

Forming Sustainable Attachments to Clothes

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Abstract: This paper presents a study of how people form attachments to clothing. The aesthetic dimension is a fundamental attribute when consumers are forming product attachment. Yet the concept of beauty in clothing can be approached through a social, cultural and temporal context and in a multi-sensorial way. Furthermore positive experiences, memories, family ties, expressions of self, promises of future experiences, and emotions are essential characteristics that allow consumers to construct an attachment to clothes. In addition certain design styles, colors and materials enable sustainable attachments to form. The notion of sustainable attachment includes reflective dimensions, which can lead to a more discursive engagement with clothing. The study explores these issues and creates arguments for sustainable attachments based on an online consumer questionnaire conducted in Finland in 2009. In this study a table has been constructed which summarizes sustainable product attachments to clothing.

Key words: *Product attachment, Sustainable attachment, Attachment to clothes, Sustainable design*

1. Introduction

Despite recent studies in the area of eco-fashion, producers and designers still lack knowledge of what consumers desire and value in the fashion field and in the context of sustainable design. Development in the textile and clothing field has been technological and cost-sensitive up to now, and the textile industry has emphasized the price of the end product and efficiency in production. Hence low prices tempt the consumer into increasing consumption and shortening the use time of clothes. Designers and manufacturers have no particularly profound knowledge of what the consumer values, and hence ever-changing trends, short product life spans and easy profit drive how clothes are currently designed. [1]

In the context of sustainable development it is crucial to consume less and to invest in products with longer life spans. To ensure this future path it is most important to focus on designing better product satisfaction and experiences. Through deeper satisfaction it is possible to create deeper engagement with products, thereby avoiding disposable products. Consumers create an emotional bond with certain products, and this emotional bond is an opportunity to increase the life span of the product. [2]

Product satisfaction is formed from different elements according to product type. It is easier to identify the operative dimensions of a product than the reflective ones. Reflective dimensions are interlinked with individuals' feelings and how they ascribe meaning, and it is therefore much more difficult for a designer to

have any control over these aspects. Individuals can operate with objects according to different feelings and in any way chosen. Someone can interact with a product through its operative value, its poetic dimension or its social significance. Hence all individuals have different experiences with products, and moreover a person's own product experience can change over time according to his/her values, attitude, personal history, past experiences and creation of meaning. [3] Experience design is based on an empathic approach in design, and this approach can result in better satisfaction of commercial, societal and individual needs in the future [4].

When studying product attachment we have to understand people holistically. In other words, we cannot only employ a user-based approach; we also need a pleasure-based approach to design. The latter concept needs a much wider, richer picture of the person than the former. Product relationships are constructed from physiological, psychological, social and ideological dimensions. [5] All these dimensions can also be found in people's attachments to clothes, and they will be discussed further later in this paper.

This study contributes to consumer-centered knowledge regarding sustainable design by exploring product attachments. The paper addresses this question: what are the essential elements of product attachment in the field of clothing? A table has been constructed that summarizes sustainable product attachments to clothing, and this knowledge can be used in further discussion of durable clothing design. The paper makes use of an online questionnaire conducted in Finland in 2009, where an internet survey was administered to a random sample of 246 respondents. The answers are dominated by the young female point of view, as the majority of the respondents are female (91.8%) and under 35 years old (80%).

2. Product attachment

We engage with objects and artifacts in our environment to create experiences. According to Dewey [6] things interact with a person's needs, desires, purposes, and capacities, and the result of this interaction is the experience. The relationship is constructed through both objective and internal conditions. Objective conditions refer to the existing environment, while the internal conditions are within the person. The internal and the objective interplay during the experience: i.e. a transaction occurs. A person's own individuality and narrative coherence serve to create a worthwhile meaning for the situation, which in turn creates a sense of experience. Moreover, as previously mentioned, the interaction between the user and artifact has two dimensions: operative and reflective. The operative aspect is constructed during use situations and use experience. The reflective level is interlinked with the user's feelings and the meaning that the user attaches to the object. These two dimensions intertwine with each other, and both levels also serve to create sustainable attachment [3].

Jordan [5] distinguishes several levels when evaluating product benefits, i.e. practical, emotional and hedonic benefits, and he defines the product's pleurability as existing in the interaction between a user and a product. Pleurability can be achieved through several levels and in a multi-sensorial way in the context of clothing.

Table I presents the answers of the 240 respondents. When asked about the attributes through which they feel attached to textiles and clothing, the respondents reported that the aspects of functionality, beauty and high quality are significant. Deep emotional attachments can also be seen in these answers, through, for instance, memories and family associations. On the other hand monetary value does not create as deep an attachment to

clothes and textiles.

Table I. Product attachments in textiles and clothing

| I am attached to the textiles and clothes because they | % |
|--|----|
| 1. function well | 97 |
| 2. are beautiful | 94 |
| 3. are made with good quality | 91 |
| 4. evoke memories | 75 |
| 5. are inherited | 72 |
| 6. are unique, designed just for me | 64 |
| 7. are handmade | 64 |
| 8. are self-made | 62 |
| 9. are old | 61 |
| 10. are valuable | 41 |
| 11. are a present | 38 |
| 12. are designed by a famous designer | 21 |

The respondents were asked in an open question about the oldest clothes they possessed and why they have kept them. In all, 171 respondents wrote short texts that were analyzed, and several quotes from the responses are used in the following text. Table II presents the overall picture of the respondents' open answers, and the different elements are presented in the order of incidence (the highest incidence is number one).

Table II. The elements of attachment in clothes with a long life span

| The elements of attachments in clothes with a long life span |
|---|
| 1. connection to memories which are linked to some person or family |
| 2. quality |
| 3. style |
| 4. beauty |
| 5. durable material that ages aesthetically |
| 6. other memories and emotional values (places, events, life stage, self) |
| 7. the way it is manufactured (hand-made, self-made) |
| 8. color |
| 9. maintenance, reparability, modification possibility |

The oldest clothes or textiles carried a strong connection to a particular person: they could be inherited, a present or simply represent a memory of someone close, be they mother, grandmother, father, another relative or a friend. Emotional value also emerges through memories that are linked to particular places, situations or life stages such as one's own childhood or even life achievements.

The following section presents several of these responses from the questionnaire, and thereby a deeper description of how we become attached to clothes.

3. Clothes as home for a body

“[It is a] beautiful, blue festive dress, which I had in my childhood. The dress is so beautiful that I haven't yet been able to throw it away.” (48/125).

People engage with objects and surroundings aesthetically [7]. The interaction between user and object is on the basis of the aesthetic experience and at the same time pleasure that the object offers us [8]. Clothing unifies roles connected to identity, sexuality and sociality, and furthermore clothing choices externalize the inner self

[9]. According to Kaiser [10] temporal, fashion and aesthetic aspects belong to a cultural contextual approach to clothing. Other conceptual levels in clothing are e.g. group affiliation, social situation, immediate body space, personal characteristics, kinetic interaction and garment/body interaction [10]. The dress, the body and the self in the social context are perceived simultaneously, and we can approach clothing as an embodied experience that is socially constituted and situated [11].

Aesthetic attributes in clothing have an emotional effect on the wearer. In the survey, for example, one respondent said that a dress has become important because “I feel pretty when wearing it” (48/96). Clothing has a strong impact on our emotions [12], and it can elevate the wearer’s mood [9]. Jordan [5] points out that the emotional benefits of a product are those aspects that affect a person’s mood. We feel attached to clothes because of their aesthetic beauty, as well as through beauty experiences over time that develop in social situations and through positive and multi-sensorial use experiences. Nevertheless the functional and practical aspects are also fundamental in clothing attachments, as one of the respondents commented: “Very often practicality wins over aesthetics.” (48/80)

The beauty of clothing is not only visual, but also entails tactile, olfactory and kinetic experiences, such as the feeling of comfort, the weight of the material against our body, and pleasant touch and odor. The pleasure clothing offers to the wearer deeply involves the garment/body interaction, and this has a strong and profound connection to tactile memory and our personal experiences and history. The meaning of tactile experience and comfort is illustrated in the following responses.

“My oldest piece of clothing is a pair of shorts inherited from my aunt. They are really comfortable to wear, yet rather ugly.” (48/73)

“I still use the upper part of some flannel pajamas, which I inherited from my grandfather (the flannels have worn out already years ago). There is an emotional value, a feeling of safety.” (48/112)

“My oldest piece of clothing is a big woolen sweater which my grandmother bought for me and which I wear at home when I’m working at the computer... it gives me a cozy feeling.” (48/171)

“A wonderful and soft sweatshirt that I use at home. I got it from my nanny when I was a child, and it is somehow valuable to me. I feel safe when I am wearing it.” (48/37)

Important clothes that are cherished and deeply loved are not always beautiful. In the questionnaire there were several references to clothes that offered a feeling of safety and at the same time had high emotional value. This is often linked to the soft material touch against the skin. These clothes are used in the home environment only, and they are often connected to some important person (such as mother, grandmother or grandfather). Important memories emerge when wearing these clothes. They may be old and full of holes, but are still deeply loved.

Clothes offer a pleasant touch on the skin, comfort, and a warm and safe feeling. The multi-sensorial way we experience clothes creates a layered experience, which can give the user a deep emotional experience, creating meaning linking the piece of clothing to the wearer’s history, present and future. Clothes become as a home for our body as well as an access to our memories or mental stage: the feeling of home.

4. Memories and narratives

“I have preserved some clothes from childhood that evoke some fragile memories. These clothes stay alive also in photographs.” (48/93)

Meaningful things represent history, past events, and memory, and they may be a reminder of some important event, place or a person. The object carries the memory and acts as a keeper of the memory of the experience, but also acts as a promise to be able to repeat the experience. Meanings associated with objects can be lasting or temporary, cultural or subjective. Objects are basically unchangeable: it is their relation to their owner that changes over time. [13]

People possess many different craft items and objects that have the task of maintaining a connection to something important, perhaps a past period of life, such as one’s childhood, or a dead close relative [14]. In this questionnaire there were several references to hand-made, self-made or self-designed aspects in esteemed clothes. The following is a response from the questionnaire.

“The knitted Norwegian woolen sweater, which has a grey bottom and white pattern and is made by my mother. I myself selected the pattern and colors. I thought that the combination was beautiful, restrained and multifunctional, even if I liked brighter colors during that period. I haven’t ever worn it a lot, because I think that mother knitted it too tight and hard. Anyway I haven’t been able to throw it away in any move. I am getting emotional while I am writing this. My mother died six months ago.” (48/83)

Special objects we possess are items that include special memories or associations. These things evoke special feelings or stories that are meaningful. This history of interaction, the association with the objects and the memories they evoke, thus serves to construct a more discursive engagement with the object. Long-lasting emotional feelings are constructed through sustained interaction with things. Hence the narrative level carries obvious importance when evaluating the discursive level in our engagement with objects. [15]

Very much emotional value is thus embedded in clothes, as well as important narratives from years back. Some stories even go through generations, and they carry several meanings and family histories. They may offer us some insight into our own childhood that we may not even remember ourselves. Some narratives include the love of mother and father and the importance of self in the continuation of generations. Warm, nostalgic and happy feelings give these narratives color.

“On my bookshelf I have blue sandals that I had been wearing before I learned to walk. I don’t remember this myself, because I was under one year old at that time. The shoes were a present from my godmother from Germany. I had even kicked away one shoe when I was in the pram, when my parents and I were in Switzerland. Because of its emotional value several people had searched for this shoe, and it was finally found on top of a pillar, where some nice person had placed it.” (48/9)

“One of the oldest pieces of clothing I possess is a woolen sweater bought by my mother and father for their joint use in Italy in the 1980s. It was their first proper trip abroad, and because of that the sweater has been saved. I found it myself over ten years ago in a storage room and I took it to use myself. The model is a rather classical cable pattern, and it can be modified to different styles. This sweater is my favorite while the hippie and grunge style is my thing. Even if it is rather grubby it has a history. It

feels safe to wrap myself in it.” (48/148)

These respondents’ stories contain connections to several persons. Not all represent family ties, but also connections to an old friend, boyfriend, husband, etc.

“A woolen sweater I bought 28 years ago, when I went to visit my school-time friend in Turku. I haven’t met my friend after that, but I do remember him always when I am wearing the pullover. Still, it is a bonus that the pullover still looks beautiful; it is in good condition and it fits me, even if it is a narrow model.” (48/154)

Clothes can also represent the achievements in a person’s life, such as a special trip abroad (perhaps the first one) or some life stage (such as pregnancy, or the period of entering into adulthood). The respondents’ answers also contain stories where the person has been saving money for a longer period to acquire some desired clothing.

“During the 1990s’ recession period I saved from my weekly allowance for over one year to get my first pair of brand jeans. For a teenager it was some kind of status thing. Nowadays those jeans are still in use after several repairs. In those days you still got value for your money.” (48/24)

5. Ageing gracefully

“My oldest piece of clothing is probably a dark green leather jacket, which was tailored for my grandmother in the 1970s. I have had it already for 15 years. Between use periods it is in the attic and then I dig it out and wear it a lot. It has a timeless cut, and grandmother was a rather similar size to me, so the jacket fits me well.” (48/77)

Papanek [18] argues that we have a longing for objects which age well, for instance, antiques, and we appreciate products and artifacts that have the stamp of its maker. Antique and craft objects are made carefully with high quality. According to this study attributes of quality, aesthetic aspects (color, print and style) and ageing well are fundamental when respondents describe attributes of meaningful clothing (see Table III). Clothing that had a long life span due to its high quality, that is, good materials and good design, received the highest rating. Materials mentioned often were high quality wool and leather. Both these materials have the characteristic that they age in an aesthetically pleasant way: gracefully. In leather especially the user can see the ageing process, which gives the product a certain attractiveness related to the temporal dimension. In high quality wool ageing does not show as obviously, and the material looks good even if it has been used for several decades.

“I have a woolen jumper that I got from my grandmother. She bought it in Helsinki in the 1930s. The jumper is simple, classical in style and timeless in color (black/red), and very well kept. From its appearance no one can guess that it is so old.” (48/160)

Table III. Sustainable design attributes in clothing attachment

| |
|---|
| Design aspects: |
| High quality [92] |
| Color or print [50] |
| Classical style, timeless design [39] |
| Functional style [18] |
| Multifunctionality [12] |
| Materials which age aesthetically: |
| Wool [31] |
| Leather [11] |

The open answers contain several references to clothes from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Clothes from the 1950s were mainly self-made or hand-made, and very often even the fabric itself was self-woven. This has resulted in high quality materials and sewing techniques, and these clothes seem to be especially cherished. There were several references to the high quality of old clothes which the users can no longer find in contemporary clothes. At the same time these items were very often linked to the user's own family history, as in the following responses.

“Wadmäl [old wool fabric] knee pants, which I inherited from my uncle. Originally they were my uncle's school trousers from the 1950s, and the length of the trousers was determined by the width of the fabric. The product has lasted, because the material is long-lasting and high quality (the fabric was woven by great-grandmother's weaver neighbor) and the product was sewn together especially well (by great-grandmother's sewer neighbor). The product has since then been correctly taken care of (washed rather rarely with cold water and mild soap, aired, and protected from moths). Still in use rather often during wintertime.” (48/100)

“[Clothes] inherited from my grandmother, which I have worn for 20 years. Old clothes get old beautifully, and they are connected with so many memories that there is no reason to ever throw them away. I do store clothes, even if I don't use them...” (48/127)

“I especially cherish old clothes from my mother, which were made during the time when clothes were made so well that they lasted through generations. You can also find these kinds of clothes in flea markets. You also gladly want to take these kinds of clothes to repair, if the basic quality is good enough. It is not worthwhile buying these current mass-manufactured clothes from flea markets, because they look time-worn already when you are buying them from the shop.” (48/129)

Clothes from the 1960s and 1970s were industrially made from high quality materials, and at that time the textile and clothing industry still existed in Finland. The style from these periods is also recognizable and forms part of the ongoing retro fashion. On the basis of this questionnaire it can be concluded that the quality of the clothes from this era is the essential reason to possess and cherish these particular clothes. They also represent the history of textiles, as those factories and brands no longer exist. It can also be interpreted from the responses that regarding the quality of clothing, the end of the 1980s and the early period of the 1990s seems to be the turning point. This is the period when more and more clothing manufacturing moved from Finland to lower cost countries: first to Europe and later to Asian countries.

6. Expression of Self

“From the very beginning I felt a sense of ownership with this clothing; it works in all occasions, the quality is high, it is timeless, I enjoy wearing it, and it ages beautifully. Moreover it has helped me create a personal clothing style through a combination with different clothes. The product expresses my personality.” (48/111)

One important issue in the product world is the expression of one's self. A favorite object may be a symbol of some characteristic, uniqueness or value we want to connect to ourselves [15]. This level is very important in clothes. Beauty is one of those attributes we want to connect to ourselves. The expression of personality or uniqueness through appearance is also obvious in the context of clothing.

“The self-made winter coat from my high school period. The material is grandmother’s old furniture fabric from the sofa and the lining is an old bedspread. I sewed it myself and in the totally wrong way, because I hadn’t yet studied the profession. It is already ripped and repaired at the seams of the sleeves, but it is my most loved coat. When you have made it yourself, you know the structure, and it is easy to repair it. Moreover it is the right size, looks beautiful and expresses my personality. No one else has a similar looking coat.” (48/21)

Through clothing choices an individual can consolidate their inner self, their own identity, at an emotional level, not only in social interactions. The following quote from one respondent is a good example of the meaning of clothes that can give emotional stimulation to the inner self and serve as a reminder to the wearer of who s/he actually is or was back in history.

“A winter coat from 15 years back. It has a fur lining, a traditional green ‘activist’ coat, one of my first clothing items I bought at the flea market after my environmental awareness was awakened. It is still warm in cold winter weather, even if there are fewer frosty days every year. The coat for me is still linked to my youth’s uncompromising attitude and idealism.” (48/135)

7. Promise of experience

“I designed a woolen sweater for myself which my mother knitted for me. I wore it for 15 years. Now I am going to felt it (I hope it will felt) and make a bag from it or something.” (48/35)

Many old clothes offer an opportunity for change, the possibility to modify, as a promise of an experience to come. These clothes are made of high quality materials, which remain useful for modification. Several answers included this modification issue, where it was a strong reason for keeping the clothes.

“I have a lot of basic clothes, which have lasted for years and which can be combined with more individual clothes. Moreover I have bought a lot of sensational clothes from flea markets, which can be worn as themselves or I modify them. Through them I express myself.” (48/88)

Users interact with products, and through this acting with, thinking about and discussing them, meaning is created. When we are interacting with products, we begin to value them in a certain way, and as time goes on we create new meanings and experiences with the product itself, which are also based on our previous thoughts about it. [17]

Some clothes contain the promise of an experience which is developed through the earlier use of the product. “My mother’s old and black slip, which works as a perfect party dress.” (48/125) Based on this answer the interpretation can be made that this woman has experienced fun evenings while wearing this party dress, and she wants to repeat these experiences.

One respondent describes the story of a simple, traditional cotton Marimekko dress, which she bought from her friend ten years ago. The dress itself had already been in use then for about 10-20 years. The dress is easy to wear in multifunctional combinations. The fabric is high quality and durable. She also describes how she has made a copy of the dress, which is nearly as good as the original (48/137). The dress is so important to the user that she wants to extend and repeat the experience with the dress; hence she has ended up replicating it.

One piece of clothing mentioned in the responses was a men's dinner jacket that includes many levels of meanings and memories, personal association, as well as links to past, present and future promises of deep experiences. Not only has the quality of the material made the piece long lasting, but also all the meaningful associations at the cultural and subjective level and experiences have created a unique value for this object. The following is a quote from the questionnaire.

“Obviously the dinner jacket, which represents the 1920s. It was originally handmade for the movie *Fanny & Alexander*. Unfortunately I don't know who wore it in the movie. I bought it at the flea market in Stockholm Söder, Bondegatan [Bonde Street], sometime in 1981 or 1982. First I wore the jacket every day, and when I got bored of it I lent it to my friend, who also wore it frequently. I got married wearing that jacket (in fact twice). Now it is in the wardrobe, not used so much anymore. Sometimes I wear it at festive occasions. Now it has collected so much emotional value that it would be most difficult to give up.” (48/10)

8. Reflective attachment and discursive engagement

“My father's old, chocolate brown Nature Conservation organization's sweatshirt from the 1970s, which transferred first to my mother, then to my two sisters, and now to me. It has been kept like a delicate flower, except when my youngest sister took it in to make it fit better. To all of us it is somehow special. We have kept good care of it just like the threatened ringed seal pictured on the front. I use it only on special occasions. The ribs have worn out and they have to be renewed soon.” (48/63)

There are three different levels when processing product experience: the visceral, behavioral and reflective levels. The visceral level is the immediate one linked to appearance, where we make rapid judgments. This level is also a starting point for affective processing. The second level is the person's behavior with the object, and at the behavioral level pleasure and the effectiveness of use are the dominant factors. The last level is the highest level, the reflective one, where a person can reflect upon his/her experience. These three levels interact with each other. Hence the stimulation to act or experience can come from the lowest level, visceral, or the highest, the reflective level. When the stimulation comes from the highest level it is driven by thought processes; when coming from the bottom level stimulation is driven by perception. The reflective level comprises feelings, emotions, self-image, personal satisfaction, memories and cognition. At this reflective level, therefore, both emotions and thought processes are fully operating, while at the lower level there is no interpretation, understanding or deep reasoning, only direct effect. [15]

The obvious difference in these three levels is also temporal. The lower levels, visceral and behavioral, are about now, whereas the reflective level is under construction during a longer period. Through reflection a person connects the current experience with his/her past experiences, personal history and also with a vision of the future and individual values. Therefore the reflective dimension in design concerns the satisfaction created by owning, displaying, and using an object. [15]

The reflective level is fundamental in discursive engagement, which develops over time and connects the user with his/her inner discussion, identity construction, deep values through use, experience and satisfaction with

the product. In discursive engagement new elements also act as a stimulus to sustained interaction with the product, and new elements help to focus attention on the object. Hence discursive engagement includes the change factors that develop or emerge during time and use. [4]

Chapman argues [4; p. 67] that most current products made according to existing design and manufacturing practices do not have “evolutionary souls”. On the other hand users are in a constant self-constructing process, and a change process is unavoidable. Discursive engagement needs new properties or qualities in the object that the user discovers: possibilities that only come visible through time and frequent use. In other words the product should include opportunities for change.

9. Sustainable product attachments to clothes

Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton [18] have created a framework to distinguish meaning categories related to objects. They describe meanings related to the person, which are dimensions linking us to self, immediate family, kin and non-family aspects. There is also a non-person level that includes the past (memories and associations), present and future (experience, intrinsic quality of the object, style, utility and personal values). When forming an attachment to a new product enjoyment may be important, while attachments we form with old products are influenced by memories. [19]

Forlizzi et.al. [20] present a framework for an emotional product concept consisting of a short and reflexive emotional response (emotional statement) and sustained and reflective response (emotional experience). They propose that when designing products the following qualities should be included in the brief: a degree of interaction, capacity to provide a satisfying experience through enjoyable use, ongoing use or release, physical attributes, style and utility. They suggest two ways to approach user-product experience. The first is to consider the emotional function that acts as a stimulus for new experience, extenders of current experience and proxies for past experience. The second is to consider product characteristics that represent interaction, a satisfying experience, physical attributes, style and utility.

Based on the responses to the questionnaire a table has been drawn up of several attributes that create sustainable product attachments to clothes (see Table IV). These can be used in further discussion on durable clothing design as well as on implications for future design practice. The level of experience is very individual, and hence while the accumulation of memories is the most promising strategy regarding product attachment, it is a difficult task for a designer to achieve. Dimensions of product attachment related to the past (memories and associations) are based on individuals’ experiences. On the other hand present and future dimensions (experience, intrinsic quality of the object, style, utility and personal values) are easier to include in the design process, or at least opportunities can be created for these attachments to emerge through experience and time. [19]

Meanings created through time, based on personal experiences, history, and sensitivity and situated in a temporal and socio-cultural context entail too large a task for one designer. A designer or better still a multi-disciplinary group of researchers and designers together can nevertheless create possibilities for positive product interaction and foremost create a positive attitude towards a company offering these meaningful

opportunities for experiences [21].

Table IV. Attributes that create sustainable attachments to clothes

| Attributes that create sustainable attachments to clothes | |
|--|---|
| design/style | classical, timeless design, not overly loud visual messages strong design, represents some unique period of design style the experience of beauty in multi-sensorial ways |
| quality | high quality in design, materials and manufacturing durability |
| material | ageing well, aesthetically and gracefully (e.g. wool, leather) |
| functionality | multifunctionality fit reparability |
| personal values | uniqueness tailor-made self-made self-designed made for me expression of one's own ideology |
| emotional values | memories (history/past, places, people, moments, childhood) family ties positive associations (e.g. safe and soft tactile feeling) expression of self |
| present/future experiences | promise of experiences (e.g. modification possibility, party clothes, opportunities for narratives to emerge) family ties and continuity aspect suitability for gift-giving satisfying experiences |

When attachments to clothes have developed to the stage where the items have gained personal symbolic and sentimental value, they have earned cherishability [4]. When we value and respect the product in a deep emotional way, the product becomes meaningful, precious to us and it deserves to be well taken care of [22]. In this questionnaire several respondents mentioned the good care and repair of old cherished and loved clothes, as well as the modification aspect or the possibility to modify a garment in the future, as reasons explaining the long lifetime of certain clothes.

In the future, a promising approach to design research is to study the relationship between the user and the object and try to understand the many levels through which individuals create engagements with objects: not only through visual appearance but also at tactile and emotional levels [23]. The attributes highlighted in this study could be used in sustainable design strategies to drive a longer-term use of clothing.

10. Conclusions

The consumer perspective offers knowledge of product attachment to clothes, and this can provide a designer with a better understanding of the sustainable attributes in clothing. The creation of meaning is one of the most important issues a designer must consider in the context of sustainable design, and therefore the meanings behind sustainable clothes provide the most important insight for a designer. Through studying the consumer's product attachments, the designer has the opportunity to create reflective dimensions into the product in order to promote discursive engagement and emotionally durable design. The designer can use certain design styles, material choices, quality aspects, functionality considerations and strategies for designing and manufacturing in

a consumer-centered way when aiming for deep product attachment in order to promote sustainability. Other dimensions such as emotional values and the promise of future experiences are a more problematic task to tackle in design; nevertheless understanding these aspects may offer very new design opportunities and result in deeper product satisfaction, thereby extending the life span of products.

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