

Children's Involvement in the Choice of Clothing in General and With Three Clothing Items in Particular

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Abstract: *This study was carried out in four primary schools (1st school year) in the district of Oporto (Portugal) and was based on two questionnaires. The aim of this study is to evaluate the level of 6 to 11-year-old children's involvement with clothing in general and, in particular, three items of clothing (t-shirts, jeans and trainers). The involvement scale developed by Laurent & Kapferer (1985) was used and adapted for children. The results showed that children's involvement in clothing takes place within different parameters (interest, pleasure, symbolism, perceived importance and subjective probability). Children demonstrated a great interest in clothing and great satisfaction in wearing brand name clothes. Symbolism (communicative capability) has, in this case, a very positive value. Perceived importance (of negative consequences) is also felt by children, which indicates the importance of making a good choice. The subjective probability (probability of choosing the wrong brand or clothing) shows that children have difficulty in choosing their clothing. However, their involvement is highest when choosing trainers. As concerns their involvement with clothing in general (first questionnaire), it was found that the symbolic parameter is more important for an outfit of clothing rather than for an individual item.*

Keywords: *Children, involvement, t-shirt, jeans, trainers, interest in clothing, pleasure (hedonic value), symbolic value, perceived importance and subjective probability.*

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1- Introduction

Involvement is one of the fundamental concepts used to explain the consumer buying process (Lastovicha & Gardner, 1979; Tiger, Ring & King, 1976; Traylor & Joseph, 1984; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Zaichkowsky, 1985; Bloch, Sherrell & Ridgway, 1986; Mittal, 1989; Laaksonen, 1994; Seo, Hathcote & Sweaney, 2001; Kim, Damhorst & Lee, 2002; Cardoso, 2004, 2006; EL Aoud, 2006). Product involvement has been viewed as a long-term interest in a product. In this particular research the intention is to study the impact of involvement in the choosing process of clothing in general and with three items in particular.

Two hypotheses were considered:

H1- Children are involved with clothing in different ways (interest, pleasure, symbolism, perceived importance and subjective probability).

H2. The level of involvement depends on the items of clothing considered (t-shirt, jeans, trainers).

In the first part of this paper there is presented a discussion of the literature background about consumer involvement (concept, bases and dimensions of involvement). After that is presented the description of the methodology used in the research. Finally is presented the major findings of this study and the discussion of the results. Limitations and implications are presented at the end of the paper.

2. Theoretical background

Involvement may be considered as a variable that can be centred on a stimulus, on a subject or on an answer (Kim, Damhorst & Lee, 2002). Therefore, Costley (1988), Finn (1983), Nantel & Robbilar (1990), Laaksonen (1994), Cardoso (2004) identify three approaches to involvement: cognitive, motivational and one based on a response.

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The cognitive approach describes involvement as a compulsory or personal connection between the individual and the object or activity. Involvement indicates a relationship between individual values, objectives and needs, the consequences and attributes of the object or activity (Cardoso, 2004). Many researchers agree about this approach and defend it: Tyebjee (1979) states that the intensity of involvement depends on the expected benefits of the product and the capacity of the product to match those expectations and Peter & Olson (1987) state that involvement is a state which occurs when a product or brand has benefits or has an impact on the consumer.

The individual motivational state says that involvement is a synonym of a feeling of importance, interest, obligation, motivation and stimulation expressed before an object stimulus. Thus, involvement is seen as a reaction which influences behaviour (Poiron, 1997a, 1997b; Cardoso, 2004; EL Aoud, 2006). In this case three different definitions emerge: (1) Definitions focused on stimuli - involvement only depends on the nature of the stimuli of the situation (Gardial & Zinkhan, 1984); (2) Definitions based on the temporary state of involvement - involvement is considered as a present and real state of a temporary and space limited context (Cohen, 1983); (3) Definitions based on the permanent involvement state - involvement is a way to describe the relation between an individual, an object and a situation (Higie & Feick, 1989).

The third approach is based on the consumer's response; that is to say, involvement is defined as a feature of the mental or behavioural response made by the individual under the effect of one or several stimuli. The intensity of involvement depends on the response adopted by each person (Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Cardoso, 2004). In this context two definitions are considered: (1) Association of involvement to the timing of the response (Calder, 1979; Rothschild, 1975); (2) Involvement as a way of foretelling the response (Stone, 1984; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984).

Each one of these approaches focuses on a content and a specific status of the involvement. As these concepts have very specific features, it is difficult to find a way of integration that could unify these three approaches. The option was to choose one of them. Based on this, the approach focused on a cognitive basis was chosen for the following reasons: (1) the research interest is oriented to a continuous involvement and not to a situational involvement. This research tries to analyse the impact of the

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continuous involvement level in clothing; (2) The involvement evaluation made will not be focusing on the decision process (cognitive process) at the time of the experiment or after the purchase of the clothing; (3) There is an intense theoretical argumentation in favour of the cognitive-basis approach (Cardoso, 2004).

On the one hand, the cognitive approach defines involvement as a connection between the individual values, objectives and needs, and on the other hand, as the consequences and attributes. The problem that emerges is how to established this connection. To find the answer to this problem, the models “Chain means and aims” were used, because they describe the relationship between values, consequences and attributes on different abstraction levels (Rokeach, 1973; Cohen, 1979; Zeithaml, 1988; Myers & Shocker, 1981). These models show that the values are the driving force behind the consumers’ motivation. These values directly affect the consequences of the consumer’s positive and negative options.

Gutman (1982), in turn, refers that the abstraction level and the extension of “Chain Means and Aims” determines the involvement level. According to this model, a weak involvement is demonstrated when the product links cannot live up to the consumer standards. On the other hand, a strong involvement is seen, when the product is considered by the individual as a means that answer his personal standards.

In conclusion, involvement level depends on the connection level between product features and personal standards. These values may vary according to products and individuals.

3. Involvement dimensions

Previous researchers analysed a group of underlying motivational factors to product involvement.

According to Mittal (1989), the involvement dimensions may be grouped in terms of cognitive dimensions and emotional dimensions. These dimensions are associated with the utilitarian objectives and the psychosocial objectives. The cognitive reasons refer to the maximization of profits. The emotional reasons are associated with the need to

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experience satisfactory sensations and to answer certain emotional states. This group of reasons includes all the non-utilitarian consumer objectives (Cardoso, 2004).

Shimp & Sharma (1983) and Mittal (1989) enhance the multidimensional character of emotional reasons. Mittal (1989) states that expressive values may be classified in terms of psychological objectives and social objectives. Laurent & Kapferer (1985), in turn, distinguish between the symbolic value and the hedonistic value as two different features of involvement.

According to Ratchford & Vaughn (1989), there are three major categories of sentimental values: the personal reward (this includes the individual's need to defend himself, to develop and to act out his own personality) the social acceptance (the need to be accepted and to be seen favourably by other people) and the sensory reasons (a yearning for pleasure released by our senses).

Clothing has been recognized as a product category likely to induce high involvement. A fashion involvement continuum can be defined based on the aggregate of a variety of important fashion behavioural activities (Tigert, Ring & King, 1976). Lastovicha & Gardner (1979) view involvement as having two major components: normative (refers to how connected or engaged a product class is to individuals values) and commitment (refers to the pledging or bidding of an individual to his brand choice. In general, involvement is a state of motivation, arousal, or interest. Personal relevance is a key concept in explaining, defining, and operationalizing involvement (Kim, Damhorst and Lee 2002). We can define clothing involvement as "the amount of time and effort a consumer spends in the selection of clothing" (Seo, Hatchote and Sweaney, 2001: 210).

Involvement was used in clothing in previous studies with adults (O'Cass, 2001a, 2001b; Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997; Flynn & Goldsmith, 1993; Fairhurst, Good & Gentry, 1989; Seo, Hatchote and Sweaney, 2001; Kim, Damhorst & Lee, 2002), given the important role of clothing in our society.

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4. Methodology

In this research two questionnaires were used: the first was generic and related to clothing in general; the second evaluates involvement in three specific items of clothing (t-shirt, jeans and trainers).

Quantitative studies may be used with children, using a traditional questionnaire, taking their level of cognitive development into consideration (Borgers et al. 2000). It is not easy to ask children about their likes, preferences, habits and needs. This method presents more difficulties because of children's limitations as far as attention, reading, verbalization and memorization are concerned.

On the other hand, given the children's cognitive development at this age (between 6 and 11 years old), it is already possible to use children to obtain information about the objective of the study (Brée, 1995; McNeal, 1993; Scott, 1997; Borgers et al. 2000).

Previous studies, mentioned in the review of literature, used the parents to get information about the children (McNeal, 1993) and the studies which concentrate solely on children direct their attention to children older than 10 years old.

The scales in use were tested in a sample of 25 children from a primary school, who attended the first and second school years, trying to ensure the understanding, objectivity and suitability of the items in the scales to the objectives of this study. This group filled in the questionnaires in order to check their functionality. They were also asked to voice any doubts they may have had about the meaning of any words, sentences or any difficulties in the understanding of the questionnaire and how to fill it in. This method consists in the individual application of the test and in the registration of all the difficulties that came up (Almeida & Freire, 1997: 20). Using the children's suggestions, some changes in the language and scales were made.

The purpose of this pre-test was to check the scales' reliability and analyse their efficiency (Scott, 1997; Borgers et al., 2000). After the conception of the questionnaire, the questions and instructions were tested, using cognitive pre-test methods to prove whether the questions were understood and why a particular answer was given

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(Campanelli, 1997; Czaja, 1998). As Borgers et al. (2000) state, the questionnaire's design and the pre-test are a requirement to ensure the best results.

The main concern of the research was focused on four criteria: (1) The understanding of statements and instructions; (2) How easy it was to fill in according to the scales used; (3) The internal consistency: the intention was to check the internal consistency through "Cronbach's alpha" (Nunnally, 1978; Robinson & al., 1991; Bearden & al. 1989; Zaichkowsky, 1985; Shimp & Sharma, 1987); (4) The parallel model: for each scale used, the items were combined so they could work as a global index that represents the measured concept. To obtain the sum, it was necessary that all items were summable. According to this, Jöreskog (1971) demonstrated that when the items make up a parallel model, the best linear combination of these items is their simple addition. The linear combination improves the global accuracy of this model. Consequently, in order to make the items summable, it is necessary that they form a parallel model.

Based on these criteria and on the pre-test results, the following procedure was developed: (1) Change in the vocabulary according to the age group; (2) Revision of the scales, in order to make them easier for the children; (3) Change in the scales and items which presented a very low level of internal consistency: most of the scales obtained alphas superior to 0,70; (4) The maintenance of the scales which present a good internal consistency, but that did not form parallel models: the checking of the parallel and additive character of the scales was only an indication.

4.1. Measurement and scales of involvement

In this research, involvement is defined as a dimension of the cognitive structure which reflects an underlying and durable link between the individual's values, objectives and needs relating to the consequences and attributes of clothing.

The problem that arises concerning the measurement of involvement is to choose between a unidimensional concept (Zaichkowsky, 1985a) or a multidimensional concept (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). The adoption of a cognitive perspective of involvement leads us to conceive the involvement as a multidimensional concept. Therefore, the limitations of the unidimensional involvement will be explained, as well as the reasons for the choice of Laurent & Kapferer's (1985) scale.

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Zaichowsky's (1985a) involvement scale is insensitive towards certain underlying dimensions of involvement; particularly the items "*dull/fascinating*" and "*not fun/fun*" may improve the scale sensitiveness to the hedonistic value (Higie & Feick, 1989). On the other hand, the five items of the "expression of myself" are associated, so the scale is tendentially sensitive towards this social value of involvement. The other 20 items of Zaichkowsky do not consider the personal values that are associated with the wish of personal fulfilment and the expression of social identity.

The scale developed by Laurent & Kapferer (1985) is multidimensional and brings together five features or dimensions. The profile of the five features forms an involvement profile applied to any class or type of product. The first feature is the interest which refers to the permanent relationship of interest between the individual and the class or type of product. The second feature is the hedonistic value of the product class which represents its emotional attraction and its capability to transmit affection or pleasure. The third feature is the symbolic value, which the consumer attributes to the product class, to his purchases or to his consumption (Poiron, 1997). The fourth is the perceived importance, which represents the relevance and the personal meaning of the product class and the realized importance of the consequences of making a bad choice. The fifth and last feature is the subjective probability of making a bad purchase (the probability of choosing a wrong brand name).

Later Jain & Srinivasan (1990) revalidated this scale, using 15 items of the 7 points differential semantic type.

Laurent & Kapferer's (1985) scale was chosen after taking into consideration all of these facts because its is smaller and is sensitive to the various involvement dimensions. However, some adaptations were necessary in the original scale in order to use it with children: a reduction in the number of items (only 15 items were used); 4 points scale of the differential semantics type, supported by "*smile faces*" and "YES-yes-no-NO".

In the second questionnaire the intention was to analyse the children's involvement in three specific items: t-shirt, jeans and trainers.

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Therefore, Laurent & Kapferer's (1985) scale was used. As it had already been employed and tested in the first questionnaire, it was considered unnecessary to carry out a pre-test in the second questionnaire as its structure was maintained in all other items tested, and only the name of the product was altered. Nevertheless, it was decided to reduce the number of items to avoid repetition, thus keeping the children's attention whilst answering the questionnaire.

The 3 chosen items were based on previous studies of Stone (1998), Hogg, Bruce & Hill (1999), Poiron (1997), Ohl (2001), Cardoso (2004) and El Aoud (2006) which showed which of the items children prefer.

Children's age, sex, school year, school locality and type were considered as independent variables.

5. The sample

The first questionnaire was answered by 313 students, between 6 and 11 years of age, attending 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th school years from four schools in the city of Oporto. The above mentioned schools were also involved in the second questionnaire.

The study sample was obtained by means of a sampling process per group, considering that each different group (school years) in which the population is organized (Almeida & Freire, 1997). Since the number of students in each school year was similar, it was considered satisfactory to get answers from all the students in each school year.

Four schools were selected, representing both urban and rural areas, so that the socioeconomic differences would be taken into account.

6. The Research process

In order to fill in the questionnaire, the researcher himself read the questions and the children wrote the answers. The characteristics of this study justify this choice of procedure, as it was necessary to get around the children's cognitive limitations. After receiving general instructions about the study, and specific instructions about the questions and scales (YES=yes-no-NO and the "Smile Faces"), children answered 5

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questions (test) relating to scales (Bachmann, John & Rao, 1993; Childers & Rao, 1992; Cardoso, 2004, 2006).

To get around the children's cognitive limitations, the questions were read very slowly and in a loud voice while children followed it through silently (Childers & Rao, 1992). The next question was not read until the previous one was fully understood and completed (Bachmann, John & Rao, 1993).

The scales were of the differential semantics type (YES – yes – no – NO), associating “*smile faces*” with them in order to express whether they agree or disagree (Harrigan, 1991). Visual stimuli and answer cards were also used (Macklin & Machleit, 1990: 253-265 – each scale face was put on large size cards 14” x 5.5 “) to make the children's answers more interesting, more specific and more motivating (Borgers et al., 2000).

The procedures followed in the first questionnaire were also adopted in the second questionnaire. This questionnaire was carried out two months after the first one in the schools mentioned above.

7. Analyses of the results

7.1. The first questionnaire

In order to analyse the internal coherence between the items, the reliability of our scale was examined by the calculation of Cronbach's alpha. The levels of reliability were defined by Nunnally (1978) and according to him, in an exploratory research, a Cronbach's alpha equal or higher than 0.6 is acceptable and an alpha higher than 0,8 is considered sufficient to an applied study (Perrien et al, 1984).

As far as the involvement relating to clothing is concerned, the obtained alpha was 0.75, which is a good result. The inter-items correlations vary between 0.01 and 0.73, and therefore the average is not very high. Concerning the 5 dimensions (interest, pleasure, symbolism, perceived importance and subjective probability) the alpha values were 0.84 (interest), 0.71 (pleasure), 0.77 (symbolism), 0.80 (perceived importance) and 0.64 (subjective probability). These values are identical (some higher) to the values obtained by Laurent & Kapferer (1985) and Poiron (1997).

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Based on Fornell and Larcker (1981), we tried to check the convergent and discriminating validity of the measure scales. According to this method, the convergent validity is established if the underlying variable produces more than 50% of its variance with the measures. Statistically, the average of the squares of the factorial weights between the variable and each one of its items should be higher than 0.50. The discriminating validity is seen if the underlying variable produces more variability with its own measures than with the other underlying variables. Statistically, it means that the variance produced by two constructs is lower than the convergent validity of its constructs.

In order to check the unidimensionality/ multidimensionality of each feature of the dimensions, a factorial analysis was undertaken using the “*Principal Component Analysis*” method (table 1) (Churchill, 1979).

Table I: Principal Component Analysis

Variable Measured		N° of items	% of variance explained by the first factor	First item	Strong agreement	Strong Disagreement
Involvement in clothing	Interest in clothing	2	55.4 %	I am interested/ I care about clothing	81.1%	18.9%
	Pleasure	3	63.4 %	I am very pleased about wearing brand name clothes	78.6%	21.4%
	Symbolism	2	81.6 %	The clothes we wear say what we are	76%	14%
	Perceived importance	4	75.1 %	When we choose a piece of clothing, it doesn't matter if we make the wrong choice	68.4%	31.6%
	Subjective probability	4	48.4 %	When I buy an item of clothing I am not sure which one to choose	79.8%	20.2%

Children demonstrated a strong interest in the choice of clothing (table 1). The two items tested confirm this conclusion. Concerning the first item (“I am interested/ I care about clothing”), 81.1 % of the children agree with this statement against 18.9% of the children who disagree. Item 2 (“I am not interested/ I do not care about clothing”) confirm and reinforce these values, because in spite of being an opposite item (negative statement), the result obtained was 86.6%.

The data obtained showed that children take pleasure in wearing clothes, particularly brand name clothes. The percentage distribution per item was the following: there were

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246 people questioned (78.6%) who agree with item 1 (“I am very pleased about wearing brand name clothes”), in item 2 (“Wearing brand name clothing is nice”) that percentage increases to 86.5% and in item 3 this value is confirmed and reinforced with 88.8% of children stating that they like brand name clothing.

Clothing symbolic value, its brand name, logo and communicative capability, is understood by many of the children interviewed. The truth is that 69.3% of the children questioned agreed that “The clothes we wear say what we are” and 76% agree that “The clothes I wear demonstrate to a small degree the type of person I am”. Only 30.7% disagree with the first statement and 24% disagree with the second.

The risk perception when someone buys clothes is understood by most of the children interviewed. As a matter of fact, 214 children (68.4%) agree that it is important not to make a mistake when we choose an item of clothing (item 1 is presented in the opposite way). The other items confirm this result.

As far as the concept “Subjective probability” is concerned, the agreement/disagreement proportions (assuming the values aggregation and working with two degrees of freedom) are distributed as follows: item 1 (“When I buy an item of clothing I am not sure which one to choose”) obtained 79.8% of agreement against 20.2% of disagreement, in item 2 (“When I buy an item of clothing I do not know which one to pick”) the proportion was 74.8% of agreement against 25.2% of disagreement, item 3 (“Choosing an item of clothing is very complicated”) obtained 65.5% of the students who agree and 34.5% of the students who disagree and in item 4 the proportion was 60.7% for agreement and 39.3% for disagreement.

In the search of associations between the variables, different combinations were made (table II). The combination between the degree of urbanity (rural/ urban) with the independent variables, resulted in associations with low level of significance (0.005), with the interest in clothing ($\chi^2=3.71$; $p=0.075$), with symbolic value ($\chi^2=0.998$; $p=0.318$), with clothing importance ($\chi^2=0.115$; $p=0.735$) and with subjective probability ($\chi^2=1.406$; $p=0.236$), which means that these variables are independent.

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There is a positive association between the degree of urbanity and the pleasure in wearing clothing. As a matter of fact, 246 children demonstrated a great pleasure in clothing, and this situation is greater with children from rural areas (137) than with children from urban areas (109) ($\chi^2=9.617$; $p=0.002$).

Table II: Pearson's correlations between independent variables and different dimensions

	Interest	Pleasure	Symbolism	Perceived importance	Subjective probability
School year	-0.019	0.157(**)	0.199(**)	0.163(**)	-0.090
	0.737	0.005	0.000	0.004	0.111
Age	-0.027	0.104	0.114(*)	0.172(**)	-0.115(*)
	0.632	0.066	0.044	0.002	0.043
Type of school	-0.154(**)	-0.021	-0.152(**)	0.142(*)	-0.045
	0.006	0.709	0.007	0.012	0.428
Income	0.158(**)	0.145(*)	0.158(**)	-0.088	0.077
	0.005	0.011	0.005	0.120	0.176
Gender	-0.162(**)	0.045	-0.060	-0.108	-0.208(**)
	0.004	0.426	0.293	0.056	0.000
Urbanity	0.101	0.175(**)	0.056	-0.019	0.067
	0.075	0.002	0.319	0.736	0.237

OBS: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Relating to gender (male/ female), one may conclude that it is only associated with clothing involvement as concerns interest ($\chi^2=8.230$; $p=0.004$) and subjective probability ($\chi^2=13.485$ and $p=0.000$), which demonstrates the dependency between these variables. As concerns interest in clothing, it can be seen that children demonstrate a strong interest (254 children), but girls show a higher interest (143 girls against 111 boys). The same conclusion was reached in relation to subjective probability, in which the girls demonstrated that they care a lot about their choices (144 girls against 106 boys). It may be concluded that girls are the ones who have a stronger interest in clothing and who worry about the choice of clothing (they are afraid of making a mistake).

The interest in clothing is high within all income levels (253 answers), but it is more important in low incomes groups. As the income becomes higher, the interest in clothing appears to decrease. Similar behaviour is noticed as concerns pleasure in clothing, the symbolic value of clothing and the importance of clothing.

The type of school attended (state or private) is significantly associated with the interest in clothing ($\chi^2=7.387$; $p=0.007$), the symbolic dimension of involvement ($\chi^2=7.245$; $p=0.007$) and the importance of clothing ($\chi^2=6.313$; $p=0.012$).

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The interest in clothing is higher in state schools (88.6%) as compared with private schools (76.3%).

The symbolic value of clothing is higher in state schools (78%) as compared with private schools (63.6%), and so it is the importance attached to clothing (73.6% in state schools against 60% in private schools).

Students' age is significantly associated with the symbolic value of clothing ($x^2=4.052$; $p=0.044$), with the importance of clothing ($x^2=9.223$; $p=0.002$) and with subjective probability ($x^2=4.119$; $p=0.042$).

As can be see in table II: a) the interest in clothing is positively associated with income, but it is negatively associated with the type of school and with gender; b) pleasure in clothing is correlated with the school year, with the type of school, with income and with the degree of urbanity; c) the symbolic dimension of clothing is positively correlated with the school year, with age, and with income, but presents negative associations with the type of school attended; d) the importance of clothing is positively and significantly associated with the school year, age and the type of school attended; e) subjective probability is negatively correlated with age and gender.

7.2. The second questionnaire

Alpha analysis relating to involvement in three specific items of clothing presents satisfactory and even good results. In table III the obtained "*alpha*" for the three items of clothing (T-shirt, jeans and trainers) can be seen, and each of the 5 items of involvement (interest, pleasure, symbolism, perceived importance and subjective probability), obtained acceptable values.

Table III: Measures reliability analysis relating to the 5 dimensions of involvement.

	T-shirt	Jeans	Trainers
Interest	0.7023	0.6888	0.8406
Pleasure	0.7350	0.7291	0.6884
Symbolism	0.6489	0.6401	0.6586
Perceived Importance	0.9448	0.8832	0.9689
Subjective Probability	0.7226	0.6819	0.7141

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The same method used in the first questionnaire was followed and a factorial analysis was carried out using the “*Principal Component Analysis*” method (table IV) to check whether the different items were of the same dimension (Churchill, 1979).

Table IV: *Principal Component Analysis*

Variable measured		No. of items	% of variance explained by the first factor		
			T-shirt	Jeans	Trainers
Involvement in Clothing	Interest in clothing	2	77.4	76.3	86.8
	Pleasure	3	67.1	67.5	65.5
	Symbolism	2	74.3	73.5	74.6
	Perceived importance	3	90.4	81.2	94.4
	Subjective probability	3	65.9	64.7	65.0

The correlation between the variables was then analysed (table V).

Thus, in relation to the T-shirt it can be seen that interest is positively correlated with the degree of urbanity. ($x^2 = 0.133$; $p=0.049$). The degree of pleasure is negatively correlated with the type of school attended ($x^2=0.225$; $p= 0.001$), with the degree of urbanity ($x^2 = 0.182$; $p=0.007$) and children’s gender ($x^2 = 0.168$; $p= 0.013$). The t-shirt importance is negatively correlated with school attended ($x^2 = - 0.237$; $p=0.000$), but positively correlated with the degree of urbanity ($x^2=0.267$; $p=0.000$), the school year ($x^2= 0.298$; $p=0.000$) and the students’ age ($x^2 = 0.269$; $p=0.000$). The subjective probability has not got any significant correlation.

Table V: Correlations between independent variables and the different dimensions of involvement (t-shirt)

		Interest in t-shirt	Pleasure in t-shirt	Sign of t-shirt	Importance of t-shirt	Probability of t-shirt
Degree of Urbanity	Pearson Correlation	.133(*)	.182(**)	.267(**)	.058	.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.049	.007	.000	.388	.310
Type of School	Pearson Correlation	.018	-.029	-.114	-.065	.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.789	.669	.091	.339	.180
School year	Pearson Correlation	-.008	.005	.298(**)	-.157(*)	.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.909	.947	.000	.020	.829
Students’ age	Pearson Correlation	-.046	.052	.269(**)	-.141(*)	-.028
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.499	.444	.000	.036	.677
Students’ sex	Pearson Correlation	.025	.168(*)	-.031	-.029	-.105
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.706	.013	.643	.669	.119

OBS: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As concerns jeans (table VI), it is noticed that the degree of interest ($x^2 = -0.174$; $p=0.010$) and the degree subjective probability ($x^2 = -0.222$; $p=0.001$) are negatively correlated with the students’ gender. The degree of pleasure and importance are negatively correlated with the school year ($x^2 = -0.145$; $p=0.031$ in the first case and

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$x^2=0.132$ and $p=0.050$ in the second case). The degree of symbolism has got 3 positive correlations: with the degree of urbanity ($x^2=0.295$; $p=0.000$), the school year ($x^2=0.283$; $p=0.000$) and the students' age ($x^2=0.272$; $p=0.000$).

Table VI: Correlations between independent variables and the different dimensions of involvement (jeans)

		Interest in jeans	Pleasure in jeans	Sign of jeans	Importance of jeans	Probability of jeans
Degree of Urbanity	Pearson Correlation	.006	.010	.295(**)	.025	-.078
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.930	.882	.000	.714	.247
Property	Pearson Correlation	.044	-.025	-.010	-.125	-.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.515	.710	.883	.063	.506
School year	Pearson Correlation	.046	-.145(*)	.283(**)	-.132(*)	-.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.497	.031	.000	.050	.465
Students' age	Pearson Correlation	-.002	-.094	.272(**)	-.083	-.078
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.982	.165	.000	.220	.250
Students' sex	Pearson Correlation	-.174(**)	-.002	.032	-.045	-.222(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.976	.635	.510	.001

OBS: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As concerns trainers, only two dimensions have significant correlations: symbolism and the degree of importance (table VII). The degree of symbolism is positively correlated with the degree of urbanity ($x^2=0.258$; $p=0.000$), the school year ($x^2=0.419$; $p=0.000$) and the students' age ($x^2=0.366$; $p=0.000$). The degree of importance of trainers is only correlated with the type of school attended ($x^2=0.225$; $p=0.001$).

Table VII: Correlations between the independent variables and the different dimensions of involvement (trainers)

		Interest in trainers	Pleasure in trainers	Sign of trainers	Importance of trainers	Probability of trainers
Degree of Urbanity	Pearson Correlation	.033	.071	.258(**)	-.086	.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.627	.295	.000	.204	.988
Property	Pearson Correlation	.008	.055	-.042	.225(**)	.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.901	.420	.530	.001	.914
School year	Pearson Correlation	.032	-.028	.419(**)	-.009	-.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.638	.682	.000	.898	.514
Students' age	Pearson Correlation	.069	.012	.366(**)	.009	-.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.306	.858	.000	.890	.337
Students' sex	Pearson Correlation	-.079	.045	.060	.090	-.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.242	.507	.372	.180	.087

OBS: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In conclusion, the dimension which presents more correlations in the three items is the symbolic dimension, which is negatively correlated with the type of school attended,

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but positively correlated with the degree of urbanity, the school year and the students' age.

8. The sociodemographic variables impact: tests for variances equality and test for averages equality.

A hypothesis H₀ of equality may be determined. An analysis of variance makes it possible to check this hypothesis or reject it. Levene's test (F), with an error margin of 5% allows the rejection or acceptance of the equality hypothesis. If X (=meaning level) < 0.05, H₀ will be rejected. Otherwise, if X > 0.05, H₀ will be accepted.

Following this, an attempt is made to determine whether there exists a relationship between the explaining variable and the explanatory variable (Table VIII)

Table VIII - Levene's Test (F) and T-student's Test

	Dimensions of involvement	Levene's Test (F)		T-student's Test		
		F	Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Gender	Interest in clothing	35.209	0.000	2.998	0.004	Ho Rejected
	Pleasure	2.567	0.110	-0.799	0.425	Ho accepted
	Symbolism	4.356	0.038	1.054	0.293	Ho accepted
	Perceived importance	13.972	0.000	1.921	0.056	Ho accepted
	Subjective probability	60.424	0.000	3.742	0.000	Ho Rejected
Age groups	Interest in clothing	0.907	0.342	0.475	0.635	Ho accepted
	Pleasure	14.900	0.000	-1.848	0.066	Ho accepted
	Symbolism	17.980	0.000	-2.020	0.044	Ho Rejected
	Perceived importance	43.163	0.000	-3.073	0.002	Ho Rejected
	Subjective probability	15.940	0.000	2.037	0.043	Ho Rejected
Urbanity	Interest in clothing	12.983	0.000	-1.784	0.075	Ho accepted
	Pleasure	41.577	0.000	-3.140	0.002	Ho Rejected
	Symbolism	3.933	0.048	-0.997	0.319	Ho accepted
	Perceived importance	0.457	0.500	0.338	0.736	Ho accepted
	Subjective probability	5.646	0.018	-1.185	0.237	Ho accepted
Type of school	Interest in clothing	35.042	0.000	2.742	0.006	Ho Rejected
	Pleasure	0.567	0.452	0.376	0.707	Ho accepted
	Symbolism	33.638	0.000	2.715	0.007	Ho Rejected
	Perceived importance	20.513	0.000	-2.530	0.012	Ho Rejected
	Subjective probability	2.602	0.108	0.806	0.421	Ho accepted

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In relation to children's gender there are differences relating to interest in clothing (F-35.209 and $p = 0,000$, and the t-student's test was 0.004, so H_0 is rejected - the interest in clothing is significantly different in both sexes) and subjective probability (F-60.424 and $p= 0,000$ and the t-student's test with a p-value of 0,000 so H_0 is rejected - there are differences between both sexes), as far as the genders are concerned. In relation to the other dimensions (Pleasure, Symbolism, Perceived importance) the meaning levels are higher than 0.05, so one may conclude that there are no differences between the sexes.

As concerns age, there are differences between two age groups (from 6 to 8 years old; from 9 to 11 years old) in the degree of symbolism (F-17.980 and $p= 0,000$ and T test 0.044), the degree of importance (F- 43.163 for a p-value of 0.000 and a T test of 0.002), and the degree of probability (F- 15940 for a p-value of 0.000 and a T test of 0.043). All other variables present levels higher than 0.05 and so H_0 is accepted. Therefore, it may be concluded that there are no differences in the two age groups (interest and pleasure in clothing).

The areas (rural/ urban) the children belong to present significant differences relative to the degree of pleasure in clothing (F- 41.577 and $p=0.000$). The hypothesis H_0 is rejected ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$) for interest, symbolism, importance and subjective probability of involvement. In conclusion, there are no differences between the urban area and the rural area as concerns these variables.

The type of school attended (private or state) presents significant variations as concerns interest in clothing (F- 35.042 and $p= 0.000$ and T test of 0.006), the symbolic dimension of involvement (F- 33.638 and $p= 0,000$ and T test of 0.007) and the degree of clothing importance (F- 20.513 and $p= 0.000$ and T test of 0.012).

There are no significant variations as concerns the type of school attended ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$) in relation to the degree of involvement, pleasure and subjective probability (H_0 is accepted: there are differences between the private and the state in these items.).

In the presence of this data the hypothesis may be tested:

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H1- The children are involved with clothing in different dimensions (interest, pleasure, symbolism, perceived importance and subjective probability).

As far as interest in clothing is concerned, 81.1% of the answers are positive, as opposed to 18.9% negative answers.

The degree of pleasure in clothing (“I am very pleased in wearing brand name clothes”) was 78.6% in agreement (even though the factorial analysis did not contemplate the other two items, the positive answers increased considerably).

The symbolic value of clothing, evaluated by the factor “the clothes we have got say what we are”, are 69.3% in agreement against 30.7% in disagreement.

The perceived importance presents a positive value of 68.4%. In this context, children think that it is important to make a good choice and not to make a mistake when they choose (buy) their clothing.

In the subjective probability, the positive and negative values were 79.8% and 20.2% respectively. (“When I buy some items of clothing I am not certain which one to choose”). This indicates that children think it is quite difficult, or even complicated, to choose their clothing.

After analysing all these five dimensions together, and in general, one may consider that children feel that they are involved in their choice of clothing.

H2. The level of involvement depends on the items of clothing to be considered.

Comparing the three items of clothing tested (T-shirt, Jeans and Trainers) one can see that when comparing the five dimensions of involvement relating to clothing in general (1st questionnaire) with the involvement in specific items, there are different values (table IX).

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Table IX: Comparison between general involvement and specific involvement.

	General clothing	T-shirt	Jeans	Trainers
Interest	81.1%	87.3%	80.5%	85.5%
Pleasure	78.6%	85.9%	83.7%	90.5%
Symbolism	69.3%	56.8%	53.8%	57.9%
Per. Importance	68.4%	87.3%	95.4%	74.2%
Sub. Probability	79.8%	80.6%	75.6%	81.4%

The interest is higher when one analyses the T-shirt (87.3% of agreement) and the trainers (85.5%). Jeans present lower levels of agreement (80.5%) as compared with interest in clothing in general (81.1%).

Pleasure is higher in the three items tested than in clothing in general. However, trainers obtain a more favourable percentage (90.5%).

As concerns symbolism, clothing in general obtained a higher favourable percentage (69.3%). This may imply that children evaluate the symbolic dimension of clothing as an outfit and not as individual items.

The perceived importance (fear of making a mistake) was higher in the three items tested than in clothing in general, particularly for jeans (95.4%) and for the T-shirt (87.3%).

The subjective probability (doubts in choosing) was higher for trainers (81.4%) and for the T-shirt (80.6%).

It may be concluded, that only the symbolic dimension is higher for clothing in general. The other involvement dimensions present higher values when concerning specific items of clothing. Trainers obtained higher values for pleasure and for subjective probability.

Based on what was mentioned above this hypothesis may be accepted.

9. Conclusions and limitations

After analysing the first questionnaire one can observe that children are strongly involved with clothing (in the five dimensions). They consider the functional aspects of clothing important and they think that the ostentatious values are unimportant.

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Children demonstrated that they have a great interest in clothing (81.1%) and great satisfaction in wearing brand name clothing (78.6%). Here, symbolism (communicative capability) reaches a positive value (69.3%).

Perceived importance is also felt by a child (68.4%) who indicates the importance of making a good choice.

The subjective probability (probability of choosing the wrong brand name or clothing) indicates that children have difficulty in choosing their own clothing.

The second questionnaire indicated that children are particularly involved in the choice of three items (t-shirt, jeans and trainers). Their level of involvement is higher in relation to trainers. In comparison to their involvement in clothing in general (first questionnaire) one may notice that the symbolic dimension is higher, indicating that this dimension is more prominent when considering a set of clothes rather than an individual item.

The symbolic dimension is the one which presents the lowest values (56.8% for t-shirt, 53.8% for jeans and 57.9% for trainers). However these values are still positive. This dimension is comparatively higher as concerns the involvement in clothing in general (1st questionnaire). This suggests that children evaluate the symbolical value of clothing as an outfit and not as a particular item.

The absence of a positive impact of involvement in all dimensions may be a consequence of the mediatory effect of certain factors linked to the individual or the situation. It is possible that the involvement impact is not direct but moderated by the effect of these factors. Therefore, it is possible that involvement (in clothing, or in a particular item) may have a significant influence in the choice process and that influence ceases to exist when the person lacks product knowledge. In the same way, it is possible that the risk associated with the choice may have a mediatory influence on the impact of involvement. Thus, involvement influences the choice process when the risk level is high. However, its impact disappears when the risk level is low (it must be remembered that parents are usually the buyers for this age group).

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On the other hand, involvement impact may be moderated by the emotional state of the child (subjected to different stimuli, in the search for pleasure ...) by the price (hedonistic or utilitarian) and by the situational factors. These variables may have a moderating impact or a mediatory involvement (defined as one's latent and individual personality).

As it is a multidimensional scale (five dimensions: interest, pleasure, symbolism, perceived importance and subjective probability), it is also possible that some overlapping effects could occur between these variables.

The results are always relative to the methods used, and so the conclusions from different researchers' appear to be different (Schaffer, 1996).

The choice of the methods used to collect information (scales, administration, structure,...), may be the source of some incoherences, despite the care taken in filling in the questionnaires.

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