

RENT MORE, BUY LESS

**A QUANTITATIVE STUDY ON MEN'S VIEW ON RENTING
CLOTHES ONLINE**

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Rent More, Buy Less: A Quantitative Study on Men's View on Renting Clothes Online

Abstract:

The present overconsumption of fashion leaves a massive ecological footprint on the planet. An emerging business model in collaborative consumption addressing this problem is online clothing rentals, which allow consumers to rent everyday clothes instead of buying them. However, the rising business model is mainly targeting women, both in research and practice. Previous findings might not be directly applicable to men because of existing gender differences in shopping behavior and fashion involvement. For clothing rental companies to successfully target men, they need a better understanding of what currently hinders this economically important customer group from renting clothes online and how they differ from women. Therefore, this thesis aims to understand men's barriers to adoption and the differences in perceptions between men and women. A quantitative study was conducted to address this aim. The choice of relevant barriers and perceptions to include was based on previous research in clothing rental and gender differences in shopping behavior and fashion involvement. An online survey with 436 potential consumers showed that men have a noticeably lower attitude and intention to rent clothes online than women. While men and women differ in their perceptions of how useful they perceive the service, no differences exist in perceptions of ownership and gender identity of renting clothes online. For men, not perceiving clothing rentals as useful and highly valuing ownership of clothes depict significant barriers to adopting the renting service. However, perceiving clothing rentals as feminine is not a barrier for them. These findings have relevant implications for businesses wanting to target men. They also show the need to investigate the topic further.

Keywords: Collaborative consumption, online clothing rental, gender differences, barriers to adoption, perceptions

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Definitions

Online Clothing Rental: A business model where companies rent out clothing items online to consumers who pay a monthly subscription fee to access the clothes (Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Pedersen & Netter, 2015).

Collaborative Consumption: Consumption built on sharing products instead of owning them (Botsman, 2015; Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, 2010b).

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA): The model predicts behavior based on intention. The intention is indicated by the attitude towards the behavior and subjective norms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM): An adaptation to the TRA explaining the acceptance of certain technologies by users. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are major determinants of a person's acceptance of a technology and influence the attitude towards it (Davis, 1989, 1993).

Gender Differences: In this thesis, gender differences refer to biological differences between men and women regarding their sex.

Perceptions of Usefulness: A subjective belief of how convenient an individual considers renting clothes online to be (Tu & Hu, 2018).

Materialism: *“The importance ascribed to the ownership and acquisition of material goods in achieving major life goals or desired states”* (Richins, 2004, p.210).

Perceptions of Ownership: Describes how important possessions are to an individual (Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010). The concept is closely linked to materialism (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997).

Gender Identity: An individual's psychological and sexual identity (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Gender Contamination: Disapproval of consumers towards products strongly related to the other gender (Avery, 2012; Neale et al., 2016).

Perception: In this thesis the term perception refers to the opinion and belief of individuals based on the way things seem to them.

1. Introduction

This introduction will present background information on collaborative consumption and online clothing rentals. It will explain the importance of including men when studying consumer perceptions and barriers towards renting clothes online. Thereby, it will demonstrate the high theoretical and practical relevance of this topic and address this thesis's contribution. The chosen research questions will then be presented, followed by the delimitations and the outline of the paper.

1.1. Background

“The system of consumerism may seem like an immovable fact of modern life. But it is not. That the system was manufactured suggests that we can reshape those forces to create healthier, more sustainable system with a more fulfilling goal than ‘more stuff’” (Rachel Botsman, 2010a).

We have only one earth. However, with the continuous growth in population and consumption worldwide, the United Nations predicts that by the year 2050, we would need three planets to sustain the current way of living (United Nations, n.d.). To prevent this negative development and achieve climate neutrality by 2050, the European Commission has implemented the Circular Economy Action Plan (European Commission, 2020). A circular economy is “*a systematic approach to economic development designed to benefit businesses, society, and the environment*” (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, n.d.-a, para. 1). One essential part of the plan is to change the way we consume to avoid waste. Consequently, consumers' decisions regarding consumption are vital in moving towards a circular economy and reducing overconsumption.

The fashion industry, especially “fast fashion,” which is characterized by continually offering new, trend-based, and cheap items, is a massive contributor to overconsumption (Anguelov, 2015). Every year, more than 100 billion pieces of new clothing are manufactured. For each five new clothing items produced, three existing items go to waste (Remy et al., 2016). One problem with manufacturing these clothes is that it requires large quantities of non-renewable sources, water, and energy. Consequently, the linear textile industry of today leaves an enormous environmental footprint on the planet. In perspective, 1.2 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions result from clothing production each year, which is more than the

emissions from maritime shipping and international flights together (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). An additional problem in the fashion industry is that clothing items are underutilized. Some clothing items are thrown away after only having been worn seven to ten times. Overall, this accumulates to a value of USD 460 billion, which consumers miss out on by discarding clothing items much earlier than needed. If the growth of the industry continues in the linear fashion of today, the consequences are catastrophic. To achieve climate neutrality and to make the system of consumerism healthier and more sustainable, as addressed by Rachel Botsman, the industry needs to change (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, n.d.-b; Thomas, 2019).

In 2011, Time Magazine ranked collaborative consumption as one of the top ten solutions to transform the world (Walsh, 2011). Since then, the phenomenon has impacted consumption in different areas, such as accommodation (e.g., Airbnb; Guttentag, 2015) and car-sharing (e.g., BlaBla cars; Akbar & Hoffmann, 2018; Hickey, 2014). The fashion industry has also started to change due to the rise of collaborative consumption (Park & Armstrong, 2017). Collaborative consumption refers to business models that emphasize sharing instead of owning products, leading to more personal freedom and a lower environmental footprint. This emerging approach includes renting, swapping, sharing, bartering, lending, gifting, and trading products (Botsman, 2015; Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, 2010b).

In addition to the continuing growth in collaborative consumption, subscription e-commerce has grown by over 100% during the last years and has started to change people's consumption behavior. A survey shows that 15% of online shoppers have subscribed to an e-commerce service in 2017 (Chen et al., 2018). One thriving, subscription-based e-commerce service that also fulfills the criteria for being a collaborative consumption service is online clothing rental. The business model gives consumers the possibility to rent different clothing items each month. The ownership of the items remains with the company, and the consumer pays a monthly subscription fee for access to the clothes (Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Pedersen & Netter, 2015). This business model offers a sustainable alternative to fast fashion due to focusing on sharing items instead of owning them. The concept fosters the reuse of clothes, resulting in the production of fewer new items (Park & Armstrong, 2017).

Whereas the idea of collaborative consumption has existed for some time (Belk, 2014), the concept of renting clothes online is a relatively new phenomenon in theory and practice, with limited research available (Park & Armstrong, 2017; Pedersen & Netter, 2015). However,

renting clothes is a growing trend, and in recent years, the number and success of clothing rental businesses have been increasing rapidly (Lai et al., 2018; Lee & Chow, 2020). The model has not yet become mainstream in the apparel industry but shows promising growth expectations (Pedersen & Netter, 2015). A recent study on trends in the retail sector over the next decade shows that 30% of European consumers would regularly subscribe to rent fashion and beauty products (Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield, 2020). The market for online clothing rental is expected to grow by approximately 100% within five years, highlighting the business model's great potential (MarketWatch, 2020).

1.2. Problematization

In the theoretical field of clothing rentals and consumers' perspectives towards them, men are understudied. A large number of studies consider mainly women's points of view (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2015, 2016; Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Lang & Armstrong, 2018; McNeill & Venter, 2019; Park & Armstrong, 2019b, see Appendix A). This high focus on women as the primary target group is also present in practice, where the majority of existing clothing rentals offer only womenswear. The fashion rental pioneer *Rent the Runway*, which is now valued as a one-billion-dollar company, is no exception (Baker, 2020). While the successful company even rents out designer clothes for children, they do not offer options for men (Settembre, 2019). Until today, no similar company with comparable success targeting men exists (Testa & Bromwich, 2020).

Studies have shown that women buy more clothes online and are more fashion-conscious than men (Angelovska, 2018; Seock & Bailey, 2008). Those factors might explain why up until today, clothing rental companies and researchers have prioritized women (Lee & Chow, 2020). However, this difference between the genders has started to diminish in recent years, which is why men are becoming an attractive target group for many clothing rental businesses in the future (Angelovska, 2018; Sondhi & Singhvi, 2006; Tao & Xu, 2018). There is a generation shift in fashion attitudes. Men from Generation Y show higher shopping enjoyment and clothing involvement than older generations (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011). They have a greater interest in fashion and are more aware of clothing (Bakewell et al., 2006; Kestenbaum, 2017). The menswear market is growing fast, and consumption has increased in physical stores and online during the last years (Alvarado, 2017), which clothing rental companies should take advantage of.

Focusing on mostly female customers leads to an untapped economic potential for companies. While few successful companies renting clothes to men already exist, such as *Trunk Club* and *The Mr. Collection*, more businesses are now trying to widen their target group and tap into the promising growth potential of menswear rentals (Tao & Xu, 2018; Testa & Bromwich, 2020). Not targeting men as customers for clothing rentals also has environmental drawbacks. For the fashion industry to transform and contribute to the circular economy, it is not enough to only include one gender. Including men in the target group is especially relevant as the world's population and the demand for clothing continue to grow (Roser et al., 2013; Thomas, 2019).

1.3. Expected Knowledge Contribution

Previous research on consumer perspectives and barriers to adoption of clothing rentals often has focused on women and has thereby neglected men. The most prevalent identified barriers to adoption include a lack of trust in the provider, hygiene concerns, lack of ownership, and social concerns. A more extensive overview of the most relevant barriers to adoption is provided in Appendix A. However, based on differences in men's and women's shopping behavior and fashion involvement identified in the literature, these barriers may not apply to men without further investigation. Therefore, there is a need to consider men separately and in comparison to women. A gap regarding men's barriers to adoption of renting clothes online and how men's perceptions differ from those of women exists. The aim and purpose of this thesis are to fill this twofold knowledge gap.

Filling this knowledge gap will help both existing and future clothing rentals understand how they can tap into targeting men's economic potential by recognizing their barriers to adoption. While several companies have started to consider men as potential customers, uncertainty about how to attract them prevails (Testa & Bromwich, 2020). Businesses need to understand existing gender differences regarding consumers' perspectives towards clothing rentals to extend their target group to male consumers (Perlacia et al., 2017). This study will draw relevant implications for businesses regarding whether targeting men needs to be done differently compared to women. These contributions can increase collaborative consumption in the fashion industry, tackle problems with overconsumption, and reduce its environmental footprint.

1.3.1. Research Questions

Based on the background, problematization, and the expected knowledge contribution, the two research questions this thesis will answer are:

- 1) *How do men's perceptions of renting everyday clothes online differ from those of women?*
- 2) *What are the barriers for men to rent everyday clothes online?*

1.4. Delimitations

It was necessary to focus on one aspect of collaborative consumption to narrow this study's scope. Within the numerous examples in collaborative consumption, different forms can be distinguished. In this thesis, the focus will be on the form of product-service systems, which allow businesses to offer goods in the form of a service rather than selling them (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, 2010b). More specifically, this thesis focuses on the emerging trend of online clothing rentals, representing a viable business model with sizable economic potential and positive environmental impact (Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, 2010b; Tukker, 2004). Consequently, this study excludes all other forms of collaborative consumption, such as swapping, peer-to-peer, and second-hand. This delimitation is further motivated by the limited understanding resulting from research treating the various forms of collaborative consumption as the same concept (Park & Armstrong, 2019a).

Moreover, this study will focus on subscription-based everyday clothing, meaning it will exclude clothing rentals that only offer apparel for special occasions. This thesis will also exclude subscriptions that include styling services or offer the option to purchase items due to their different approaches and goals from rental companies (Park & Armstrong, 2019a; Woo & Ramkumar, 2018).

A third delimitation relates to focusing on only barriers instead of including both drivers and barriers of clothing rental. While drivers motivate a particular behavior, barriers to adoption include factors that hinder individuals from acting in a specific way. Men are currently more hesitant than women to rent clothing (Lee & Chow, 2020; Testa & Bromwich, 2020), and for them, barriers seem to outweigh the drivers to rent clothes online. For companies to successfully target men, they need a detailed understanding of how to overcome barriers that

currently keep men from using the service. Therefore, a focus on barriers to adoption seemed like a more relevant first step to address the currently understudied consumer group of men in the field of clothing rentals.

The number of chosen barriers depicts the fourth delimitation. Due to time and scope restrictions, only the barriers that seemed most relevant to men could be assessed. The decision which barriers to focus on is rooted in research in gender differences in shopping behavior as outlined in Chapter 2.2., *Gender Differences*, and materialism as described in Chapter 2.5., *Perceptions of Ownership*.

1.5. Research Outline

This thesis is divided into six main chapters, namely 1. *Introduction*, 2. *Theory and Hypothesis Generation*, 3. *Methodology*, 4. *Results and Analysis*, 5. *Discussion*, and 6. *Conclusion*. The following chapter, *Theory and Hypothesis Generation*, will present existing literature and underlying theories, which form the basis for the integrated hypothesis generation. The next chapter, *Methodology*, sheds light on the method chosen for this study. Moreover, it will include the voices of industry experts before explaining the main study in detail. In the fourth chapter, *Results and Analysis*, the hypotheses generated in Chapter 2 will be tested. The fifth chapter, the *Discussion*, will analyze the results found in the previous section. Moreover, the chapter links the findings to previous research and answers the research questions. Finally, the *Conclusion* presents theoretical and managerial implications and discusses limitations and proposals for future research on the topic.

2. Theory and Hypothesis Generation

The following chapter will introduce relevant literature on the topic and the theoretical framework to address the research questions. First, a brief introduction to the context of clothing rental will help understand this thesis's focus. Second, relevant knowledge about gender differences in online shopping, fashion purchasing, and online fashion consumption will be presented, which builds the basis for the subsequent section. The two academic fields of gender studies and clothing rental will then be combined to derive this study's hypotheses. The hypotheses will be presented in the same order as the research questions in each section. The hypotheses addressing a comparison between men and women aim to answer the first research question. The hypotheses testing the impact the potential barriers have on men's attitude aim to answer the second research question.

2.1. Introduction to Clothing Rental

A lot of the existing research on collaborative consumption is done in other industries than fashion (Park & Armstrong, 2017), such as cars (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012) or toys (Ozanne & Ballantine, 2010). However, consumption in the fashion industry differs from that in other sectors, as purchasing apparel affects people's emotions and perceptions of individuality (Park & Armstrong, 2017). While the findings from research on diverse forms of collaborative consumption and different industries than fashion still partly apply to clothing rental, this highlights the need for more research looking at the various sectors and types of collaborative consumption, such as clothing rentals, individually (Park & Armstrong, 2017, 2019a).

The existing literature on clothing rentals can be divided into two fields, the business and consumer perspective. The business perspective focuses on the business model of clothing rentals and its opportunities and challenges (Pedersen & Netter, 2015; Todeschini et al., 2017). The consumer perspective looks mostly at what drives and hinders individuals from renting clothes online (Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018; Park & Armstrong, 2019a, 2019b). As explained in Chapter 1.4., *Delimitations*, this thesis will specifically focus on barriers to adoption.

Previous literature has identified a large number of potential barriers for consumers regarding collaborative consumption in general (e.g., Barnes & Mattson, 2016; D'Agostin et al., 2020; Edbring et al., 2016), as well as clothing rentals (e.g., Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018; Lang,

2018; Park & Armstrong, 2019a). The following Chapter 2.2., *Gender Differences*, will serve as a basis to motivate the choice of barriers in this thesis.

2.2. Gender Differences

In this context, gender differences refer to existing biological differences between men and women regarding their sex. Understanding gender differences in shopping behavior is essential to predict consumer preferences and choices and the success of e-commerce (Lin et al., 2019; Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015).

2.2.1. Gender Differences in Online Shopping

Research on gender differences in non-fashion related online shopping behavior reveals that men prefer shopping online, whereas women are more active and take greater pleasure in shopping in physical stores (Dittmar et al., 2004; Hasan, 2010; Van Slyke et al., 2002). Compared to male consumers, female shoppers seem to be less emotionally satisfied with shopping online, which might be because they are less trusting of it (Rodgers & Harris, 2003). For women, the missing social interaction and emotional experiences might be barriers to shop online (Dittmar et al., 2004; Hasan, 2010; Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015). The utility, instrumentality, and functional benefits, such as economic, efficiency, and information benefits, mostly drive men to shop online (Hasan, 2010; Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015; Van Slyke et al., 2010). Women seem to be less concerned with the utility of online shopping (Hasan, 2010).

As shown above, men are more engaged with shopping online than women. However, the gender gap in online shopping has become significantly smaller in the last decade (Oghazi et al., 2020). Nevertheless, gender differences remain a vital field of inquiry, and research continues to observe differences between male and female online shoppers (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015; Oghazi et al., 2020; Seock & Bailey, 2008).

2.2.2. Gender Differences in Fashion Purchasing

Concerning offline apparel shopping, research shows that women are more involved with fashion and buy clothing more frequently than men (O’Cass, 2004; Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). Moreover, women spend double the time shopping for clothes compared to men. Also, females perceive apparel shopping as a way to socialize and become up to date with the newest

trends (Sondhi & Singhvi, 2006). Other researchers add that females, compared to men, show more hedonic shopping behavior, which sparks excitement (Kirgiz, 2014). Men shop apparel out of need and habit, and utilitarian instead of hedonic benefits seem more relevant for them (Chang et al., 2004; Sondhi & Singhvi, 2006).

Additionally, it should be noted that men's perceptions of fashion are changing. It seems that especially younger males are becoming more aware of fashion trends (Bakewell et al., 2006; McNeill & McKay, 2016). However, Bakewell et al. (2006) add that even though men are becoming more fashion-aware, they are still relatively simplistic and engage little in trying new styles. A potential explanation for men's observed conservatism regarding fashion is their fear of potentially being seen as "feminine" (Bakewell et al., 2006; Kimmel, 1994) since shopping is perceived as a vastly gendered activity (Otnes & McGrath, 2001).

2.2.3. Gender Differences in Online Fashion Consumption

The findings regarding utilitarian versus hedonic shopping motivations described above also seem to apply to purchasing fashion in an online setting. A study by Seock and Bailey (2008) suggests that females look for hedonic benefits regarding their online fashion purchasing, whereas males seek more functional benefits, such as convenience and saving time. Additionally, females are more price-sensitive than males. Even though women are more likely to purchase apparel online, it is still essential for online fashion stores and online clothing rentals to recognize male online shoppers' potential (Lee & Chow, 2020; Seock & Bailey, 2008). Shopping for clothing online can lead to increased convenience and time-savings, which fit the high importance men place on utilitarian benefits (Seock & Bailey, 2008).

2.3. Theory of Reasoned Action

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) has been applied in several different contexts to explain why people engage in different behaviors and to understand behavioral differences between genders (Ramkumar & Woo, 2018; Van Hooft et al., 2006; Yeo et al., 2017).

2.3.1. Intention

There are several different perspectives in the literature on how intention is defined. In the TRA, Ajzen (1991) conceptualizes intention as an indication of how much effort individuals are willing to put forth to achieve a behavioral goal, which is the definition that will be used in

this thesis. When individuals have the intention to perform a particular behavior, they are likely to do so. Therefore, the TRA aims to predict individuals' behaviors based on their intention to engage in it or not. Two factors indicate the individuals' intention: attitude towards the behavior and subjective norms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). These two determinants of intention will be addressed further in Chapter 2.3.2., *Attitude*.

Previous research has shown relevant differences between men and women regarding their shopping behavior (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015; Seock & Bailey, 2008). Also, men rent fewer clothes online than women at the moment (Testa & Bromwich, 2020). Consequently, the intention to rent clothes online is expected to be lower for men than for women. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H1: *Men have a lower intention to rent clothes online than women.*

2.3.2. Attitude

Together with subjective norms, an individual's attitude determines the intention. When these two factors favor engaging in a specific behavior, they positively affect the individuals' intention. Subjective norms are based on social pressures from family, friends, and society and their expectations towards engaging in the behavior or not. The attitude is based on the beliefs about the behavior outcomes and whether those outcomes will be favorable or unfavorable (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). More precisely, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define attitude as the negative or positive feeling connected to engaging in a certain behavior. This is the definition of attitude we will use in this thesis.

Previous research has established that attitude has a more considerable influence on consumers' purchase intention than subjective norms. Having a positive attitude towards a specific product increases consumers' intention to buy it (Belleau et al., 2007; Ha & Stoel, 2009; Yeo et al., 2017). These findings have also been made in the context of engaging in green consumption, buying fashion, and signing up for subscription-based online services for beauty and fashion (Belleau et al., 2007; Paul et al., 2016; Ramkumar & Woo, 2018). In the context of clothing rentals, studies support that attitude affects the intention towards renting fashion online and that this intention mirrors the willingness to engage in the behavior (Lee & Chow, 2020; Tu & Hu, 2018).

Moreover, consumers' gender can influence the relative importance of each of the two factors, attitude and subjective norms. Research has shown that women value interpersonal relationships and define themselves in their relationships with others, indicating that subjective norms play a more significant role for women. In contrast, men are more independent and prefer individual tasks, which implies that their attitude affects their intention more. To summarize, the subjective norm is a stronger predictor for women's intention, while attitude is the more vital indicator of men's intention (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Van Hooft et al., 2006).

Considering that men are less involved with fashion and are less likely to buy clothes online than women (Lee & Chow, 2020; O'Cass, 2004; Pentecost & Andrews, 2010; Seock & Bailey, 2008), they are expected to have a lower attitude to rent clothes online. Since attitude has been established to have the most substantial impact on both consumers' purchase intention and men's intention, the following hypotheses are developed:

H2: *Men have a more negative attitude towards renting clothes online than women.*

H3: *Having a negative attitude towards renting clothes online will decrease men's intention to rent clothes online.*

This section has established the relationship between attitude and intention and has shown that attitude is a legitimate predictor of intention. Therefore, the potential barriers presented in the following sections will focus on the connection to attitude and consequently use attitude as the dependent variable.

2.4. Perceptions of Usefulness

The following section will explain why perceived usefulness has been identified as a driver in previous studies. It will also, based on the previously presented gender literature, show why the same conclusion cannot be drawn for men.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is an adaptation to the TRA (Davis et al., 1989). The model states that the perceived ease of use and the perceived usefulness are significant determinants of a person's acceptance of a technology, and more specifically, influence a person's attitude towards a technology (Davis, 1989, 1993). While TAM has been initially applied to explain users' acceptance of technology, it has been extended to various fields,

including online shopping (Childers et al., 2001) and clothing rental (Davis, 1993; Tu & Hu, 2018). In the context of online shopping, perceived usefulness describes the outcome of online shopping. In contrast, perceived ease of use means the process of using the new technology or system, which then leads to this outcome (Childers et al., 2001). While both beliefs, perceived ease of use and usefulness have been identified to be relevant for clothing rentals (Lang et al., 2020; Park & Armstrong, 2019a), especially perceived usefulness seems to be important to men (Van Slyke et al., 2010; Venkatesh & Morris, 2000).

Perceived usefulness has, together with relative advantage, been identified as one of the biggest drivers for consumers to engage in clothing rentals (Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018; Park & Armstrong, 2019a; Tao & Xu, 2018). Research shows that perceived usefulness includes saving money and time (Park & Armstrong, 2019a). Becker-Leifhold and Iran (2018) support this finding by highlighting the utilitarian value of saving money as a crucial driver for engaging in clothing rental. Relative advantage is one of five characteristics of innovations, which influence a person's decision to adopt an innovation. If a product or service has a relative advantage over another, it is perceived to be better and brings more benefits than the available alternatives (Rogers, 2010). In the context of clothing rentals, this includes the rental service's convenience factor, more explicitly saving time and avoiding hassles (Tao & Xu, 2018).

It becomes apparent that while some studies name perceived usefulness as the primary driver of clothing rentals, others highlight the importance of relative advantage. However, the existing literature commonly treats perceived usefulness and relative advantage as similar constructs (Moore & Benbasat, 1991; Van Slyke et al., 2010). Besides, much research has highlighted the utilitarian value of clothing rentals, which is closely related to perceived usefulness (Childers et al., 2001; Mukendi & Henninger, 2020). Based on the connections and similarities between relative advantage, perceived usefulness, and utilitarian value, we will treat them as the same concept.

As stated in Chapter 2.2., *Gender Differences*, men highly value utilitarian benefits when shopping online and when purchasing clothing (Seock & Bailey, 2008; Van Slyke et al., 2010). Also, men place a higher value on relative advantage than women in an e-commerce setting (Van Slyke et al., 2010). They focus more on the instrumentality of e-commerce and apparel shopping; in other words, making purchasing products more efficient and effective (Chang et al., 2004; Van Slyke et al., 2010). Similarly, males place a higher value on convenience and

are more time-conscious than their female counterparts. More specifically, men are more functionally oriented, which means they want to save time and purchase their clothes in a convenient way (Seock & Bailey, 2008). As stated before, convenience is part of the relative advantage that is often seen as a benefit of clothing rental in existing research (Tao & Xu, 2018).

Based on the fact that the literature has identified the perceived usefulness of clothing rentals as a driver and that men highly value usefulness, it would be natural to assume that men would be highly engaged in clothing rental services. However, it should be noted that most of the studies that have identified perceived usefulness as a driver for renting clothes have been done on samples consisting of only or mostly females. They argue that female samples best represent these platforms' user segment today (Mukendi & Henninger, 2020; Park & Armstrong, 2019a; Tao & Xu, 2018). This high focus on female samples also impacts the results of approaches building on these studies, such as systematic literature reviews (Lang et al., 2020; Tu & Hu, 2018). However, it cannot readily be assumed that those findings will hold for men in the same way. Women are often more fashion- and price-conscious than men (Seock & Bailey, 2008). Therefore, while females might see an economic benefit in renting several, otherwise costly, branded clothing items at a reasonable price, this might not be as appealing to men. Also, a subscription requires men to engage with the clothing and order new items every month, which might decrease their perception of usefulness of the renting service.

Based on the above, we conclude that the fact that men value usefulness when it comes to shopping does not mean that they perceive clothing rentals to be an efficient and effective service, making their lives easier and saving them money and time. These negative perceptions of the usefulness of renting clothes online are expected to be reflected in their attitude. Therefore, the following hypotheses are developed:

H4: *Men perceive renting clothes online to be less useful than women.*

H5: *Not perceiving renting clothes online as useful has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online.*

2.5. Perceptions of Ownership

One commonly discussed characteristic of clothing subscription models is the lack of ownership, which can be perceived as both, an advantage or a disadvantage (Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018; Park & Armstrong, 2019a). On the one hand, several studies argue that the lack of ownership is a barrier to adopting product-service systems (Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018; Catulli, 2012). Giving up ownership is seen as a barrier due to its association with control and social status (Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018; Mont, 2002). Becker-Leifhold (2018) highlights the importance of ownership, especially for fashion items. On the other hand, studies conclude that not owning clothing is a driver to engage in rental services since it takes away the ownership burden (Lang et al., 2019; Park & Armstrong, 2019a). Non-ownership increases convenience because it allows for flexibility and takes away the need for maintenance (Akbar & Hoffmann, 2018; Rexfelt & Hiort af Ornäs, 2009). Moreover, by being released from the burden of ownership, consumers can focus more on the enjoyment and excitement of using their products (Lang et al., 2019).

The extent to which ownership is important to a person differs from individual to individual. The more relevant possession is for a person; in other words, the more someone values ownership, the less interested they are in renting (Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010). The endowment effect states that when an individual owns a good, he/she starts to associate the item with him/herself and the possession-self link makes him/her value the item more highly (Ariely et al., 2005). In the context of collaborative consumption for apparel, Park and Armstrong (2019b) found that the endowment effect can be a barrier for clothing consumption when the ownership is removed. The effect is more noticeable for products closely associated with identity, like clothes and accessories. People feel a stronger desire to own products they associate with being a part of themselves. These findings can explain why people might feel a stronger resistance towards engaging in clothing rental than car rental (Dommer & Swaminathan, 2013; Morewedge et al., 2009).

The importance of ownership is closely linked to materialism, as more materialistic people prioritize ownership more than less materialistic people (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997). Materialism can be defined as “*the importance ascribed to the ownership and acquisition of material goods in achieving major life goals or desired states*” (Richins, 2004, p.210). This definition is similar to that of Belk (1984), who also adds that materialistic people consider

possessions a central determinant of happiness or unhappiness. Several studies support the finding that more materialistic individuals have negative perceptions towards collaborative consumption and are less willing to participate in it (Akbar & Hoffmann, 2018; Barnes & Mattsson, 2016; Edbring et al., 2016; Lang & Armstrong, 2018; Lee & Chow, 2020; Lindblom et al., 2018).

Research has established that men are more materialistic and associate material possessions with happiness to a more considerable extent than women (Belk, 1984; Eastman et al., 1997; Kamineni, 2005; Roberts & Clement, 2007; Segal & Podoshen, 2013). Reasons why men show higher levels of materialism might be explained by the high value they place on conspicuous consumption, which means they value strengthening their image through openly consuming possessions (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004). Similarly, men have more self-monitoring traits than women, which means they are more conscious about their self-presentation (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997; O’Cass, 2001). Therefore, as ownership is closely related to social status, giving up possession of clothes might be especially unfavorable to men.

To conclude, men are more materialistic than women and perceive owning goods as a way to express their identity and increase their happiness. Individuals who place higher importance on possession are less likely to engage in clothing rentals since ownership is removed. Based on that, the following hypotheses are developed:

H6: *Ownership of clothes is more important to men than to women.*

H7: *Preferring ownership of clothes has a negative impact on men’s attitude to rent clothes online.*

2.6. Perceptions of Gender Identity

According to the self-congruency theory, individuals prefer products and brands that reflect their image or identity (Sirgy, 1982). Gender identity refers to an individual’s psychological and sexual identity instead of biological sex (Stets & Burke, 2000). Gender is an integral part of an individual’s identity and leads to differences in consumption behavior.

Gender identity and dividing products and brands into being masculine or feminine are more important to men than women. Men focus more on everyday items’ gender identity (Gal & Wilkie, 2010) and tend to buy more gender-congruent products than females (Fugate &

Phillips, 2010). Moreover, men avoid using products associated with female reference groups (White & Dahl, 2006). One example from previous research is that men are less likely to engage in sustainable behavior since it is viewed as feminine and can threaten their masculinity (Brough et al., 2016; Stafford & Hartman, 2012). Also, they avoid choosing food they perceive as feminine (Gal & Wilkie, 2010). This resistance towards feminine products led to *Coca-Cola* launching *Coke Zero* (Avery, 2012; Nobel, 2013), the same drink as *Diet Coke*, but without the feminine association, the word “diet” brings (Stoeffel, 2014). Men are more sensitive towards gender contamination, which arises when products strongly related to one gender are consumed by the wrong gender (Avery, 2012; Neale et al., 2016). They are more comfortable with products that state they are masculine, such as “*Nivea for Men.*” Also, men exaggerate masculine brands’ masculinity and feminine brands’ femininity (Avery, 2012; Azar et al., 2018).

Men’s higher resistance towards feminine products and brands is also applicable for fashion (De Alwis & Ramanathan, 2019). Fashion has a feminine gender identity since females generally show a higher interest and involvement in clothing than men (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997; O’Cass, 2004), and shopping is perceived as a feminine activity (Tuncay & Otnes, 2008).

To summarize, the gender identity of products is more important to men than to women. Men do not want to engage in behaviors associated with being female. Since fashion is often seen as a feminine interest, the following hypotheses are developed:

H8: *Men perceive renting clothes online as more feminine than masculine compared to women.*

H9: *Perceiving renting clothes online as feminine has a negative impact on men’s attitude to rent clothes online.*

2.7. Summary of Hypotheses and Conceptual Framework

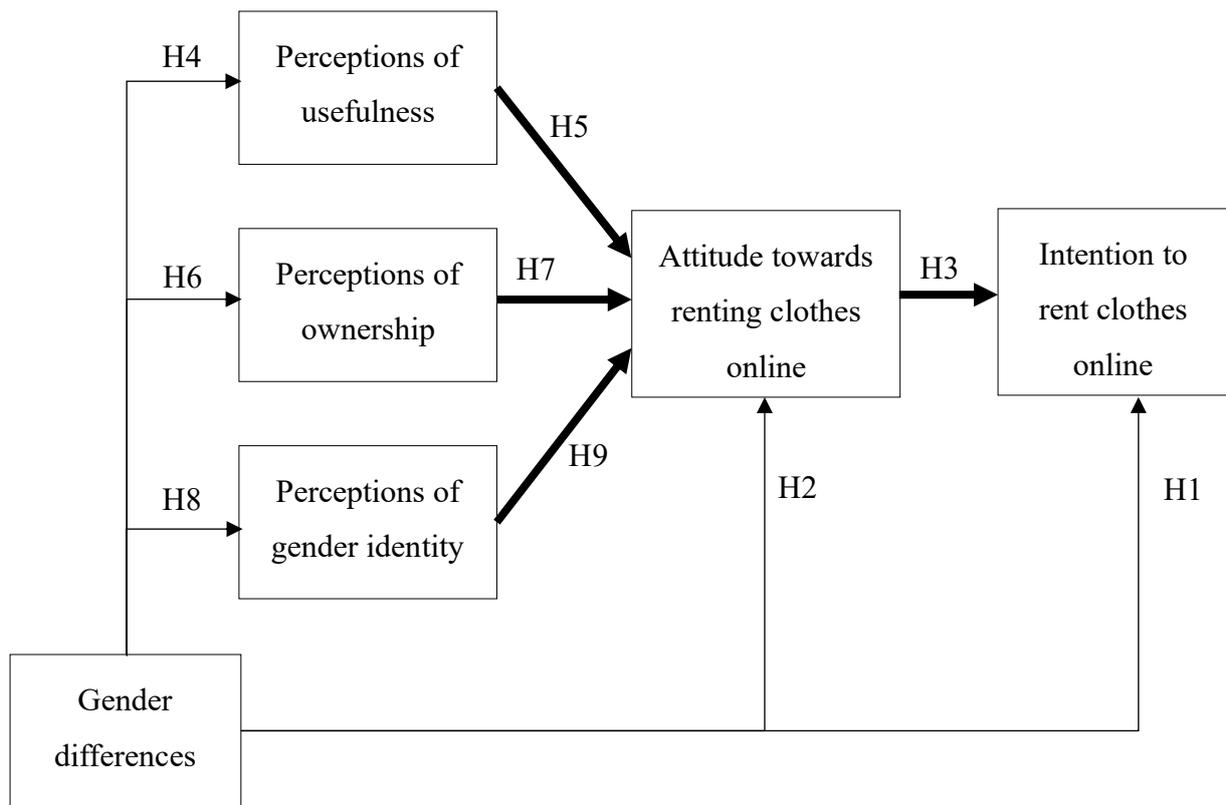
The developed hypotheses and conceptual framework are presented below to summarize Chapter 2., *Theory and Hypothesis Generation.*

Table 1*Summary of Hypotheses*

Relationship	Hypothesis
Intention and attitude	H1: Men have a lower intention to rent clothes online than women.
	H2: Men have a more negative attitude towards renting clothes online than women.
	H3: Having a negative attitude towards renting clothes online will decrease men's intention to rent clothes online.
Attitude and usefulness	H4: Men perceive renting clothes online to be less useful than women.
	H5: Not perceiving renting clothes online as useful has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online.
Attitude and ownership	H6: Ownership of clothes is more important to men than to women.
	H7: Preferring ownership of clothes has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online.
Attitude and gender identity	H8: Men perceive renting clothes online as more feminine than masculine compared to women.
	H9: Perceiving renting clothes online as feminine has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Note. The thinner lines include males (n = 167) and females (n = 267) to address the first research question. The thicker lines include only the male sample (n=167) to address the second research question.

3. Methodology

The following chapter will elaborate on the methodology of this thesis. First, it will outline the scientific research approach chosen for this study. Afterward, results from complementary expert interviews on the topic are presented before the main study is explained in detail, including the pilot test of the questionnaire, sample and sampling, survey design, and survey measures. Finally, the data is discussed critically, considering its reliability, validity, and replicability.

3.1. Scientific Research Approach

This study is based on the ontological perspective of objectivism and the epistemological standpoint of positivism. Positivists believe that an objective and external reality exists independent of our thoughts or knowledge of it. Therefore, to answer the research questions, data was collected in a value-free way to create generalizable and scientific statements (Bell et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2012).

As described in Chapter 2., *Theory and Hypothesis Generation*, this thesis combines existing research from two fields, gender studies and clothing rental, to derive hypotheses that help answer our research questions. Since our study is grounded in existing theory to create hypotheses, which are tested and analyzed, it follows a deductive approach. Existing studies have already established several common barriers based on existing theory; however, they have not addressed the gap of looking at men separately and comparing their perceptions to women's. As we reapplied existing theory to fill a gap instead of generating new theory, a mainly qualitative approach did not seem fitting (Bell et al., 2019).

Practically, the study followed a quantitative research strategy, conducted through a survey, to test the developed hypotheses. More specifically, an online self-completion questionnaire served as a useful method to collect otherwise unobservable data, such as attitudes, from a large number of potential or existing costumers of clothing rentals (Bell et al., 2019; Bhattacharjee, 2012). Conducting the survey online seemed advantageous, given the environment's similarity to renting clothing items on the internet.

Nevertheless, due to the topic's practical importance, it seemed beneficial to support the quantitative study with qualitative and complementary expert interviews to support academic relevance and connection to praxis. These interviews were conducted objectively and will be presented in Chapter 3.2., *Complementary Expert Interviews*.

3.2. Complementary Expert Interviews

A complementary study was done with seven experts in sustainability, fashion, and consumer perspectives. The purpose of these interviews is not to directly answer the research questions, which is why they are not presented in Chapter 4., *Results and Analysis*. Instead, the purpose of the interviews is to complement the literature and empirical research with a business and academic perspective on clothing rental. Therefore, they are presented below, which allows us to distinguish them from the main study clearly. The topic's practical and timely relevance made the experts' insights especially applicable when discussing our findings.

The interviewees were asked open-ended questions about their overall view on renting clothes online, gender differences in men's and women's fashion consumption, and potential barriers for consumers to rent clothes online (see Appendix B). The majority of the interviews were conducted through digital meetings. The aim was to hold all interviews face-to-face, but some were conducted through email due to the experts' time constraints. While conducting interviews through email bears the risk of receiving short and unelaborated answers, we nevertheless perceived their input as too valuable to exclude given their level of expertise (Hawkins, 2018). Also, since these interviewees had more time to reflect on the answers, it could have increased the data quality (Given, 2008).

All interviews included the same order and formulation of questions. The questions were asked objectively and without interference. This approach allowed us to collect the data in a value-free and non-judgmental way, which aligns with the scientific research approach. An overview of interview participants and their field of expertise are summarized in Table 2. All the experts' answers are presented anonymously in the text and table to adhere to ethical principles (Bell et al., 2019).

Table 2*List of Interviewees*

Interviewee	Area of expertise
The CEO	CEO of a jeans leasing company
The Founder	Founder of a menswear clothing rental company
The Professor	Professor in fashion studies and design
The Sustainability Expert	Sustainability director in the field of retail
Researcher 1 (R1)	Researcher in the field of sustainable product innovation and product design
Researcher 2 (R2)	Researcher in the field of consumer decision making and self-control
Researcher 3 (R3)	Researcher in the field of consumer decision making

Overall View on Clothing Rentals

The experts' overall opinions were that the importance of clothing rentals would increase as collaborative consumption continues to grow in other areas. Clothing rental will be a part of a more sustainable and collaborative future in the fashion industry, and more people are starting to get familiar with it. Even though it may not become the industry's leading business model, it will be a sustainable complement and grow over time.

Gender Differences

The interviewees highlighted several gender differences in fashion and its consumption. Women show more interest in clothes, visit clothing stores more frequently, and consume more clothes than men. Also, the Founder states that men have been stereotyped as being unfashionable. They have a lower interest in fashion and spend less time on it compared to women. Women often desire different kinds of styles and have several jeans models while according to the CEO:

“Men like the idea of a well-fitting pair of jeans that do not change much”.

Women’s higher enthusiasm also applies to sustainable fashion. However, this can be contradictory.

“Women are perhaps more interested in sustainability AND to have a large wardrobe”
(R1).

Barriers to Adoption

One of the barriers to consumers’ adoption of clothing rentals is habit. People are used to buying and owning their clothes instead of renting them. There are also several stigmas about renting clothes. One of them is about wearing clothes someone else has been wearing since they will not know in which context those clothes have been used.

“People do not want to wear a piece of clothing someone has been wearing to a funeral”
(The Founder).

A second stigma is that other bodies have touched the clothes, and therefore, the feeling of the clothes being hygienic is of utmost importance. Several industry experts brought up the problem with how to wash the clothes and make the consumers understand that they are fresh and clean.

“People are hesitant against second-hand clothes and clothes..., that you know, have been touched by other bodies. This is where the cleaning becomes essential” (The Professor).

R2 mentions that this barrier can be exacerbated due to the coronavirus pandemic we are currently experiencing.

Also, some of the interviewees mentioned the supply differences for the genders. Both the Founder and the Sustainability Expert argue that men have fewer choices when they shop for clothes, and the options are also more boring. Having less choice and more boring options than women might be a possible barrier for men.

R3 also brings up two other possible barriers:

“...it may not appeal to all consumers, especially those who do not look for variety or who place higher value on physical ownership.”

The majority of the interviewees agreed with ownership being a further barrier. According to R2, this barrier is more applicable to men than women:

“Women might be more open to sharing with others, while men might be more focused on personal ownership.”

R3 also develops her view on ownership and agrees that it might be more important to men. Because men seem to care more about control and ownership creates a feeling of control, R3 states:

“Clothing rental companies may need to consider ways in which to boost the perceptions of control for male customers. For example, firms may look for ways to offer greater customization opportunities for customers, which might increase their feelings of control over the process.”

R1 shares the view of the importance of ownership and does not believe it will decrease in the future:

“...my guess is there will always be a need for personal ownership.”

3.3. Main Study

3.3.1. Pilot Test of the Questionnaire

Before collecting data for the main study, a pilot test of the questionnaire was carried out. This pilot study aimed to uncover and improve potential mistakes or ambiguities in the questions or scales used (Bell et al., 2019). Fifteen people participated in the pilot study and gave written feedback on the items for the main study. The pilot study respondents were of mixed age, nationalities, and gender, similar to the main study's expected participants. Most pilot-study participants were non-native English speakers, except for one. Since most expected respondents are anticipated to be non-native English speakers, this safeguards against potential misunderstandings in wording by that group. However, having one native English speaker

nevertheless ensured the grammatically correct language. Based on the input from the pilot-study respondents, several changes in the questionnaire were made. The changes included, for example, a more precise explanation of the scale displaying whether people perceive individuals who rent clothing to be masculine or feminine. Many respondents had problems distinguishing between “*masculine/feminine*” and “*male/female*,” which is why the “*masculine/feminine*” scale was changed to “*has a masculine behavior/has a feminine behavior*.” Also, during the pilot test, several respondents answered the questions based on their understanding of whether renting clothes would be good or bad for the general population. Changing the instructions on how to answer the questions helped make respondents understand that they should base their answers on their personal views on the scenario instead. Moreover, the feedback also resulted in several smaller changes and clarifications in the questionnaire’s scenario and welcome text. After adapting the questionnaire based on the pilot group’s comments, it was tested on five further individuals. No more changes were required.

3.3.2. Sample and Sampling

The sampling of respondents for the main study was conducted between the 14th and 27th of October 2020. An online self-completion questionnaire was considered as a fitting instrument. Since clothing rental companies operate online, it is essential that the target group can access the internet and knows how to use it.

The survey was spread on different social media platforms, such as *Facebook* and *LinkedIn*, where people were invited to participate. The respondent sample represents a convenience sample, which means that respondents are chosen based on availability. Additionally, a snowballing technique was used where people were asked to further distribute the survey in their networks to decrease the convenience sample’s bias and increase the sample size (Saunders et al., 2012). Also, the platform *SurveyCircle* was used to diversify the respondents further (<https://www.surveycircle.com/en/>). While this type of non-probability sample is cost and time-efficient, it has limitations regarding the data’s generalizability, as the data does not represent the general population (Bell et al., 2019). A sample representative of the general population with internet access would have been optimal, as this study aimed to capture and compare all potential consumers’ attitudes towards clothing rental.

Participants were informed that every response results in a donation to the *World Wildlife Fund (WWF)* to incentivize participation in the study. While egoistic incentives, such as a monetary

prize or entering a lottery, have been shown to be more beneficial for response rates than altruistic motivations, they would also threaten the anonymity of respondents and thereby potentially the honesty of answers (Bell et al., 2019; Pedersen & Nielsen, 2016). Therefore, choosing an altruistic reward, such as a donation, seemed more appropriate in the given context and allowed us to adhere to ethical standards regarding the anonymity (Bell et al., 2019).

In total, 445 people answered the survey. Four respondents who spent less than 1:30 minutes on the survey were excluded to ensure the answers' quality, as this was significantly lower than the average time spent on the questionnaire. Further, five respondents were excluded since they answered the control question about the study's content wrong, which shows they were unfocused when answering the questions. Additionally, we screened the remaining sample for straight liners, meaning respondents answering the same number on all questions, but did not find any. Therefore, 436 answers were considered valid. Two respondents indicated "other" when asked for their gender, which is not enough for a separate gender group of comparison. Therefore, they will not be included in further testing.

The sample consists of 61% women and 38% men and is relatively young, with an average age of 29 years. 67% of respondents are either from the Nordic countries or Germany, while 33% come from other countries (see Table 3). The characteristics of the sample are not representative of the general population. However, the relatively young age of respondents seems appropriate, given the online operating context of clothing rentals.

As there are no clear guidelines regarding sample size in non-probability samples and given the context of our study looking at consumer attitudes, we ensured that the sample size of the study is comparable to similar studies in the field of clothing rental (Lang, 2018; Lang & Armstrong, 2018; Saunders et al., 2012). It should be noted that the split between genders in our sample is relatively uneven (men: $n = 167$, women: $n = 267$). However, the minimum number of respondents in each group remains in line with other studies (e.g., Lee & Chow, 2020; Tu & Hu, 2018). The impact of the differences in sample size on the applied tests will be addressed in Chapter 4.1., *Analytical Tool and Data Preparation*.

Table 3*Composition of Sample (N = 436)*

Demographics	Women		Men		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Number of participants	267	61	167	38	434	100
Age						
16–24	144	33	65	15	209	48
25–40	85	19	79	18	164	37
40–63	38	9	23	5	61	14
Country of residence						
Germany	123	28	70	16	193	44
The Nordic countries	55	13	45	10	100	23
Non-European countries	42	10	29	7	71	17
Other European countries	39	9	22	5	61	14
Double	4	1	0	0	4	1
N/A	4	1	1	0	5	1
Previous renting experience	6	1	2	0	8	2

Note. Two individuals indicating “other” as their gender are not included in this table.

3.3.3. Survey Design

The main study was created in the online survey tool *Microsoft Forms*. At the beginning of the survey, participants were presented with a short scenario about renting clothes online (see Appendix C). The scenario introduced the respondents to the concept of clothing rental and presented them with a realistic situation of the current online clothing rental market conditions, such as how many clothing pieces they can rent for a specific price. The scenario was created

by screening four existing renting companies (see Appendix D) and relying on existing research in the area (Park & Armstrong, 2019b). Using a real-life scenario on the conditions of renting clothes online, such as the price, allowed us to collect consumers' views given these conditions. While the specific information might have impacted the responses, it represents realistic conditions the consumers would encounter if they decide to rent clothes online.

The study's questions can be divided into three themes, representing the potential barriers identified from the previous literature, namely usefulness, gender identity, and ownership. Additionally, attitude and intention towards renting, and demographic questions, were included in the survey. At the end of the survey, a control question was placed to ensure the respondent's attention while answering the questions (Alvarez et al., 2019). As recommended by Bell et al. (2019), demographic questions about age, gender, and nationality were left until the end of the survey.

English was chosen as the survey's language since the questionnaire was distributed online, and respondents were therefore expected to be of mixed nationalities. The questions' wording was chosen carefully to ensure comprehensibility and logic of the questions and avoid misunderstandings. The questions' language has also been tested with native and non-native English speakers in the pilot study.

To ensure honest replies and avoid only getting socially desired answers from participants, the answers' anonymity was incentivized in the introduction text (Wildman, 1977). The anonymity further ensured the ethical collection of data (Bell et al., 2019). Besides, the instruction texts clarified to participants that some questions would be similar, however, that this served the study's purpose. This clarification seemed necessary based on feedback from the pilot study. A progress indicator was incorporated in the questionnaire since research suggests this decreases the likelihood of people abandoning the survey before completing it (Couper et al., 2001).

As recommended for self-completion questionnaires, the study included only closed questions (besides demographic and control questions). Closed questions allow for easier processing and comparing answers. For participants, closed questions allow straightforward completion of the survey and a clarified meaning (Bell et al., 2019). The closed questions were presented on either a 7-point Likert scale or a semantic differential scale, in line with the research each scale

was adapted from. Therefore, the questions were arranged horizontally with clear instructions on how to respond. Both scales allowed respondents to be extreme or neutral since one could choose the middle option. Since the scales differentiate between seven items, subtle differences can be noted in the answers, and answers can easily be compared (Bell et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2012). The negative items (e.g., “*strongly disagree*”) were consistently placed on the left side of the scale and the positive items (e.g., “*strongly agree*”) on the right, as this makes the questions more understandable and logical to the respondent (Söderlund, 2005).

3.3.4. Survey Measures

The questionnaire measures have all been established in peer-reviewed studies to ensure measurement quality and allow comparison (Bell et al., 2019). Most of the measures used have already been adapted to the specific field of clothing rental (Lee & Chow, 2020; Park & Armstrong, 2019b; Tu & Hu, 2018), while others were adjusted to fit this context (Avery, 2012).

Intention

The intention to rent clothing was measured by adapting a scale from Lee and Chow (2020), who have applied the scale used by Karahanna (1999) from the context of technology adoption to renting clothes online. However, while Lee and Chow (2020) measured two items, only one was used for measuring the intention to rent clothes in our study. The second item used by Lee and Chow (2020) included ambiguous terms and asked for two different things at once, which is not recommended since it creates confusion for the respondents (Bell et al., 2019). The item used to measure the intention to rent clothing items online was, “*I intend to rent fashion items online within the next six months.*” The framing and use of this one-item scale are in line with recommendations from Ajzen (2006). Respondents could indicate their agreement or disagreement on a 7-point Likert scale.

Attitude

The scale measuring attitude towards renting clothing online was taken from Lee and Chow (2020), who adapted the scale to online clothing rental based on Ajzen’s (2006) recommendations. However, the wording was slightly changed to avoid misunderstandings based on feedback from the pilot study. The attitude towards clothing rental was assessed using a 5-item scale measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale. Respondents were asked to rate the statement: “*For me, renting clothes online would be...*” on the following bipolar

adjective scales: “*harmful-beneficial*,” “*unpleasant-pleasant*,” “*bad-good*,” “*worthless-valuable*,” and “*unenjoyable-enjoyable*.” The five items created an attitude index with Cronbach’s Alpha of .92.

Perceptions of Usefulness

The measure for perceptions of usefulness was adapted from Tu and Hu (2018), who adapted the measurement scale from Taylor and Todd (1995) and Davis et al. (1989) to fit the context of clothing rentals. Perceptions of usefulness were measured with a 6-item scale using a 7-point Likert scale, reaching from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*,” where higher scores indicated higher perceived usefulness. The statements rated by respondents were the following: 1. “*I think clothing rental is very convenient*,” 2. “*I think clothing rental is useful to me*,” 3. “*I think clothing rental can make me more fashionable*,” 4. “*I think clothing rental can quickly bring me the products I want*,” 5. “*I think clothing rental can save me money*,” 6. “*I think I can effectively manage storage space through clothing rental*.” The six items generated a usefulness index with Cronbach’s Alpha of .79.

Perceptions of Gender Identity

To measure whether people associate a particular gender with clothing rental, they were asked to identify the kind of person that typically rents clothing items. The measurement was adapted from Avery (2012). Respondents were presented with a total of five semantic differential items. The items consisted of semantic differential scales, which were displayed in 7-point Likert scales with opposite meanings at each end, namely “*stylish-unstylish*,” “*has a masculine behavior-has a feminine behavior*,” “*young-old*,” “*male-female*,” “*hip-mainstream*.” The study was only interested in gender identity, displayed in masculine/feminine behavior and male/female (Avery, 2012). However, other opposites were kept not to give away the purpose of the question to respondents and avoid bias (Sandhu & Singh, 2017). The two statements related to gender identity showed a Spearman-Brown coefficient of .79.

Perceptions of Ownership

Individual perceptions of ownership within clothing rental were assessed using a 2-item scale from Park and Armstrong (2019b), who adapted their measures from Moeller and Wittkowski (2010). Additionally, the survey included a 3-item scale from Lee and Chow (2020), who measured psychological ownership in their research. Respondents indicated on a 7-point Likert scale how much they disagree or agree to the following statements: 1. “*Owning my clothing*

items (instead of renting them) is important to me,” 2. “Having ownership of my clothing items (instead of renting them) gives me comfort because I have access to those items,” 3. “The money paid for renting fashion items online is NOT worthwhile since I cannot own the items,” 4. “NOT being able to own the fashion items I love is annoying,” 5. “I want to own the fashion items I like and feel that they are mine.” Two of the statements (3 and 4) include negative wording, which Bell et al. (2019) recommend avoiding based on the risk that respondents might miss the word "not" when reading, which would change the meaning entirely. Therefore, the word “NOT” was purposely written in capital letters to remain with the original wording and avoid the risk described above. The Spearman-Brown coefficient for the 2-item scale from Park and Armstrong (2019b) was .79. The Cronbach’s Alpha of the 2-item scale was identical with the value of .79, which was calculated to allow comparability to the 3-item scale from Lee and Chow (2020). As the latter resulted in a lower Cronbach’s Alpha of .74, the 2-item scale was chosen for the analysis.

Demographic and Control Questions

The survey’s final part included demographic questions asking about participants’ age, gender, and nationality. The questions about age and nationality were presented as open-ended questions, whereas the gender question gave the options to choose between “*male,*” “*female,*” and “*other.*” These demographic questions seemed relevant as they help to understand the sample, how it compares to the general population and samples of previous studies, and respondent’s potential differences in perceptions. Moreover, a control question was placed asking participants what the survey was about, and respondents giving wrong answers were excluded from the study. Additionally, the questionnaire asked whether participants had rented clothes online before, as renting experience might impact the respondents’ answers.

3.4. Critical Review of the Data

Reliability, validity, and replicability are important measures to evaluate the data’s quality, which is a common concern when conducting quantitative research (Bell et al., 2019). All three factors are addressed below to evaluate the quality of this work.

3.4.1. Reliability

Reliability deals with the consistency of measures. High reliability means that measures are accurate and stable and that the results are repeatable (Bell et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2012).

The measure comprises stability, internal reliability, and inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater reliability will not be addressed further since subjective judgment is not a concern due to the nature of the quantitative research (Bell et al., 2019).

Stability

This element of reliability assesses if a measure is stable over time, and its results do not fluctuate. Consequently, if a measure is retested at a later point to the same sample and in the same contextual setting, there would be little to no variation in the collected data (Bell et al., 2019).

Our research measures different aspects, from personality traits to attitudes, which might change over time at a different pace. Materialism is considered a personality trait (Belk, 1985), which is stable over time (Bell et al., 2019). Also, extensive research on the TAM model has revealed a high test-retest reliability of perceived usefulness (Hendrickson et al., 1993). Gender identity can be argued to be relatively stable, as studies show that while a change in perceptions of gender identity has occurred over the last decades, the pace of change is relatively slow (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). However, the market for online clothing rentals is growing quickly (Lee & Chow, 2020; MarketWatch, 2020), and consequently, people's attitudes towards the service might change. Importantly, over time several events can cause the intention towards behavior to change. This possible change has essential consequences regarding the predictability if consumers will rent clothes online (Ajzen et al., 2018). Therefore, we conclude a medium strength of the stability in our study, as the fast-changing market environment might impact people's perceptions towards the service.

Internal Reliability

Internal reliability refers to whether the items in a multi-item scale are coherent and consistent when measuring the same intended variable, e.g., perceptions of ownership (Bell et al., 2019). Cronbach's Alpha test was applied to test the internal reliability of the measures with more than two items, namely attitude and perceptions of usefulness. For measures with only two items, namely perceptions of ownership and gender identity, we used the Spearman-Brown coefficient to determine reliability as research has shown it to be the most appropriate measure for 2-item measures (Eisinga et al., 2012). The general rule states high internal reliability of multi-scale items at a value above .70, which all measures achieved (see Table 4; Bell et al., 2019). Furthermore, the measures used were taken from peer-reviewed academic articles in

related fields to ensure the data sources' credibility. Similar internal reliability has been established in previous research (Lee & Chow, 2020; Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010; Tu & Hu, 2018). It should be noted that intention was measured using a one-item scale, which means an assessment of internal reliability is not possible. Consequently, while the internal reliability for measures with more than one item is considered high, an overall evaluation of internal reliability cannot be conducted.

Table 4

Cronbach's Alpha and Spearman-Brown Coefficient for Measures

Measure	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Spearman-Brown
Attitude	5	.92	
Usefulness	6	.79	
Ownership	2		.79
Gender identity	2		.79

3.4.2. Validity

Validity is an essential criterion to measure the quality of the collected data since it ensures the integrity of the conclusions drawn from the research. Three primary constructs were considered to determine this thesis's validity, namely measurement validity, external validity, and ecological validity (Bell et al., 2019).

Measurement Validity

Measurement validity considers whether or not a measure captures the concept intended to capture (Bell et al., 2019). The measurements used in this study are well-established and based on reliable sources. As part of the TAM model, perceived usefulness has been used for many decades, and its measurement validity has been established in various studies (e.g., Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989; Taylor & Todd, 1995). This established validity holds for the measures of intention and attitude (Karahanna, 1999; Lee & Chow, 2020). In addition, the measurements for gender identity (Avery, 2012) and perception of ownership (Lee & Chow, 2020; Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010; Park & Armstrong, 2019b) have been assessed for measurement validity

in peer-reviewed journals. Since all measures applied in this thesis have been checked for their measurement validity, we conclude that they capture what they were set out to capture. Consequently, the measurement validity of this study can be considered high.

External Validity

External validity captures whether it is possible to generalize the study's findings beyond the specific research context to the larger population (Bell et al., 2019). As the sample is relatively young ($M = 29$) and 67% of respondents are from either Germany or the Nordic countries, the results are limited to that population. Using a convenience sample generally lowers the study's generalizability to the broader population compared to a probability sample (Bell et al., 2019). Several measures were taken to counteract this effect and thereby strengthen the external validity of the study. For example, a snowballing technique was used where people were asked to share surveys in their networks to widen the scope beyond our own networks. The sample was further diversified using the website *SurveyCircle*, where participants from various countries and ages could participate. Using an online-self completion questionnaire additionally ensured that only subjects with the necessary knowledge to operate on the internet, which is a precondition for renting clothing online, are targeted. Overall, the external validity of this study is, therefore, considered adequate.

Ecological Validity

The construct of ecological validity questions if a study's findings can be applied to the natural social settings occurring in everyday life. Answering questions on a questionnaire is generally considered an unnatural environment, which lowers this thesis's ecological validity (Bell et al., 2019). However, it should be acknowledged that ordering clothing items on the internet is an activity that occurs online, just like answering the survey. Even though being similar, a difference between the two activities nevertheless remains. A fictitious scenario was embedded in the questionnaire to help people imagine what ordering clothing online would look like in real life to bridge this gap. Also, people were explicitly prompted to "*Please imagine the following scenario.*" Therefore, the ecological validity of this survey can be considered sufficient.

3.4.3. Replicability

Replicability assesses whether a study can be reproduced, which is essential for other researchers who might want to strengthen or contradict the original research findings (Bell et

al., 2019). Well-established measures have been employed to make this study replicable. Those measures have been tested for their data quality and have previously been replicated in other studies (e.g., Avery, 2012; Lee & Chow, 2020; Park & Armstrong, 2019b; Tu, & Hu, 2018). Also, the theory, methodology, and analysis have been well-documented and described in detail, allowing other researchers to replicate the study if desired. Overall, the replicability of this thesis can be argued to be sufficiently high.

3.4.4. Concluding Remarks on the Data Quality

Overall, the data quality can be considered sufficiently high, even though some weaknesses were identified following the use of a cross-sectional design and a convenience sample. However, using a cross-sectional design served as a useful way to collect data on people's attitudes. Moreover, this way of collecting data is very prevalent among the most relevant quantitative studies for this thesis's scope (e.g., Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Lang, 2018; Lang & Armstrong, 2018). If more time and resources would have been available, using a probability sample would have optimized this study's results.

4. Results and Analysis

The following chapter will analyze the collected data to uncover how men's perceptions of clothing rentals differ from those of women and what the barriers to adoption for men are. The chapter will start by presenting the analytical tool used and explaining the required data checks and re-coding. Lastly, the previously developed hypotheses will be tested, and the overall fit of the model will be assessed.

4.1. Analytical Tool and Data Preparation

The analytical tool *IBM SPSS Statistics 26* was used for processing and analyzing the collected data. Since the data was collected with the survey tool *Microsoft Forms*, an electronic transfer to *SPSS* was possible. Thereby, a manual transfer could be avoided, eliminating potential human errors from the manual transfer.

As described in Chapter 3.3.2., *Sample and Sampling*, we excluded nine responses to ensure high data quality. The excluded respondents spent insufficiently little time answering the questions or answered the control question wrong. Furthermore, the sample sizes of men and women were relatively uneven. However, the sample size difference has no impact on answering the second research question, as it only considered the male sample. Regarding how men differ from women concerning their perceptions, the difference was deemed acceptable. Sample sizes can be regarded as equal if the larger group is not more than 1.5 times bigger than the smaller group (Morgan et al., 2004). Our two samples violated that guideline only slightly ($267/167 = 1.6$). This decision is further supported by the similarity in demographics and the fact that it did not seem appropriate to exclude valid answers of the larger sample.

Moreover, the scale for perceptions of ownership was re-coded in *SPSS* so that high values would indicate a preference for renting, which is in line with the logic of the other scales.

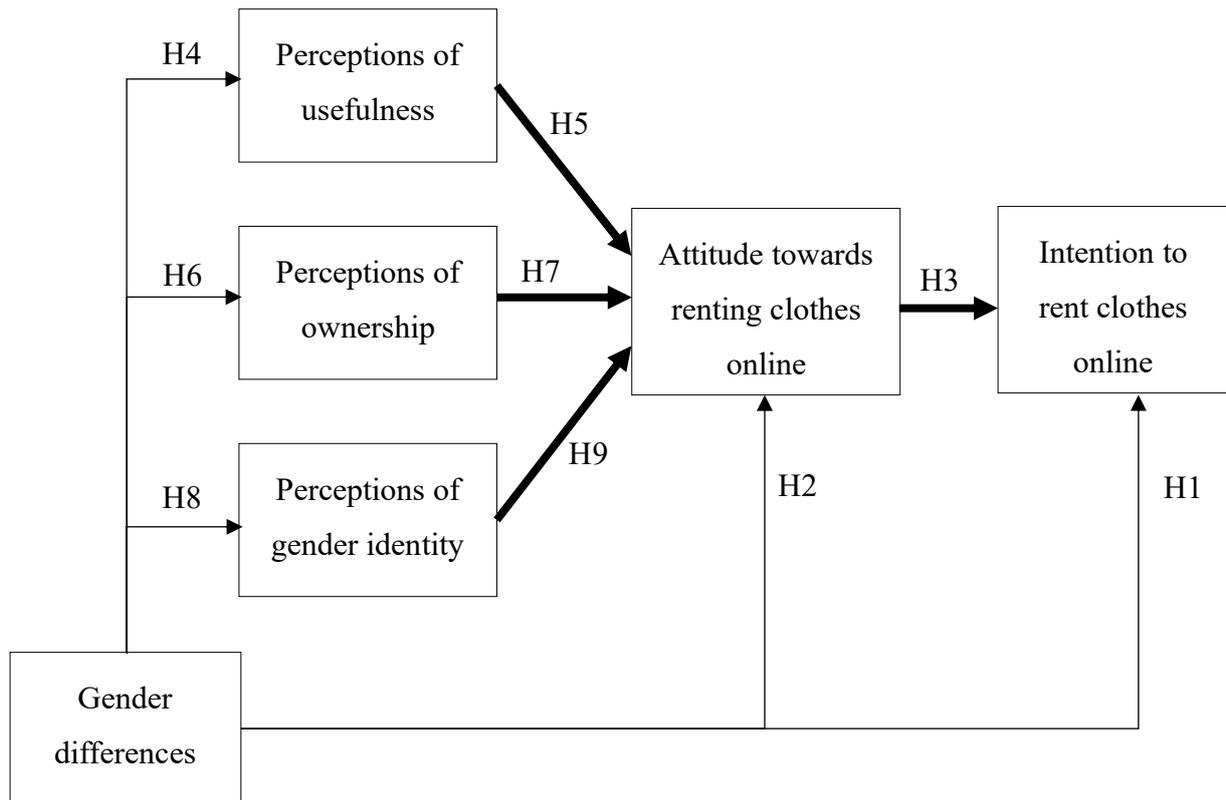
Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter 3.4.1., *Reliability*, Cronbach's Alpha and the Spearman-Brown coefficient were checked for multiple- and two-item scales, respectively, before creating indices. The criteria for sufficient reliability was met for all measures.

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

The previously developed conceptual framework is presented below as a visual reminder before describing the hypothesis testing.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework Reminder



Note. The thinner lines include males (n = 167) and females (n = 267) to address the first research question. The thicker lines include only the male sample (n=167) to address the second research question.

The first section of the hypothesis testing will use Independent Samples t-Tests to analyze gender differences in intention and attitude towards renting clothes online before using Simple Linear Regression Analysis to predict men's intention based on their attitude. This section serves to establish that gender differences in attitude and intention exist and are significant.

Afterward, the analysis will focus on the potential barriers identified based on the literature. Each section of the analysis will start with a gender comparison in the form of an Independent Samples t-Test to answer the first research question of how males and females differ regarding their perceptions to rent clothes online. Next, each section will consider only the male sample to answer the second research question about the barriers for men to rent everyday clothing online. The question will be addressed using a Simple Linear Regression Analysis to test if the hypothesized barriers can predict men's attitude towards renting clothes online. Using a Simple Linear Regression allows us to determine the strength of the relationship between the potential barriers and attitude (Saunders et al., 2012). Lastly, Multiple Linear Regression will be used to establish the overall fit of our model. All hypotheses were evaluated on a significance level of 5% ($p < .05$).

4.2.1. Assumption Testing

All assumptions for using an Independent Samples t-Test were tested for each hypothesis before conducting the test. The assumption of independence of observations was met by using gender as a grouping variable. For some hypotheses, outliers existed (H1, H4, H6, H8). To ensure the outliers would not significantly impact the result, we ran the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test, which is far less affected by outliers than the Independent Samples t-Test. As the results did not significantly differ from those of the parametric t-Test, we focused on reporting results from the latter. To check whether the dependent variables are approximately normally distributed for males and females, we conducted a Shapiro-Wilk Test, which indicated some deviations from normality (Laerd Statistics, n.d.-a). However, the Independent Samples t-Test is quite robust to normality violations (Saunders et al., 2012). Also, based on the Central Limit Theorem, a t-Test of large enough samples will still provide valid results, which is the case for both of our groups. Moreover, if the distributions were skewed, they were skewed similarly for males and females, which is seen as less troublesome than groups with distributions of a different shape. Additionally, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was assessed using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances for each Independent Samples t-Test conducted. If this assumption was not met, it will be further addressed in the respective results section (Laerd Statistics, n.d.-a).

Furthermore, all assumptions for conducting a Simple Linear Regression were tested for each hypothesis. We visually inspected the scatterplot for all hypotheses and thereby confirmed for each hypothesis that a linear relationship between the two variables exists. Moreover, we

checked the Durbin-Watson Statistics to establish the independence of observations, which was met for all hypotheses. For Hypotheses 3 and 5, outliers existed, which is a violation of assumptions. However, as these outliers were neither caused by measurement nor data entry errors, there was no valid reason to remove them. As our data was collected in the form of a Likert scale, it had to be expected that some individuals would indicate very high or very low answers representing their opinions, which does not make their answers invalid. Additionally, there was homoscedasticity, which we tested by visually investigating the plot of standardized residuals versus standardized predicted values. Lastly, residuals were approximately normally distributed, which we inspected visually through the normal probability plot (Laerd Statistics, n.d.-b).

4.2.2. Attitude and Intention

Gender Comparison: Intention

The first hypothesis states that men have a lower intention to rent clothes online than women. We tested this hypothesis using an Independent Samples t-Tests to compare men and women in their intention to rent clothes online. Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances was significant ($p < .001.$), violating the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the two groups. Due to the violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the two groups, we ran a Welch’s t-Test, which does not assume equality of variances. The results showed that the intention for men ($M = 2.00, SD = 1.52$) was lower than that for women ($M = 2.59, SD = 1.73$), a statistically significant difference, $MD = 0.59, 95\% CI [0.28, 0.90], t(386) = 3.75, p < .001.$ The effect size Cohen’s d was not applied as it uses pooled variances, which is not applicable with the Welch’s t-Test. The finding suggests that men have a lower intention to rent clothing online than women, which provides empirical support for Hypothesis 1. A summary of the results is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Welch’s t-Test Difference Between Men and Women for Intention

	Women		Men		95% CI		$t(386)$	p	Cohen’s d
	M	SD	M	SD	LL	UL			
Intention	2.59	1.73	2.00	1.52	0.28	0.90	3.75	.001**	-

Note. n female = 267, n male = 167; CI = confidence interval of the difference; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

H1: Men have a lower intention to rent clothes online than women.

H1 SUPPORTED

Gender Comparison: Attitude

The second hypothesis states that men have a more negative attitude towards renting clothes online than women. To compare this difference in attitude between men and women, we conducted an Independent Samples t-Test. The results showed that men’s attitude ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.45$) towards renting clothes online was significantly lower than women’s attitude ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.38$), $MD = 0.93$, 95% CI [0.65, 1.20], $t(432) = 6.67$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.65$. The effect size ($d = 0.65$) based on Cohen (1988) can be considered a medium effect. The findings indicate that men have a significantly more negative attitude towards renting clothes online than women. Therefore, the data provides empirical support to accept Hypothesis 2. A summary of the results can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

Independent Samples t-Test Difference Between Men and Women for Attitude

	Women		Men		95% CI		$t(432)$	p	Cohen’s d
	M	SD	M	SD	LL	UL			
Attitude	4.45	1.38	3.53	1.45	0.65	1.20	6.67	.001**	0.65

Note. n women = 267, n men = 167; CI = confidence interval of the difference; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

H2: Men have a more negative attitude towards renting clothes online than women.

H2 SUPPORTED

Men: Attitude and Intention

Hypothesis 3 focuses only on the male sample and states that having a negative attitude towards renting clothes online will decrease men’s intention to rent clothes online. We computed a Simple Linear Regression to predict men’s intention based on their attitude towards renting clothes online. The Simple Linear Regression established that the attitude towards renting clothes could statistically significantly predict intention to rent clothes online, $F(1, 165) = 64.49, p < .001$. The attitude accounted for 28.1% of the explained variance in intention, indicating a medium effect size (Cohen,1988). Based on the outlined findings, the hypothesis is supported. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Simple Linear Regression Results: Attitude and Intention

Intention	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R ²	Adj. R ²
		LL	UL				
Model						.28	.28**
Constant	0.05	-0.47	0.57	0.26			
Attitude	0.553**	0.42	0.69	0.07	0.53**		

Note. n = 167; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; SE B = standard error of the coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; R² = coefficient of determination; Adj. R² = adjusted R².

*p < .05. **p < .01.

H3: *Having a negative attitude towards renting clothes online will decrease men’s intention to rent clothes online.*

H3 SUPPORTED

4.2.3. Perceptions of Usefulness

Gender Comparison: Perceptions of Usefulness

Hypothesis 4 proposes that men perceive renting clothes online to be less useful than women. We conducted an Individual Samples t-Test to test this hypothesis. The results show that men ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.22$) perceive clothing rentals as significantly less useful than women ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.16$), $MD = 0.53$, 95% CI [0.30, 0.76], $t(432) = 4.54$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.45$. The effect size ($d = 0.45$) is small; however, close to being categorized as medium (Cohen, 1988). These results suggest that men think of renting clothes online as less useful than women. Consequently, Hypothesis 4 is supported. The results are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Independent Samples t-Test Difference Between Men and Women for Usefulness

	Women		Men		95% CI		$t(432)$	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD	LL	UL			
Usefulness	4.42	1.16	3.89	1.22	0.30	0.76	4.54	.001**	0.45

Note. n women = 267, n men = 167; CI = confidence interval of the difference; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

H4: *Men perceive renting clothes online to be less useful than women.*

H4 SUPPORTED

Men's Barrier to Adoption: Usefulness and Attitude

The fifth hypothesis holds that for men, not perceiving clothing rental as useful leads to a negative attitude towards renting clothes online. We ran a Simple Linear Regression to test if not perceiving clothing rentals as useful predicts attitude towards the service. The Simple Linear Regression results indicated that not perceiving renting clothes online as useful could statistically significantly predict men's attitude towards clothing rentals, $F(1, 165) = 223.71$, $p < .001$. Perceptions of usefulness accounted for 57.6% of the variance in attitude. According to Cohen (1988), the effect size can be considered large. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was supported. A summary of the findings is shown in Table 9.

Table 9*Simple Linear Regression Results: Usefulness and Attitude*

Attitude	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R ²	Adj. R ²
		LL	UL				
Model						.58	.57**
Constant	0.004	-0.48	0.49	0.25			
Usefulness	0.907**	0.79	1.03	0.06	0.76**		

Note. n = 167; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; SE B = standard error of the coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; R² = coefficient of determination; Adj. R² = adjusted R².

*p < .05. **p < .01.

H5: *Not perceiving renting clothes online as useful has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online.*

H5 SUPPORTED

4.2.4. Perceptions of Ownership

Gender Comparison: Perceptions of Ownership

The sixth hypothesis states that ownership of clothes is more important to men than to women. We conducted an Independent Samples t-Test to compare the means of men and women. The results of the test did not show a significant difference between men ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.31$) and women ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.30$), $MD = 0.18$, 95% CI [-0.07, 0.43], $t(432) = 1.39$, $p = .164$, $d = 0.13$. The results point out that while both groups have relatively low means indicating that ownership of clothes is important to them, the test found no significant difference between men and women. Therefore, there is no empirical evidence to support Hypothesis 6. A summary of the results is presented in Table 10.

Table 10*Independent Samples t-Test Difference Between Men and Women for Ownership*

	Women		Men		95% CI		<i>t</i> (432)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD	LL	UL			
Ownership	2.66	1.30	2.49	1.31	-0.07	0.43	1.39	.164	0.13

Note. n women = 267, n men = 167; CI = confidence interval of the difference; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

H6: *Ownership of clothes is more important to men than to women.*

H6 NOT SUPPORTED

Men's Barrier to Adoption: Ownership and Attitude

Hypothesis 7 states that preferring ownership of clothes has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online. We conducted a Simple Linear Regression to see whether the preference for ownership predicts men's attitude towards renting clothes online. The results showed that men's perceptions of ownership present a statistically significant predictor for their attitude towards renting clothes online, $F(1, 165) = 38.84, p < .001$. The perceptions of ownership explained 19.1% of the variance in attitude, indicating a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). These findings give reason to support Hypothesis 7. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 11.

Table 11*Simple Linear Regression Results: Ownership and Attitude*

Attitude	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R ²	Adj. R ²
		LL	UL				
Model						.19	.19**
Constant	2.325**	1.90	2.76	0.22			
Ownership	0.484**	0.33	0.64	0.08	0.44**		

Note. $n = 167$; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; $SE B$ = standard error of the coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination; $Adj. R^2$ = adjusted R^2 .

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

H7: *Preferring ownership of clothes has a negative impact on men’s attitude to rent clothes online.*

H7 SUPPORTED

4.2.5. Perceptions of Gender Identity

Gender Comparison: Perceptions of Gender Identity

Hypothesis 8 states that men perceive renting clothes online as more feminine than masculine compared to women. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between men ($M = 5.20, SD = 1.02$) and women ($M = 5.29, SD = 1.17$) in their perceptions on how feminine renting clothes online was, $MD = 0.08, CI [-0.13, 0.30], t(432) = 0.75, p = .452, d = 0.08$. The findings indicate no statistically significant difference between men’s and women’s perceptions of whether clothing rental is more feminine than masculine. No empirical support for Hypothesis 8 was found. The results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Independent Samples t-Test Difference Between Men and Women for Gender Identity

	Women		Men		95% CI		$t(432)$	p	Cohen’s d
	M	SD	M	SD	LL	UL			
Gender identity	5.29	1.17	5.20	1.02	-0.13	0.30	0.75	.452	0.08

Note. n women = 267, n men = 167; CI = confidence interval of the difference; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

H8: *Men perceive renting clothes online as more feminine than masculine compared to women.*

H8 NOT SUPPORTED

Men’s Barrier to Adoption: Gender Identity and Attitude

The ninth hypothesis states that perceiving clothing rental as feminine has a negative impact on men’s attitude to rent clothes online. We computed a Simple Linear Regression to test whether perceiving clothing rental as a female activity predicts men’s attitudes towards the service. The Simple Linear Regression results indicated that perceiving renting clothes online as feminine could not statistically significantly predict men’s attitude towards the service, $F(1, 165) = 0.92, p = .339$. The perceptions of gender identity explained 0.6% of the variance in attitude. Based on Cohen (1988), no effect was observed. Based on these findings, Hypothesis 9 was not supported. The results of the Simple Linear Regression are shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Simple Linear Regression Results: Gender Identity and Attitude

Attitude	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R ²	Adj. R ²
		LL	UL				
Model						.01	.00
Constant	4.079**	2.92	5.24	0.59			
Gender identity	-0.106	-0.33	0.11	0.11	-0.07		

Note. n = 167; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; SE B = standard error of the coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; R² = coefficient of determination; Adj. R² = adjusted R².

*p < .05. **p < .01.

H9: *Perceiving renting clothes online as feminine has a negative impact on men’s attitude to rent clothes online.*

H9 NOT SUPPORTED

4.3. Overall Model Fit

In addition to the hypotheses tested above, we conducted a Multiple Linear Regression, which allowed us to ascertain our model's overall fit to answer the second research question. Using a Multiple Linear Regression helped us determine the variance in men's attitude that the barriers could explain and the relative contribution of each (Laerd Statistics, n.d.-c).

The assumptions for using Multiple Linear Regression were tested. All assumptions for the Simple Linear Regression were also met for the Multiple Linear Regression. In addition, there was no evidence of collinearity, which was determined by tolerance values greater than .10. Also, there were no leverage points greater than .20 and values for Cook's distance above 1 (Laerd Statistics, n.d.-c).

The Multiple Linear Regression model statistically significantly predicted attitude, $F(3, 163) = 85.27, p < .001$. R^2 for the overall model was 61.1%, with an adjusted R^2 of 60.4%, indicating a large effect size, according to Cohen (1988). In line with the Simple Linear Regression results, perceptions of usefulness added most significantly to the prediction, followed by perceptions of ownership. Gender identity did not add statistically significantly to the model. Regression coefficients and standard errors are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Multiple Linear Regression Results for Attitude

Attitude	B	95% CI for B		SE B	t	β	R^2	Adj. R^2
		LL	UL					
Model							.61	.60**
Constant	0.371	-0.51	1.25	0.45	0.83			
Usefulness	0.838**	0.71	0.96	0.06	13.27	0.70**		
Ownership	0.186**	0.07	0.30	0.06	3.13	0.17**		
Gender identity	-0.108	-0.25	0.03	0.07	-1.51	-0.08		

Note. n = 167; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; SE B = standard error of the coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination; Adj. R^2 = adjusted R^2 .

*p < .05. **p < .01.

4.4. Model Summary

The tested hypotheses and the revised conceptual model are presented below to summarize our findings.

Table 15

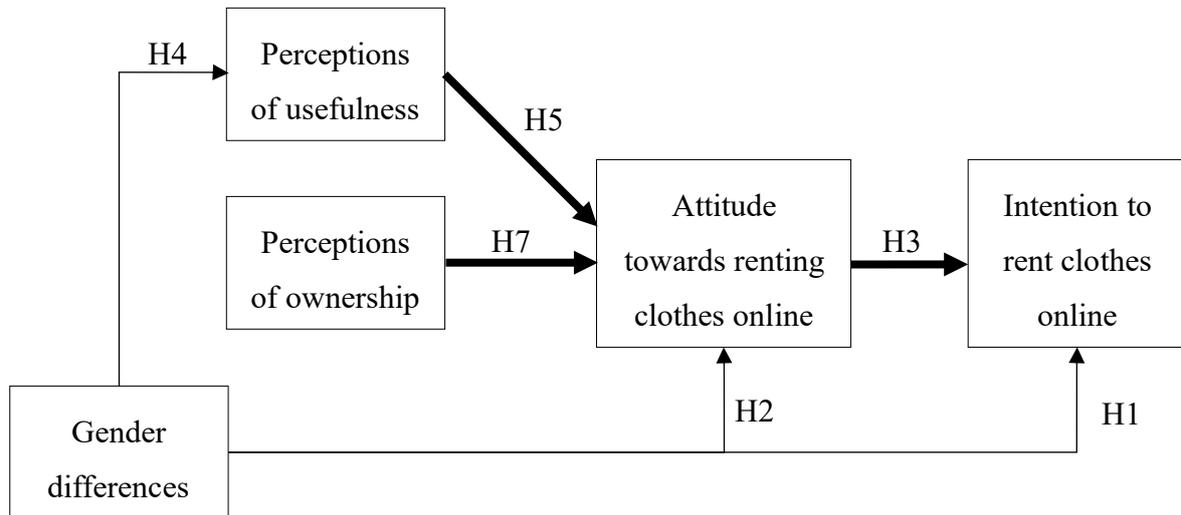
Summary of Results Categorized by Relationship and Hypothesis

Relationship	Hypothesis	Results
Intention and attitude	H1: Men have a lower intention to rent clothes online than women.	Supported
	H2: Men have a more negative attitude towards renting clothes online than women.	Supported
	H3: Having a negative attitude towards renting clothes online will decrease men's intention to rent clothes online.	Supported
Attitude and usefulness	H4: Men perceive renting clothes online to be less useful than women.	Supported
	H5: Not perceiving renting clothes online as useful has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online.	Supported
Attitude and ownership	H6: Ownership of clothes is more important to men than to women.	Not supported

	H7: Preferring ownership of clothes has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online.	Supported
Attitude and gender identity	H8: Men perceive renting clothes online as more feminine than masculine compared to women.	Not supported
	H9: Perceiving renting clothes online as feminine has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online.	Not supported

Figure 3

Revised Conceptual Model



Note. The thinner lines include males (n = 167) and females (n = 267) to address the first research question. The thicker lines include only the male sample (n=167) to address the second research question.

5. Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings of the study. In line with the order of the hypothesis testing, the chapter will start with illuminating findings regarding attitude and intention before considering perceptions of usefulness, ownership, and gender identity. Additionally, theoretical contributions and managerial implications will be presented.

5.1. General Discussion

5.1.1. Attitude and Intention

The aim of Hypotheses 1 and 2 was to confirm the relevance of the chosen topic by showing that men have a noticeably lower intention and a more negative attitude towards renting clothes online than women. In line with our research questions, these findings strengthen the need to consider both genders separately to understand potential reasons for men's low attitude and intention and to comprehend the differences between the genders.

The finding of Hypothesis 1 is in line with Lee and Chow (2020), who found that women had stronger intentions to rent clothes online than men. In our study, an additional gender difference in attitude towards renting clothes online exists, where the average attitude for men lies slightly below the neutral value of four, whereas the average attitude for women lies above it. These values indicate that men have a slightly negative average attitude towards renting clothes, whereas women have a slightly positive average attitude. As explained in more detail in Chapter 2.2., *Gender Differences*, women are more likely to buy clothes online (Seock & Bailey, 2008) and show a higher involvement with fashion than men (O'Cass, 2004). The possibility of regularly changing their wardrobe and exploring different styles seems to be of greater interest to women, which might explain the gender differences in attitude and intention to rent clothes online found in this study.

The result of Hypothesis 3 is in line with the TRA and previous research stating that having a positive attitude to rent clothes online increases a person's intention to use the service (Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Lang et al., 2019; Lee & Chow, 2020; Tu & Hu, 2018).

While a significant difference between the genders exists for attitude and intention, it should be highlighted that the overall intention to rent clothes online is relatively low for both men

and women in comparison to previous studies (e.g., Baek & Oh, 2021; Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Lang et al., 2019). There are several potential explanations for this finding.

One potential explanation for the low intention in our study is the extremely low renting experience of our sample. Previous research has suggested that the intention to rent clothes online is larger for those individuals with renting experience than those without experience (Lee & Chow, 2020). While only 2% of our sample has rented clothes online before, other studies had samples with much higher levels of renting experience, such as Lee and Chow (2020) with 25% or Tu and Hu (2018) with 55%. This low experience in fashion renting might result from a low awareness of consumers, which has been identified as a barrier to collaborative consumption before (Barnes & Mattson, 2016; Becker-Leifhold, 2018).

Second, the current coronavirus pandemic might lead to a decreased intention to rent clothes online. According to Google Trends, the worldwide interest in the term “rent clothes” has been rising quite steadily over the past five years (see Appendix E). However, a sharp drop occurred at the end of February; approximately at the same time, the virus was starting to spread worldwide (Taylor, 2020). Since then, the interest in the topic has not yet risen back to the same level as before. One reason for this drop might be that consumers stay at home more due to social lockdowns, leading to a “comfy/cozy” trend where people wear more casual clothes than before (Edelson, 2020). Consequently, the interest in renting clothes might have dropped, as the benefits of the service, such as diversity and frequent change of items, become less relevant. Additionally, as the coronavirus pandemic has negative economic consequences for many households, individuals might decrease the amount of money they spend on apparel. A study showed that more than 60% of consumers had reduced their amount of money spent on clothes during the pandemic, indicating that fashion was not prioritized (Granskog et al., 2020). Moreover, according to one of the experts in the interviews, the coronavirus pandemic might have strengthened the cautiousness and hesitance to use something that someone else has used before, as is the case for clothing rentals. This resistance was heightened as the coronavirus increased people’s concern with hygiene due to the fear of contamination (Baek & Oh, 2021; Kirk & Rifkin, 2020).

It should be added that there seems to be a gap between people’s attitudes to renting clothing online and their intention to take action. While people have relatively low intentions to rent clothes, their attitudes towards the service seem more positive. An attitude-behavior gap means

that while people think about an action in a positive way, they do not act according to it (Hamari et al., 2016). Recent research on clothing rentals in the context of the coronavirus pandemic has suggested that the link between attitude and intention is weaker for individuals with greater contamination concerns. Individuals with high (versus low) fear of contagion are less inclined to rent clothes despite having positive attitudes (Beak & Oh, 2021). As mentioned before, the coronavirus pandemic might have impacted our results due to the time this study was conducted. Consequently, higher fear of contamination might explain the attitude-behavior gap found in this study.

Additionally, the attitude-behavior gap is prevalent in the context of sustainability (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Prothero et al., 2011) and collaborative consumption (Hamari et al., 2016). As our questionnaire was distributed describing the topic as “sustainable fashion consumption,” it is very likely that people thought of online clothing rental as a sustainable practice. Potential reasons for this gap in the sustainability context might be the costliness to act sustainably, a lack of information about sustainable consumption, or low perceived availability (Hamari et al., 2016; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). However, as perceptions of sustainability were not directly addressed in this study, further research is required to draw in-depth conclusions.

5.1.2. Perceptions of Usefulness

Hypothesis 4 stated that men perceive clothing rental as significantly less useful than women, which was supported. In addition to showing a difference between genders, our research indicates that men do not perceive renting clothes online as useful. In previous research, the connection between perceived usefulness and attitude is often stated positively (e.g., Tu & Hu, 2018). However, following from the expected findings in Hypothesis 4, Hypothesis 5 stated that not perceiving clothing rental as useful would lead to a negative attitude towards the service in men. While the connection between perceptions of usefulness and attitude is reversed compared to previous research, the relationship remains the same, meaning a positive/negative perception leads to a positive/negative attitude.

Previous research has identified usefulness as one of the biggest drivers for consumers to engage in collaborative consumption (Park & Armstrong, 2019a; Tao & Xu, 2018). However, our study shows that men do not perceive clothing rental as useful, which negatively impacts their attitude towards the service. Consequently, not perceiving clothing rental as useful

constituted a barrier to adoption for men in our study. The negative perceptions of usefulness were the largest factor to explain the variance in men's attitude, showing the high relevance of this barrier.

The conducted expert interviews and previous research offer explanations for why men might not perceive renting clothes online as useful and why they do not experience the same benefits with the business model as women do. According to the Founder and the Sustainability Expert, the supply of menswear is more boring than that of womenswear. One of the advantages of renting clothes instead of buying them is the opportunity to try different styles. However, if the available supply is perceived as boring, this opportunity disappears, resulting in the service being perceived as less useful. It was also brought up that clothing rentals do not appeal to people who do not look for variety in clothing items. While women seek a diversity of styles, the CEO from the interview stated that this is not the case with men.

Literature also states that one driver for clothing rentals is the opportunity to save money. It allows consumers to wear expensive designer clothes at a lower price (Lee & Chow, 2020). However, there are some indicators for why this does not apply to men. Firstly, women are more price-conscious than men, which means saving money is more useful to them (Park & Armstrong, 2019a; Seock & Bailey, 2008). Secondly, men generally spend less money on clothing compared to women (Salmon, 2016). It is possible that engaging in clothing rental would not save them money since they spend less on clothes in the first place. Paying a monthly subscription fee could instead make them pay more. Also, since men spend less money on clothes and buy clothes less frequently than women, they might not need to save time and closet space.

Moreover, men are less brand- and fashion-conscious than women (Seock & Bailey, 2008). Consumers that are more brand-conscious have a stronger intention to buy clothes from expensive designer brands (Giovanni et al., 2015). Therefore, the opportunity to wear designer clothes at a lower price would be less useful to men than to women. Men are also more functionally oriented than women. Saving time and buying clothes in a convenient way is important to them. Renting clothes online might not fulfill their criteria for convenient buying. They need to choose new clothes to rent and pick up packages every month. For them, it might seem as it will cost more time in the end than buying the clothes in the store.

5.1.3. Perceptions of Ownership

Hypothesis 6 stated that ownership of clothes is more important to men than to women. Looking at the means, men value ownership slightly more than women; however, the difference was not significant. The findings clearly show that ownership is important to men but also important to women. This finding is, therefore, partly in line with previous research. While men are materialistic and prefer ownership over renting, the effect is not noticeably larger than for women (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997; Kamineni, 2005; Segal & Podoshen, 2013). This finding is not in line with two of the industry experts who expected that men would value ownership more than women. However, they still highlighted the general importance of ownership.

One possible explanation of why both genders highly valued ownership might be hygiene concerns affecting both genders equally. Several studies have identified hygiene and contagion issues as barriers to adoption for many consumers (Armstrong et al., 2016; Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Catulli, 2012; Kim & Jin, 2020). When the physical or skin contact with the item is more considerable, consumers seem to experience greater feelings of disgust (Armstrong et al., 2015, 2016; Kim & Jin, 2020). The hygiene issue is often linked to a lack of trust in providers. If consumers have insufficient confidence in the provider, they cannot be sure the clothing items are properly cleaned (Armstrong et al., 2015, 2016). Some studies have based the hygiene issue on the law of contagion and consumer contamination theory (Clube & Tennant, 2020; Kim & Jin, 2020). The law of contagion assumes that when two people or items come into contact, they impact each other through the transfer of properties (Nemeroff & Rozin, 1994). This concept is strongly connected to the consumer contamination theory, which states that consumers perceive items that other consumers have previously touched to be less favorable. That is because the thought of contamination creates feelings of disgust, which then provokes negative emotions (Argo et al., 2006; Kim & Jin, 2020). Additionally, several interviewees brought up the problem with hygiene and contamination, which they thought is an essential issue for clothing rental businesses to deal with. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.1.1., *Attitude and Intention*, the hygiene issue might play an even greater role at the moment due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Hypothesis 7 found that preferring ownership of clothes has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online, indicating that non-ownership is a barrier for men. The barrier

added considerably to men's variance in attitude, demonstrating its importance. The result is in line with previous research stating that ownership is a barrier to rent clothes online (Lang & Armstrong, 2018; Lee & Chow, 2020). The finding contributes theoretically since previous research showing that ownership is a barrier for engaging in clothing rentals has been done on female or gender-mixed samples. Our findings show that this applies to men as well. However, the results contradict research concluding that removing ownership is a driver to rent clothes online as it takes away the burden of ownership (Akbar & Hoffmann, 2018; Lang et al., 2019; Park & Armstrong, 2019a; Rexfelt & Hiort af Ornäs, 2009).

Different reasons might explain why ownership is a barrier for men. One potential reason explained in Chapter 2.5., *Perceptions of Ownership*, is the endowment effect, which states that owning a good leads to an individual associating the product with him/herself, making the person value the product more (Ariely et al., 2005).

Furthermore, our finding that non-ownership is a barrier for men to rent clothes online might be explained by the identified connection between ownership and loss of control (Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018; Mont, 2002). This explanation is in line with one of the interviewees, who argued that having control is especially important to male consumers.

Another possible explanation for the importance of ownership is the social stigma that renting is for people with lower status and less financial resources (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Catulli, 2012; Lang et al., 2019). Social status has been previously identified as a reason why non-ownership is a barrier to adopting collaborative fashion consumption (Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018; Mont, 2002). Owning items can be seen as a symbol of status, and renting instead of owning will not fit some people's personal image (Lang, 2018). Research has shown that especially men pay attention to what buying specific clothes says about their success in life (Goldsmith et al., 2010; Gwozdz et al., 2013).

5.1.4. Perceptions of Gender Identity

The results of Hypothesis 8 did not show a significant difference between men and women regarding their perceptions of gender identity of renting clothes online. However, the results indicate that both genders associate clothing rental as a more feminine activity, as observed in the means. The latter observation is in line with previous research stating that shopping is a gendered and feminine activity (Otnes & McGrath, 2001; Tuncay & Otnes, 2008).

Hypothesis 9 tested whether perceiving clothing rental as feminine has a negative impact on men's attitude to rent clothes online. The hypothesis was not supported, which contradicts the existing literature highlighting men's fear of being perceived as feminine in the context of fashion (Bakewell et al., 2006; Kimmel, 1994). Additionally, this finding opposes Avery's (2012) results, who concluded that gender contamination for men is still prevalent today. However, since that study was conducted in the context of car brands, differences to clothing rentals could be expected.

While men perceive renting clothes online as a feminine activity, it does not impact their attitude towards renting clothes online. This conclusion might be explained by the gender blurring, i.e., dissolving of perceived gender roles in fashion. More recent studies about gender identity show that people are resisting the traditional gender stereotypes (McNeill & McKay, 2016). Men are increasingly embarking on domains traditionally perceived as female, such as fashion (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). This blurring of gender lines can be seen in a fashion show in 2018, where the designer Thom Browne added skirts in different lengths to the traditional men's suit. Also, several fashion brands have started to design gender-neutral clothes (Bauknecht, 2017). In 2015, the department store *Selfridges* started to sell unisex clothes at their flagship store in London (Tsjeng, 2015), and both men and women have started to buy clothes from the opposite gender section (Gallagher & Phelan 2019). Because of the recent tendency of blurring gender stereotypes and the new trends in the fashion industry, the importance of gender identity might be diminished. Consequently, the gender contamination theory in the fashion context might be outdated.

5.2. Theoretical Contribution and Managerial Implications

This study makes a relevant theoretical contribution as it fills an existing research gap by considering men's barriers to adoption of clothing rentals and how their perceptions towards the service differ from those of women. Thereby, it adds to the emerging research field of clothing rentals. It confirms previously identified barriers, such as lack of ownership, but adds a gender-specific perspective. Moreover, as this research shows that gender differences are important to consider in clothing rental, it supports existing gender literature, which holds that gender differences are still of relevance today. By showing the importance of considering men and women separately, this study opens the door for further research on the topic.

From a managerial perspective, the findings in this study can help companies to tap into the economic potential of the menswear clothing rental market. More specifically, this research can offer valuable practical implications for businesses wanting to expand their rental company to male consumers or only wanting to specialize in renting clothes to men.

Firstly, companies should be aware of existing gender differences in men's and women's perceptions towards renting clothes online and the fact that men seem to possess a lower intention and more negative attitude towards the service. Consequently, they should address men and women differently in some respects to specifically address the barriers hindering men from engaging in clothing rentals.

Secondly, companies need to consider men's low perceptions of usefulness to target them successfully. Regarding how useful the clothing rental service is, men's perceptions are more negative than those of women, which is why this aspect is especially relevant to highlight when targeting male customers. While renting clothes online can be about variety and designer clothes, companies should focus on the service's convenience aspect when targeting men. One idea of how to implement this focus on usefulness could be the creation of different "bundles" of everyday items for different stages of life, such as for "businessmen" or "urban trendsetters." These bundles might offer a simplified version of existing styling service accompanying clothing rentals for men, which specifically focus on making men's lives more comfortable and more hassle-free. Also, menswear rental companies could offer a range of products to address the problem of the supply potentially being perceived as boring. As men often spend less money on clothes than women, more flexibility regarding pricing plans, such as promotions and diversity of available payment plans, could positively influence men's perceptions of usefulness of renting clothes online.

Thirdly, it is important to take the high value placed on ownership into account. According to the findings in this study, marketers do not need to distinguish between the genders when addressing this barrier. To overcome the barrier, practitioners should carefully consider how to frame their message so that people that highly value ownership do not feel negative towards renting. A communication strategy focusing on the benefits of renting over owning, such as no need for repair or storage, might be beneficial. Additionally, rental companies could offer and communicate high flexibility regarding the renting period's duration to avoid people feeling pressured to return items when they are not ready. Furthermore, as recommended by one of the

experts, giving consumers more options for customization might increase their perceptions of control and thereby lead to a lower need for ownership.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion will summarize the study's key findings, focusing on explicitly answering the two research questions. Additionally, limitations and directions for future research will be discussed.

As stated by Rachel Botsman, the current system of consumerism needs to shift its goal from simply creating “more stuff” to become more sustainable. “Fast fashion” is a massive contributor to overconsumption, creating an intolerable environmental footprint on our planet. The emerging trend in collaborative consumption to rent clothes online instead of buying them can offer a solution. Up to date, there is a large focus on women in research and practice. However, men are a promising and important target group from an economic and environmental standpoint. From a theoretical perspective, this study aimed to fill the twofold gap of what men's barriers to adoption are and how their perceptions towards renting clothes online differ from those of women. This gap was supported by the practical need of companies to learn how to target men successfully.

Men and women differed in their attitude and intention to rent clothes online, where men had more negative viewpoints than women. This difference provided a valuable confirmation of the relevance to explore men and women separately and in comparison to each other.

To answer the first research question, men did not differ from women in their perceptions of ownership and gender identity. However, the analysis revealed a considerable difference regarding their perceptions of usefulness. Both genders placed high importance on ownership and perceived clothing rental as more feminine than masculine. Regarding perceptions of usefulness, men thought of online clothing rental as significantly less useful than women. Those findings are especially relevant for businesses wanting to target both genders, as it helps them understand in what aspects they should address men and women differently.

To answer the second research question, the analysis of the study revealed negative perceptions of usefulness as the largest barrier for men to rent clothes online, followed by the importance of ownership. Together, the two barriers have been shown to explain 60% of the variance in men's attitude towards renting clothes online. Gender identity was not identified as a barrier

for men. Lack of ownership has been commonly established as a barrier in existing research. Furthermore, our research is in line with previous research showing that a positive/negative perception of usefulness leads to a positive/negative attitude. However, we have identified that men do not perceive clothing rental as a useful service in the first place, which depicts a barrier to adoption. Overall, while previous research has often focused on only females or both genders, this thesis makes a relevant theoretical and practical contribution as it considers men separately.

6.1. Limitations

While our research has filled the previously identified twofold knowledge gap, some limitations need to be considered.

The first limitation is the choice of barriers to include in our study. This study has addressed three potential barriers, which were carefully chosen based on gender literature. While this is a good starting point, further barriers might exist, keeping men from renting clothes online. Additional barriers should be addressed to gain a more in-depth understanding of what hinders men from renting.

The second limitation of our study is the sample. Since the study is based on a convenience sample, it is not representative of the general population. The sample includes various nationalities and the findings might have differed if the sample was limited to specific countries or regions. For example, consumers from the USA might be more familiar with the concept due to major companies like *Rent the Runway* originating there, so including more Americans might have resulted in a different outcome. Also, while the sample consists of people of all age groups, almost half of the sample is younger than 25. Including more people from other age groups might yield different results. Furthermore, the low previous online clothing rental experience needs to be considered. Due to their low experience, participants may not understand the concept well enough, which might impact their answers.

The third limitation is that we did not consider how life situations could affect people's perceptions of renting clothes online. Disposable income, education level, and whether people live in the countryside or the city can impact their perceptions and demands towards renting clothes online.

The fourth limitation of the study is the period it was conducted. The coronavirus pandemic may have impacted the results in unexpected ways. The particular circumstances where most countries experienced a lockdown forced people to change their behavior. Since people spent more time at home, it is likely that fashion was not a priority.

Lastly, looking back at the measures used in our survey, it has to be acknowledged that the same wording for measuring attitude and intention should have been used. More specifically, we should have referred to clothing rental for both measures to receive more precise predictions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

6.2. Directions for Future Research

Firstly, this study was conducted with a quantitative method to understand perceptions of clothing rentals and specific barriers to adoption for men. While understanding this is a necessary foundation, it is crucial to get a deeper understanding of these perceptions and barriers. Therefore, it would be interesting to complement our findings with a qualitative study.

Secondly, other potential barriers for men need to be studied. Even if the barriers analyzed in this study are a good starting point, they are not exhaustive. Since negative perceptions of usefulness and the importance of ownership together explained 60% of men's attitude towards renting clothes online in our study, it leaves 40% unexplained.

In relation to the point above, negative perceptions of usefulness as a barrier for men should be investigated in more detail in future research since it largely contributed to explaining the attitude. In this study, usefulness included various facets, such as saving money, time, and closet space. However, it could be interesting to understand which factors are specifically responsible for low perceptions of usefulness in men.

The study should also be replicated on samples with a more specific target group. In our study, we included all age groups and nationalities. While it is important to have an overall understanding of men's perceptions, it can be valuable for clothing rentals to know the perceptions of a more specific demographic group of men. Also, since one limitation of our study was not considering different life situations, this should be included in further research. It can help companies understand whether they need to target men differently based on these

characteristics. Men living in a big city or with a higher income may perceive the importance of specific barriers differently compared to other men.

While this study focused on clothing rentals, this business model is only one way to contribute to collaborative consumption. To make the fashion industry more sustainable, it is also important to consider men's perceptions of other collaborative consumption models, such as second hand, swapping, and peer-to-peer.

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8. Appendix

Appendix A: Overview of Previous Research on Barriers to Adoption of Clothing Rentals

Table A1

Summary of Articles Examining Barriers to Adoption of Clothing Rentals

Authors	Year	Sample	Barriers
Armstrong et al.	2015	N = 52, females, Finnish, age 24 - 66	Lack of trust in provider, ease of use, social drawbacks
Armstrong et al.	2016	N = 153, females, 66% Americans, 44% Finnish	*Lack of trust in provider (quality, maintenance, hygiene, viability of business model)
Becker-Leifhold & Iran	2018	> 2800 journal articles	*Hygiene/health concerns, lack of ownership, consumption habits
Clube & Tennant	2020	N = 556, online reviews of two existing fashion rental providers	Contamination, hygiene
Lang	2018	N = 452, 43.6% males, 56.4% females, Americans	Financial risk, performance risk, psychological risk
Lang & Armstrong	2018	N = 431, females, Americans	Materialism
Lang et al.	2019	N = 713, 33% Americans females, 25% Americans males, 26% Chinese	Social risk (harm of self-image & social standing), perceived performance risk (= quality risk)

		females, 16% Chinese men	
McNeill & Venter	2019	N = 14, females, New Zealanders	Lack of ownership
Mukendi & Henninger	2020	N = 20, 85% females, 15% men	Consideration/ lack of trust, hygiene issues, availability, use/ fear to damage, returns/ lack of ownership
Park & Armstrong	2019b	N = 1841, 77% females, 23% males, Americans	Ownership and possession-self bond affect participants perceived risk of engaging in UNO (endowment effect exists for UNO)
Tao & Xu	2018	N = 17, 82% females, 18% males, Americans	Cancellation process, compatibility with values (missing social experience), complexity

*These barriers are applicable to different collaborative consumption models in the fashion industry, not specifically for clothing rental.

Appendix B: Expert Interview Questions

1. What is your perspective on collaborative consumption as the future of consumption? Is it achievable?
2. Do you think renting clothes online is the way we will consume fashion in the future?
3. Do you think there are gender differences in people's sustainable behavior? And especially when it comes to consumption?
4. What is your perspective on renting clothing online?
5. What do you think are specific barriers for people to rent clothing online?
6. Do you think there are any gender differences in these barriers?
7. What do you think needs to change for clothing rentals to become more mainstream?

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Please imagine the following scenario

"Rentyourclothes" is an online subscription service for everyday clothing. You can rent five clothing items at a time, which you can exchange for new items once a month. The cost is a monthly subscription fee of approximately 80€. It is possible to upgrade your plan to rent more items at once or receive new items more frequently for a higher price. To choose which items you like, you simply browse our online clothing library, where we regularly add new items. You select the items you want, and we will deliver them to you within 2-3 days, including a free return bag. The subscription includes professional laundry service every time you return the clothes and damage insurance, so you do not need to worry about that!

Based on the scenario above, please rate the following statements by picking the box that best represents your personal view.

2. I intend to rent fashion items online within the next six months. *

Very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very likely

3. For me, renting clothes online would be: *

Harmful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Beneficial

4. For me, renting clothes online would be: *

Unpleasant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Pleasant

5. For me, renting clothes online would be: *

Bad 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Good

6. For me, renting clothes online would be: *

Worthless 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Valuable

7. For me, renting clothes online would be: *

Unenjoyable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Enjoyable

Based on the initial scenario, please rate the following statements by picking the box that best represents your personal view.

8. I think clothing rental is very convenient. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

9. I think clothing rental is useful to me. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

10. I think clothing rental can make me more fashionable. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

11. I think clothing rental can quickly bring me the products I want. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

12. I think clothing rental can save me money. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

13. I think I can effectively manage closet space through clothing rental. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

Describe the type of person who rents clothes by picking the box that best represent your personal view.

14. The typical person who rents clothes is *

Stylish 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unstylish

15. The typical person who rents clothes *

Has a masculine behavior 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Has a feminine behavior

16. The typical person who rents clothes is *

Young 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Old

17. The typical person who rents clothes is *

Male 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Female

18. The typical person who rents clothes is *

Hip 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Mainstream

Please rate the following statements by picking the box that best represents your personal view.

19. Owning my clothing items (instead of renting them) is important to me. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

20. Having ownership of my clothing items (instead of renting them) gives me comfort, because I have access to those items. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

21. The money paid for renting fashion items online is NOT worthwhile since I cannot own the items. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

22. NOT being able to own the fashion items I love is annoying. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

23. I want to own the fashion items I like and feel that they are mine. *

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

24. What was this survey about? *

- Food
- Clothing rental
- Animals
- Cars

25. Have you ever rented clothes online? *

- Yes
- No

26. How old are you? *

27. What is your gender? *

- Male
- Female
- Other

28. What is your nationality? *

Appendix D: Existing Clothing Rental Companies

Table D1

Screened Existing Rental Companies for Questionnaire Scenario

Company name	Subscription plans
Rent the Runway	4 items for \$89/ month, 1 shipment/ month OR 8 items for \$135/ month, 2 shipments/ month OR 16 items for \$199/ month, 4 shipments/ month
Nuuly	6 items for \$88/month with the option of 2 bonus items for \$18 each
The Devout	5 items for £79/ month
Scotch Select	3 items for \$99, unlimited exchange

Appendix E: Google Trends "Rent Clothes"

Image E1

