denote persons who 'do not prefer unique models of clothing' (coded '0'); the other two categories of answers were merged to indicate individuals who 'do prefer unique models of clothing' (coded '1').

The willingness to pay more for unique models of clothing is also measured on a scale ranging from 1 to 4 where '1' represents 'strongly disagree' and '4' stands for 'strongly agree.' The question wording is 'Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?... I am willing to pay more to wear unique models of clothing.' We constructed a dummy variable recoding the answers as follows: the first two categories of answers were collapsed so as to denote persons who 'are not willing to pay more for unique models of clothing' (coded '0'); the remaining two categories of answers were also merged so as to indicate respondents who 'are willing to pay more for unique models of clothing' (coded '1').

Independent variables

The attitudes towards the quality of the clothes are measured with two indicators. The first one is an additive index combining two different features that reveal the quality of apparels: (1) quality of the material used to produce clothing articles, and (2) quality of the tailoring of the clothing

items ($r=0.612$). The exact phrasing of the question is ‘When buying clothes how important is: ... (q7.1) the quality of the fabric ... (q7.2) the build quality.’ The answers are measured on a scale with values ranging from 1 to 4 where ‘1’ means ‘very little importance’ and ‘4’ indicates ‘very much importance.’ In our analysis the scale ranges from 2 to 8. Thus, a higher value indicates a stronger emphasis on the quality of the clothes. The second one is a proxy: we considered (following the arguments presented above) attitudes towards brands as an indicator pointing to the quality of the clothes. These attitudes are measured on a scale from 1 to 4 where ‘1’ means ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘4’ represents ‘strongly agree.’ The exact question is ‘Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?... The brand is very important for me.’

Consumption behaviours are measured with three different items. The first refers to the frequency of buying clothes, the second to the online shopping habits and the third to the possibility of employing the services of a tailor. The frequency of buying clothes is measured on a scale from 1 to 3 where ‘1’ means ‘quarterly,’ ‘2’ represents ‘monthly’ and ‘3’ indicates ‘two or three times a month.’ The precise phrasing of the question is ‘How often do you buy clothes?’ Following the same procedure as before, we constructed a dummy variable by recoding the answers as follows: the first two categories of answers were merged so as to denote respondents who ‘buy clothes monthly or quarterly’ (coded ‘0’); the third answer was recoded as ‘at least two times a month’ (coded ‘1’). The online shopping habits are measured with a dummy variable where ‘1’ denotes that the respondent is usually purchasing clothes online and ‘0’ that the respondent is usually buying clothes in-stores. The possibility of engaging the services of a tailor is measured with the question: ‘Have you ever employed the services of a tailor?’, where ‘1’ means ‘yes,’ and ‘0’ indicates ‘no.’

We also included in the analysis the following control variables: the age of the respondent, the level of education (measured with a proxy for the number of years of schools), the employment status (where ‘1’ denotes an employed person and ‘0’ all the other possible statuses) the marital status

(where '1' denotes a married person and '0' all the other possible statuses) as well as the type of urban residence (where '1' denotes a city over 150,000 inhabitants and '0' all the other cities). The models do not include gender as predictor because, as we already mentioned, the sample consists of female respondents.

Results

The results are presented in Table 1 (Model 1) and Table 2 (Model 2). The relation of both dependent variables (the preference for unique models of clothing – Model 1 – and the willingness to pay more for unique models of clothing – Model 2) with the set of predictors is supported by the results of the analysis. However, considering the sample is not probabilistic, the results should be read with caution. An accurate reading of the significance levels in both models is: if the sample were representative, then the results obtained could be extended for the whole population of women with a probability of 'p.'

The results presented in Table 1 (Model 1) indicate that the main variable in terms of its predictive value turns out to be the importance ascribed to the brand. It is followed by the online shopping behaviour, quality of the clothes (fabric and build), the frequency of buying clothing and employing the services of a tailor.

Table 1. Logistic regression, dependent variable: prefers unique models of clothing (N=281)

Independent variables	Dependent variable	Prefers unique models of clothing		
		B	Wald	Exp(B)
Constant		-10.028***		
Age		.006	.129	1.006
Number of years of school (8 to 22)		.156*	3.932	1.169
Employed (1=yes)		-.312	.634	.732
Married (1=yes)		-.861*	4.757	.423
City (1=150.000+ inhabitants)		-.298	.725	.742
Average monthly sum spent on clothes (self-reported)		.001	1.839	1.001
Employed tailoring services at least once (1=yes)		1.040**	9.496	2.828
Buying clothes at least twice a month (1=yes)		1.303**	10.190	3.681
Online clothing shopper (1=yes)		-1.510***	12.115	.221
The brand is important (1 to 4, ascendant)		1.336***	24.234	3.803
Fabric and build quality (2 to 8, ascendant)		.567***	11.579	1.763
Cox and Snell R Square			0.347	
Nagelkerke R Square			0.468	
Omnibus test (model)		$\chi^2=119.753$; df=11; p=0.000		
Hosmer & Lemeshow Test		$\chi^2=5.950$; df=8; p=0.653		
-2Log likelihood		259.739		
Percentage of cases correctly classified (beginning block)			59.4%	
Percentage of cases correctly classified (model)			76.5%	
Note: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.1;				
8 outliers (+/-3SD) were excluded				

As can be noticed in Table 1 the importance given to the brand has a positive significant relation with the dependant variable, indicating that for each increase of one unit on the scale measuring the brand importance a 1.336 increase in the log-odds of preferences for unique models of clothing is expected, holding all the other predictors constant. A similar relation with the dependent variable is found in respect with the quality preferences; that is for each increase of one unit on the scale measuring the importance of the quality of clothes (fabric and built) a 0.567 increase in the log-odds of preferences for unique models of clothing is expected, holding all the other predictors constant. The positive relation of the importance given to the brands and that of the quality of the clothes with the dependent variable might indicate that demanding, sophisticated, shoppers are more attentive to individualization, personalization.

At the same time, the odds of showing a preference for unique models of clothing are 78% smaller for online shoppers than for in-store shoppers, holding all the other predictor constant; that is being an online shopper decreases the chances for preferring personalized clothes. The finding might be consonant with the previous idea if we assume that online shoppers have less time to spend while in-store shoppers have more time to visit stores and to analyse directly the products they want to buy. Moreover, the latter are also probably more demanding than the former.

The other two consumption behaviour indicators (the frequency of shopping clothing and the employment of tailors in the past) also increase the odds for individualized preferences. Those who employed a tailor, at least once in the past, are about 2.83 more likely to prefer unique models of clothing than those who never employed a tailor.

From the socio-demographic predictors, only the level of education and the marital status turned out to have statistically significant effect on the preference for unique models of clothing. Marriage affects negatively the propensity towards clothing personalization (for a married person the odds of having a preference for unique models of clothing is about 58% smaller than the odds for a person having another marital status) while higher level of education increases the odds for preferring non-conventional clothes (each additional year of education increase the odds ratio of preferring unique models by about 1.16). Educational capital, as an indicator of social status, has the expected effect on clothing personalization in terms of the theoretical assumptions. Its positive impact proves to be consonant with the literature. Regarding the negative effect marriage has on clothing personalization, this finding can be interpreted in the theoretical framework of rational choice theory (RCT). In the light of these theoretical assumptions, personalized clothing constitutes a valuable sartorial capital that can provide an individual advantage for its possessor on the marriage market (Coleman 1990, 22). Thus, investing in personalizing the wardrobe could be conceived as a rational matrimonial strategy employed to increase the individual's attractiveness on the marital market. Marriage deems this reason irrelevant,

with the consequence that the post-marital investment in clothing decreased significantly.

To sum up, the results in Model 1 show that those respondents who are more likely to prefer unique models of clothing give higher importance to brands, to the quality of clothes (fabric and built), have employed at least once the services of a tailor, are more frequent shoppers, are less likely to shop online, less likely to be married, more educated.

Table 2. Logistic regression, dependent variable: willing to pay more for unique models of clothing (N=281)

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Dependent variable</i>		
	Willing to pay more...		
	B	Wald	Exp(B)
Constant	-10.544***		
Age	.009	.337	1.009
Number of years of school (8 to 22)	.212**	6.614	1.236
Employed (1=yes)	-.317	.600	.728
Married (1=yes)	-.189	.231	.827
City (1=150.000+ inhabitants)	.571	2.500	1.770
Average monthly sum spent on clothes (self-reported)	.000	.021	1.000
Employed tailoring services at least once (1=yes)	.509	2.354	1.664
Buying clothes at least twice a month (1=yes)	.881*	5.530	2.414
Online clothing shopper (1=yes)	-.194	.245	.823
The brand is important (1 to 4, ascendant)	1.197***	20.663	3.311
Fabric and build quality (2 to 8, ascendant)	.380*	4.885	1.462
Cox and Snell R Square		0.227	
Nagelkerke R Square		0.329	
Omnibus test (model)		$\chi^2=72.512$; df=11; p=0.000	
Hosmer & Lemeshow Test		$\chi^2=8.334$; df=8; p=0.402	
-2Log likelihood		257.504	
Percentage of cases correctly classified (beginning block)		72.6%	
Percentage of cases correctly classified (model)		75.8%	

Note: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, + p < 0.1

In our second logistic regression (Model 2) we analysed the willingness to pay more for unique models of clothing using the same predictors as in Model 1. The results presented in Table 2 show that the main variable in terms of its predictive value is the same as in Model 1, namely the importance ascribed to the brand. It is followed by the level of education,

the frequency of buying clothing, the quality of the clothes (fabric and build).

The importance given to the brand has a positive significant relation with the dependant variable, indicating that for each increase of one unit on the scale measuring the brand importance a 1.197 increase in the log-odds of preferences for unique models of clothing is expected, holding all the other predictor constant. A similar relation with the dependent is found in respect with the quality preferences; that is for each increase of one unit on the scale measuring the importance of the quality of clothes (fabric and built) a 0.380 increase in the log-odds of preferences for unique models of clothing is expected, holding all the other predictor constant. Those shopping at least two times a month are about 3.68 more likely to prefer unique models of clothing than those shopping less than twice a month. Respondent with higher levels of education are more likely to pay more for personalised models of clothing (for each additional year of education increases the odds of preferring unique models of clothing by 23.6%).

To sum up, the results in Model 2 show that those respondents who are more likely to prefer unique models of clothing give higher importance to brands, to the quality of clothes (fabric and built), are more frequent shoppers, are more educated. Results in Model 1 and Model 2 are convergent and, together, give us a picture of the respondent's characteristics that increase the chances for being in favour of personalization.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study we were concerned with examining clothing consumption attitudes and behaviours in relation with preferences for clothing personalization. For this purpose, we started by emphasizing several inner tensions embedded into the historical relationship between fashion and the social world. This discussion was framed in a broader analytical context which focused on the mutual transformations between fashion, modernity

and postmodernity.

The conceptual structure employed in setting out the argument was constructed on the basis of the distinction between standardization and personalization. Drawing on the relevant literature in the fashion studies, the paper identifies several patterns of personalization, based on economic, cultural and social determinants.

The study is geographically set in a region that was historically shaped by a standardized lifestyle imposed by both a communist mode of production and a socialist culture. What makes this region a privileged site of sociological analysis are the profound changes brought about by the transition to liberal democracy. The fall of the communist regime gradually transformed all the coordinates of social life, including an altogether new perspective on clothes and fashion preferences.

In order to analyse contemporary clothing behaviours and preferences, we have constructed two logistic regression models using questionnaire data. This approach allowed us to identify the main predictors influencing clothing personalization as measured in two complementary ways (the preference for unique models of clothing and the willingness to pay more for unique clothes). We found out that those respondents who are more likely to prefer unique models of clothing give higher importance to brands, are more demanding in what concerns the quality of clothes (fabric and built), are more frequent shoppers, and hold higher levels of education.

The findings brought forward by this study shed light on some patterns of sartorial personalization to which customers appeal in order to customize their clothing experience within the context of an emerging market. Despite its inherent methodological and analytical limits concerning the sampling, the regional anchoring, and the focus on female subjects, it nonetheless makes an inroad into clothing preferences in Romanian society. Through its conceptual framework and empirical findings, the study contributes to the emerging body of knowledge pertaining to fashion study in general and the sociology of fashion in particular.

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