

Fashion Shopping as a Job-to-be-done

(Franziska S. Kullak, Daniel Baier & Herbert Woratschek)¹

Customer needs can be as varied as the reasons why customers go shopping in **in-store fashion retailing (ISFR)** and **online fashion retailing (OFR)**.

Shopping as a Job-to-be-done

According to Griffin and Hauser (1993: 4) **customer needs** are “a description, in the customer’s own words, of the benefits that he, she or they want to fulfil by the product or service”. Extant research suggests that customer needs in fashion retailing can be fulfilled through the

1. purchase of a **garment** (e.g., Bennur & Jin, 2012; Le, Kohda, & Huynh, 2019),
2. the retailer’s **in-store technology** (e.g., Landmark & Sjøbakk, 2017), or
3. **salespersons** and their interpersonal role with customers (e.g., Hui & Yee, 2015).

Since the same customer needs can be fulfilled differently, Kullak, Baier, and Woratschek (2023, p. 2) suggest studying **customers’ problem-solving process** to understand how a fashion retailer can support shoppers in better fulfilling their needs. This problem-solving process is described as a job in the **jobs-to-be-done (JTBD) theory** (Christensen, Anthony, Berstell, & Nitterhouse, 2007). In this theory, a job describes the process of **how customers fulfill their needs**. Therefore, people buy products and services to get a job done.

Customer needs

By applying the JTBD theory Kullak et al. (2023) identified and compared customers’ personal (table 1) and social needs (table 2) in ISFR and OFR. Personal appearance, personal fulfillment and enhancing well-being are **personal needs**. They are **mainly congruent in ISFR and OFR** and can be fulfilled by a garment. Especially customers who prefer lone shopping draw on smart technology (such as smart dressing rooms) to fulfill their personal needs in ISFR. Further, customers’ personal needs referring to taking time out from daily duties can be fulfilled by **different kinds of experience: In-store experience or online shop experience**. In addition, rewarding oneself can be completed through curated shopping in OFR.

¹Please cite: Kullak, F. S., Baier, D., & Woratschek, H. (2022). Fashion Shopping as a Job-to-be-done. *SMAB Relevant Management Insights*, 31, 1-4. Retrieved from <https://www.sma-bayreuth.de/expertenwissen/relevant-management-insights/>

Subcategories	Selected personal needs	ISFR	OFR	Ways to fulfill personal needs
<i>Personal appearance</i>	Feeling vain, attractive or happy	●	●	Garment
<i>Personal fulfillment</i>	Rewarding oneself (for sense of achievement or as a consolidation for dealing with failures)	●	●	
	Desiring something new Experiencing something good			
<i>Enhancing well-being</i>	Being mindful	●		
<i>Processing disappointments</i>	Consolidation for dealing with failures (respondents especially lone shoppers faced with a failure reported feeling satisfied by the availability of smart technology)	●		Smart technology
<i>Taking time out from daily duties</i>	Browsing through the garment range Feeling relaxed (from everyday life, working life, or studies)	●	●	ISFR: In-store experience or OFR: Online shop experience
<i>Rewarding oneself</i>	Doing something good for oneself		●	Curated shopping
	Experiencing something good and be surprised			

Table 1: Customers' personal needs (adapted extract from Kullak et al., 2023)

In **ISFR**, social others (e.g., family, friends and even salespersons) play a focal role. The completion of these **social needs** is characterized by **face-to-face social interactions**. In contrast, in OFR social others are not paramount to complete customers' social needs. Yet, the customer's external representation is marked by a social linkage but **without face-to-face social interaction**. Therefore, this type of social needs can be **almost equally fulfilled** through the purchase of garment in **ISFR** or a selection of garments in **OFR**.

Services to get the job done

The results show that when shopping in a fashion store, it's not just the garment that counts, but **customers' needs beyond the garment that are fulfilled**. Purchasing a garment is always intertwined with the fulfillment of one or more customers' personal and social needs. Thus, **fashion retailers** should think boldly about how they can **support customers in better fulfilling their needs**. For example, social needs comprising spending quality time with social others can be supported by creating an environment in which customers can **interact face-to-face** with one another in **ISFR** (e.g., in-store sewing course to encourage customers to engage and dwell). Similarly, online fashion retailers should acknowledge that social interaction cannot be supported in the same way. Hence, they should initiate online platforms that promote **online social interactions as an alternative to social interaction** (e.g., an online brand community

[Connell, Marciniak, Carey, & McColl, 2019] or a branded community [Ashman, Solomon, & Wolny, 2015]).

Subcategories	Selected social needs	ISFR	OFR	Ways to fulfill social needs
<i>Spending quality time with social others</i>	Performing rituals with social others	•		Social others with high interaction with social others Differing roles of salespersons and accompanying persons
<i>Customer's external representation</i>	Maintaining and enhancing self-image and transporting the inner self-esteem toward social others Identifying with social others Being inspired by social others	•	•	Garment Selection of garments
<i>Social group membership</i>	Belonging to a social group of people through identification with the group		•	Selection of garments

Table 2: Customers' social needs (adapted extract from Kullak et al., 2023)

To put it in a nutshell:

1. **Fashion shopping** can be seen as a **job-to-be-done** by a customer in a specific context.
2. Jobs need to be done **to fulfill customers' needs**.
3. **Fashion retailers support** customers in getting their jobs done **by providing services**.
4. Customers have **personal and social needs**.
5. **ISFR** and **OFR** support customers in different ways to fulfill **personal and social needs**.
6. Social needs can be fulfilled very differently since **face-to-face interactions** are only possible in **ISFR**.
7. **Online platforms can offer alternative** face-to-face interactions in OFR, too.

References

- Ashman, R., Solomon, M. R., & Wolny, J. (2015). An old model for a new age: Consumer decision making in participatory digital culture. *Journal of Customer Behaviour, 14*(2), 127–146. <https://doi.org/10.1362/147539215X14373846805743>
- Bennur, S., & Jin, B. (2012). A conceptual process of implementing quality apparel retail store attributes: An application of Kano's model and the quality function deployment approach. *International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology, 2*(1), 174-183.

- Christensen, C. M., Anthony, S. D., Berstell, G., & Nitterhouse, D. (2007). Finding the right job for your product. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 48(3), 38–47.
- Connell, C., Marciniak, R., Carey, L. I., & McColl, J. (2019). Customer engagement with websites: a transactional retail perspective. *European Journal of Marketing*, 53(9), 1882–1904. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-10-2017-0649>
- Griffin, A., & Hauser, J. R. (1993). The voice of the customer. *Marketing Science*, 12(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.12.1.1>
- Hui, S. L., & Yee, R. W. Y. (2015). Relationship among interpersonal relationship, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty in fashion retailing industry. *Research Journal of Textile and Apparel*, 19(1), 65–72. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RJTA-19-01-2015-B007>
- Kullak, F. S., Baier, D., & Woratschek, H. (2023). How do customers meet their needs in in-store and online fashion shopping? A comparative study based on the jobs-to-be-done theory. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 71, 103221. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103221>
- Landmark, A. D., & Sjøbakk, B. (2017). Tracking customer behaviour in fashion retail using RFID. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 45(7/8), 844–858. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-10-2016-0174>
- Le, T. Q., Kohda, Y., & Huynh, V. N. (2019). Using conjoint analysis to estimate customers' preferences in the apparel industry. *16th International Conference on Service Systems and Service Management (ICSSSM)* (pp. 1–4). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICSSSM.2019.8887668>