

SCENT-SATIONAL SALES

THE IMPACT OF SCENTS ON SECOND-HAND
CLOTHING CONSUMPTION



AN ADVISORY REPORT
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INTRODUCTION



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO INCREASE SECOND-HAND CONSUMPTION?

The **fast fashion** industry encourages **overconsumption** of clothing, which increases **waste** and **carbon emissions** [1,2].



The fast fashion industry uses up 93 billion cubic metres of water per year [3].

90% of clothing is burned or disposed of in landfills [4].

Low-wage workers are exploited to keep the prices cheap[4,5,6].



To illustrate:

Producing one t-shirt requires 2,700 litres of water. This amount of water is enough to sustain one person for 2.5 years [4] !



Buying clothes **second-hand** decreases the need for new items: this limits waste and can **decrease** the **negative environmental impact** of the fashion industry [7].

To illustrate:

Buying 85 used clothing items can indirectly prevent the production of 100 new clothing items [8].

This shows how important it is to know why people buy clothing second-hand and how to promote this.



OBSTACLES

Second-hand clothes are believed to be:

- for people of a lower socio-economic status [6].
- dirty
- unhygienic
- of poor quality [9,10]

Second-hand stores are believed to be:

- unorganised
- smelling bad [11]

SOLUTION

Priming is a psychological concept in which the exposure to one stimulus influences the perception of another stimulus [12]. People need to be unaware of this [13].

Scents make excellent primes because of this [14]. By using a scent smelling like clean clothing, the second-hand clothes are perceived as more clean and valuable [15,16]!



WHY DO PEOPLE BUY SECOND-HAND CLOTHES?



To understand how priming can help increase sales, it is important to look at how the **process behind** second-hand purchasing works:

People having the **intention** to buy clothes second-hand consider multiple factors before:

Economic value: Ideally, consumers want to find items at a lower price than new items [10,17].

- **Quality:** Clothing should be in good condition and show little to no signs of previous wear [10].
- **Hygiene:** Concerns about cleanliness and possible contamination from previous users can prevent people from buying second-hand clothes [18,19].

Hedonic value: Many people go vintage-hunting for the sheer enjoyment of the activity itself [20].

Social approval: In cultures in which second-hand shopping is accepted and popular, people are more likely to buy used clothes [21].

Environmental value: People aware of the environmental harm caused by the fashion industry are motivated to buy second-hand clothes to be more eco-friendly [10,22,23].



PILOT STUDY



WHICH SCENTS SHOULD WE USE FOR THE MAIN STUDY?

To determine which scents we wanted to use to increase the perceived (hygienic) quality of second-hand clothing, we conducted an **experiment** in a lab.

Procedure:

Each of the 12 participants entered 4 different rooms, each smelling differently:

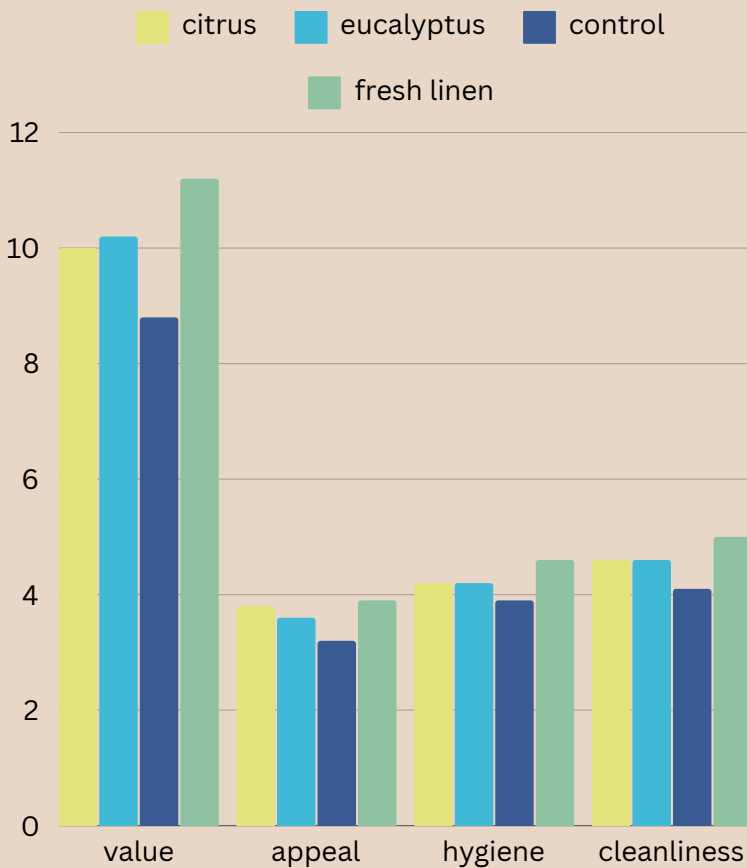
- **citrus** or **eucalyptus** cleaner odor: these scents are related to cleanliness [24,25].
- **fresh-laundry** odor: this scent is related to clean clothing [15,16].
- control odor: **no odor** was diffused

In each room they had to rate pictures of second-hand clothing items on:

- **hygiene**
- **cleanliness**
- **appeal**
- **value** (how much they would pay for the item)



RESULTS

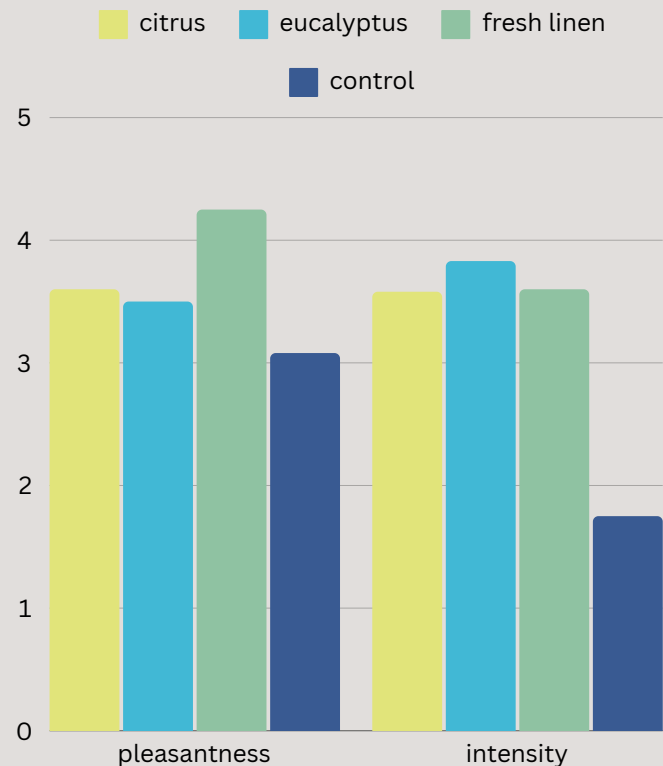


This graph shows that participants perceived the **fresh-linen** scent as **most pleasant**.

The **eucalyptus** scent was noticed the most (intensity) and rated as less pleasant as fresh-linen and citrus. That is why we **did not choose** the eucalyptus scent for the main study.

Even though the results were not significant, the graphs show a clear pattern:

- The participants would spend **more money** on the clothing items when exposed to a **fresh-linen scent**.
- The participants rate the clothing items as **more appealing, hygienic and clean** in the fresh-linen condition.



MAIN STUDY



WILL A FRESH-LAUNDRY SMELL BOOST SPENDING AT A SECOND-HAND STORE?

To answer this question we went to a second-hand clothing store and set up an experiment there.

The participants

Questionnaire:

$N = 257$

Transaction data:

$N = 1737$

Age range:

16-83 years old

The procedure

We asked people who bought at least one item at the store to fill in the questionnaire, asking them how much money they had spent and what their intention was before entering the store.

The conditions

Control: No scent was diffused

Citrus: A cleaning related citrus scent was diffused

Fresh-linen: A clean clothing related scent was diffused

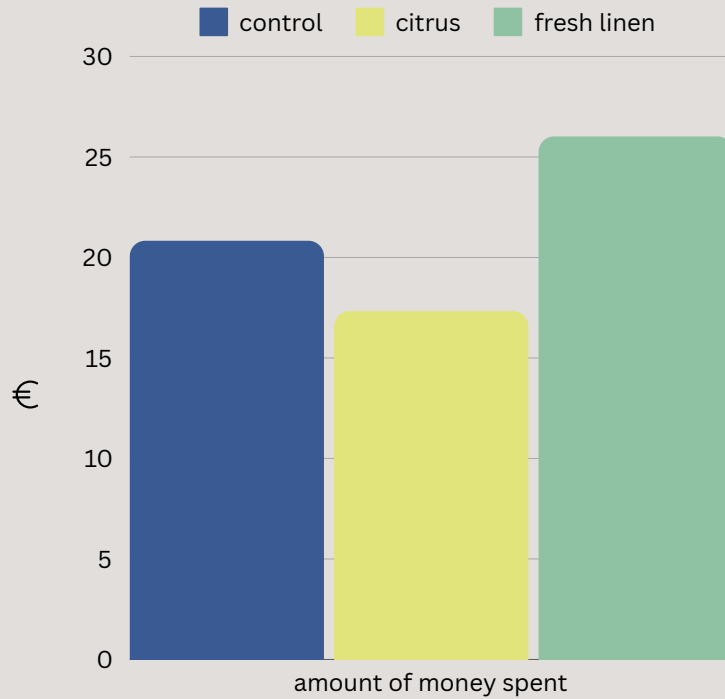
The hypotheses

1. Customers are spending more money at a second-hand clothing store when exposed to a fresh-laundry odor [15,16].
2. This effect will be higher for people with a lower intention [26].

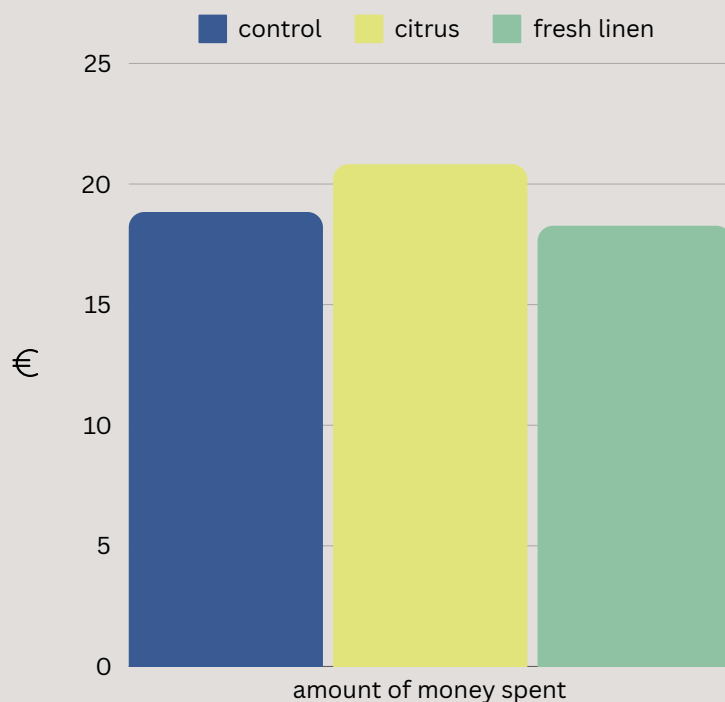


RESULTS

Results from the questionnaire data



Results from the transaction data



RESULTS



What can we conclude from the results?

1. The results from the **questionnaire data** were in line with the expected effect: when customers smelled a fresh-linen odor, they spent more money on average.
2. The results from the **transaction data** can not be interpreted reliably, because the difference between the three conditions on the amount of money spent was too little (only about one Euro).
3. Also, the results showed that the **intention** of customers does not seem to play a role in the influence of a fresh-linen scent on the money spent by the customers at a second-hand clothing store.



RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATION 1



Improving customer experience with clean scents

Why?

The main reason why people don't buy clothing second hand is because they think of them as something dirty and unhygienic [9,10]. So, by building the association with cleanliness through a fresh and clean scent [15,16], worries about hygiene can be alleviated unconsciously and customers are encouraged to buy clothes second-hand!

How?

Install one or more scent-diffusers, depending on the size of the store. Make sure the diffusers are produced to disperse scents in stores or similar settings. The coverage of the diffusion can differ between products - to see whether more than one diffuser is needed, check the product details and adjust it to the size of the store. This warrants that the scent is distributed equally throughout the store.



RECOMMENDATION 1A

Make sure that customers are unaware of the scent



Why?

Research showed that scents as a prime work best when they are not noticed consciously [13]. This is especially important, since people can react with resistance when they feel manipulated [27]. This would counteract the desired effects.

How?

To make sure that people do not notice the scent, it is advised to place the diffusers somewhere where the customers will not notice them. In our study we placed one behind a mirror and the second one underneath a clothing rack. Our results showed that people were indeed not aware of the scent!

Also, the intensity at which the scent is diffused should be at a level where it can be detected but the customers are not immediately aware of it.



RECOMMENDATION 1B



Encourage longer customer visits

Why?

Research showed that the effectiveness of scents as primes is closely tied to the time one is exposed to them [28]. First, the scent needs time to be detected and associated with clean clothing, which is individual per person [29,30].

How?

Create a pleasant store environment. Research showed that a pleasant store environment increases the time customers spend at the store. An organized store with well-displayed items and good lighting can encourage customers to spend more time at the store [31,32]. Spending more time at the store, can also lead to more purchases being made [31]!



RECOMMENDATION 2



Display the advantages of second-hand shopping

Why?

Even though the present study did not find support for intention to increase the money spent by second-hand customers, a multitude of other studies suggest that the values preceding intention are important in determining whether someone buys second-hand clothes [10,17,20,21,22,23]. To recap, those are the variables:

- Economical values
- Environmental values
- Social approval
- Hedonic values

How?

To address the economical values, especially of vintage-hunters, showcase branded- and high-quality products. To make the advantages of second-hand shopping more tangible, put a poster or sign at the door or windows to the store. This can increase awareness, even for people passing the store.



EXAMPLE POSTER

**SAVE THE
PLANET**

**SHOP
SECOND HAND!**

**JOIN THE TREND OF SUSTAINABLE
SHOPPING -**

**FIND UNIQUE PIECES AND REDUCE
YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT AT THE
SAME TIME!**



**SAVE MONEY ON BRANDED AND HIGH QUALITY
PRODUCTS HERE:**

[NAME OF STORE]



environmental
values

social
approval



environmental
and hedonic
values

economical
values



TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

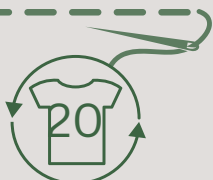
1

Use a scent that is subconsciously connected to clean clothing, to decrease customers' concerns for hygiene and increase sales of second-hand clothing.

- Making sure that customers are unaware of the scent-diffusion is important.
- By enhancing the store environment, customers are more likely to spend more time at the store - just like that, the effectiveness of the scent is increased!

2

Create awareness for the advantages of buying second-hand clothing. This can be done by addressing the values of people who shop at second-hand clothing stores through a sign or a poster.



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