

The Role of Money and Fashion in Character Building in Confession of A Shopaholic Movie (2009)

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the film Confession of A Shopaholic, directed by P.J. Hogan based on Georg Simmel's sociology of money to dismantle the role of money and fashion in the formation of the main character's character. The purpose of this article is to formulate how money problems can change individual character. Georg Simmel's sociology of money points discussed in this article cover two things, namely money as an institution that supports social stratification and the financial system as part of the evolution of society. Simmel's view of fashion is used to support this research. Research data is taken from scenes or dialogues of the main characters in shopping, including when faced with choices. There is a deep connection between money, fashion, social stratification, and the results of the evolution of society which play a role in building the mentality of society itself. Childhood experiences also shape the individual's passion to fulfill his desires as an adult. The results of the study show that the cooperation between money and goods offered by the market is able to drive the emotional side of the individual and the role of the environment to support individuals in finding awareness.

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1. Introduction

Money plays a very significant role in almost all of humanity. The needs of men and women are closely related to obsessions, budgets, anxiety, and especially evaluation (Oleson, 2004). Human needs for money and social support are similar to needs at the second level based on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, namely the need for security (Cheung, 2008). Studies show that meeting needs has a good impact on an individual's mental health (Amani & Shabahang, 2017). In parallel, economic function is related to human psychology towards money. Money is able to provide autonomy and a sense of security to humans and is played differently according to their cultural background (Cohen, Shin, & Liu, 2019). The use of banknotes as a means of transaction began in mainland China. In the 13th century, the Chinese region that at that time was split into several smaller countries issued coins of their own territory. This then led emperor Khubilai Khan to decide to make money in paper form (Surowiecki, 2012). In the African region itself, the process of forming a national currency was long and faltering due to the influence of apartheid politics and South African efforts in the global economy (Feingold, Fourie, & Gardner, 2021). Since it became a legitimate means of transaction in various countries, money has become a vital tool in human life. The presence of money ridden by capitalism makes man's relationship with money even more complex. Without the presence of money, man cannot carry out his activities to survive. For example, to grow crops, humans need money to buy the equipment and equipment needed. In relation to life, the possession of a certain amount of money is a symbolic representation of social status and honor (Cheung, 2008). The more money an individual has represents how high the individual is in social status.

Life is a relentless cycle of circulation, socialization, and interactivity that arises as a result of the process of social exchange (Blumenberg, 2012). The human life cycle when he has grown up is to work and earn wages—which are then used for survival. More and more humans are blatantly showing their desire to have a lot of money because they feel that the money they have today is still relatively small. This phenomenon is in line with the opinion that money is capable of moving human desire into the abstract sphere, providing a container of life to lift itself higher that transcends the boundaries of the human species (Kuźniarz, 2018). The relationship between human behavior and money was once researched by Xie (Xie, Yu, Zhou, Sedikides, & Vohs, 2014) in the article Money, Moral Transgression and Blame. This study involves the individual as a subject who influences bad behavior towards others. This experiment is divided into

two experiments, the first of which uses the cognitive dissonance paradigm by observing lies committed by participants with large and small money. The second experiment is to look at a picture of a person bumping into someone else to get a certain amount of money, whether small, medium, or large. The results show that money, no matter how small its value, has an influence on the immorality of other people's offenses.

The sociological theory of money in Georg Simmel's work *Philosophy of Money* is closely related to the Marxian philosophical tradition (Cassano, 2005). The money economy has a close relationship with the dominance of the intelligentsia (Boy, 2021). *Confession of A Shopaholic* is a film adapted from the novel of the same name by Sophie Kinsella. The film, directed by P.J. Hogan, was released in 2009. The main character in this film is Rebecca Bloomwood, a journalist of a gardening magazine lives in New York City. Rebecca has a habit of shopping which then makes her trapped in financial problems in the form of tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Rebecca's financial problems eventually have implications for her relationship with her boss and best friend.

This film has been researched before from various points of view. Dinuriyah (2013) discusses the search for identity in three teen films entitled *Confession of a Shopaholic*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, and *Bridget Jones's Diary*, respectively. This research focuses on the identity of women presented in these three films where living in a big city, being independent, having a job, and being single has indirectly shaped the ideal female standard at that time (Dinuriyah, 2013). *Confession of a Shopaholic*, released in 2009, is an adaptation of the novel of the same name written by Sophie Kinsella. Research on the novel of the same name has been researched by Hadita from a linguistic point of view. This research discusses the function and accuracy of conjunctions in novel translation. The research method uses a descriptive method that focuses on the description of the function and the accuracy of translation. The theories used are coordinate conjunction theory in English and Indonesian, coordinate conjunction function and accuracy theory. The results of this study show the similarity of meaning in conjunction when it is not translated (Hadita, 2014). Research from the point of view of gender and language use has been researched by Ramadhani (2019). The theory used in this study is Robin Lakoff's sociolinguistic theory of the characteristics of women's language and its relationship with gender. The research method uses descriptive qualitative. The data acquisition is taken from the utterances uttered by the main character. The results showed that there are ten variations used in women's language, such as the right color term, avoiding the use of strong words, empty adjectives, tag questions, avoiding the use of strong words, lexical hedges, intensifiers, emphatic stress, hypercorrect grammar, and super polite forms. This research reveals that women have a higher level of politeness than men (Ramadhani, Hafsa, & Proutomo, 2019).

Puspitasari and Masri (2019) discuss the film from a linguistic point of view. The research entitled *Language Deception in "Confession of a Shopaholic" Movie by Shopie Kinsella* discusses the language deception contained in the speech of his characters. The research method used in this study is descriptive qualitative by utilizing the theory of Language fraud by Darius Galasinski. The results of the study found that there are five types of Galasinski fraud contained in the film including negligence, evasion, fraud with commissions, fraud through explicit information, and fraud through implied information (Puspitasari & Masri, 2019). Sapui (2020) conducted research from a psychological point of view in relation to the healing process of *Compulsive Buying Disorder* (CBD) disease experienced by the main character. The study tracked the role of confession as a 'cure' for shopping-savvy women. This study maps the healing of heroines based on the principle of Foucauldian recognition (Sapui, 2020).

In substance, the premise of the story in the film *Confession of A Shopaholic* has many uniqueness so that it can be researched from various points of view. But from several studies that have been done, there has been no research that discusses the role of shopping in the personal formation of figures seen from the perspective of Georg Simmel's sociology of money. This study aims to unpack how the role of money fashion in the personal formation of the main character through the lens of Georg Simmel's sociology of money.

2. Method

This research utilizes the theory of Sociology of Money proposed by Georg Simmel. Simmel sees money as an item of life that can help us understand the whole of life. He argues that the jobs offered by urban life have an impact on economic life that only focuses on making money. Conceptually, valuation is a whole world viewed from the point of view of a certain advantage (Simmel, 2011). Appraisal of an item occurs when the upper class society dominates the use of the item. People from the lower middle social strata then imitate it so that it is seen as it is done by people with high social strata—which ultimately affects the goods to get recognition from people with lower middle social classes that the goods are of high value.

The film *Confession of A Shopaholic* is in line with the premise above. The film's setting is New York City, one of the largest cities and the center of the economy in the United States. The film was released in 2009, at which time America was in a major recession. The main character in this film, Rebecca Bloomwood, is said to have a debt of up to tens of thousands of dollars—which represented American society at the time. This research observes in depth how the main character carries out shopping activities and the things behind them. Rebecca's shopping behavior will be analyzed using Georg Simmel's theory of money sociology to find out what the background of Rebecca's relationship with money—which in the film is represented by credit cards. Georg Simmel's fashion theory was also used to support this research.

Simmel's theory of sociology of money consists of three main ideas, namely: money as a social institution; money as a relationship between justice, law, and man as a social being; and social evolution inadvertently produced products in the form of financial systems. This research will discuss how the film *Confession of A Shopaholic* is viewed through two points, namely money as a social institution and the financial system as a product of the evolution of society. The point of money as a relationship between justice and law is not discussed in this study because this element is not found in the object under study. Fashion theory is used to examine the influence of a brand of goods on the main character's shopping desires. Research data is in the form of dialogues or scenes that show the main character's view of an item, the things behind the main character wearing or buying branded goods, and the implications obtained after his wishes are fulfilled.

3. Result

3.1 Money as a Social Institution

Money as a social institution does not mean anything if it is limited to one individual (Simmel, 2011). He is able to make changes to the general condition only by changing the relations between individuals. Simmel argues that the increasing volume of money earned by individuals has an impact on the empty changes in relations between individuals as well as in commodity prices, so that it will have an impact on the emptiness of energy stimulation to work. Money implicitly becomes a stimulant for the individual to do work, it becomes the labor that moves man towards the goal, which is money itself (Beer, 2019). The difference in the amount of money that individuals have from one another gives rise to differences in social strata, which then motivates people with lower middle social strata to pursue it.

The difference in the volume of money for each individual also has implications for commodity prices. Goods with a significant price difference in the same item indicate the presence of an excess value of the item. The relationship between the recipient and the price of goods has changed because goods with higher prices are not just a duplication of the amount of money in greater value, but there is a development of the quality of goods that cannot be obtained in cheaper goods.

Rebecca's love for luxury goods cannot be separated from her interest in the world of fashion. Since the opening part of the film, Rebecca is constructed as a woman who loves luxury goods and credit cards. The film's first minutes show that she proudly uses her credit card to buy clothes and bags. "*Rebecca Bloomwood. Occupation: Journalist. Jacket: Visa. Dress: AMEX. belt: MasterCard... Bag: Gucci!*" (Hogan, 2009). The next sequence also shows Rebecca's point of view on the goods she bought. "*A man will never love you and treat you as good as a store. If a man doesn't fit you can't exchange it 7 days later with gorgeous cashmere sweater*" (Hogan, 2009). The scene when Rebecca sees a green scarf inside the 'Daniel&George' store, and some of the brands Rebecca mentions in the dialogue—so it can be simply concluded that the things Rebecca owns are luxury goods.

This point of view is Rebecca's way of judging an item. For Rebecca, the presence of luxury goods is more materially appreciable than the presence of a man because men are not something that can be exchanged in stores. The commodification carried out by Rebecca is an impact of her perspective on luxury goods. These two sequences show Rebecca's worldview—that what she wears, the things she buys, the shopping activities, and the job she dreams of are things that cannot be replaced by anything else. This statement is supported by Rebecca's dialogue at the 04:16 minute "*Suze, since I was fourteen I wanted to work in Alette magazine. I could just get this job I will be happy forever*" (Hogan, 2009).

But Rebecca also experienced several disappointments because the quality of the goods she got was not worth the money she spent. When Rebecca finished shopping on the promotional items, she checked that the sweater she bought turned out to contain only 5% cashmere and the rest from polyester material, Rebecca felt disappointed and deceived by fashion brands because she felt that she was buying sweaters with impure materials so that it didn't warm

enough. This disappointment he then spilled in the form of an article for his magazine, because the quality of the goods was not worth the money he spent. The price gap with the quality of the goods was implicitly also explained by the director on the sequence when Rebecca attended a dinner with Alette Naylor. It started when Rebecca pulled the thread stitches out of the sleeves of her jacket, but instead made the beads on her jacket fall so much that she had to remove her jacket, which she later misunderstood people as a waitress on the evening's show—thus affecting the chaotic plan of Rebecca to impress Alette Naylor and instead make a fool of herself. Rebecca was embarrassed and disappointed at her shameful deeds. But the root of the problem lies in the thread of the jacket. The above two scenes implicitly break Simmel's contention that higher prices of goods are of better quality.

3.2 The Financial System as A Product of Social Evolution

Money assimilates the whole world, which brings the problems of alienation, simplification, and equality that occur between societies so that society loses the main subject of life (Wang, 2015). The emptiness of money conscience reflected in everyday life, according to Simmel, is a reflection of socialist idealism. Socialism seeks to free the individual from the shackles of the monetary system and focus on the rationalization of life, the control over the life opportunities that include law and justice. Socialism seeks to establish order from the elements of life (Beer, 2019). The consequence of socialism is that social reactions are in the form of non-compliance with the system (Huerta de Soto, 2010). The monetary system, in contrast, encourages the individual to concentrate on himself, abandoning emotions and loyalty as objects. The monetary system rules out interindividual relationships as something emotional (Simmel, 2011). Along with the development of society, the form of money tends to change in a more abstract direction (Zelmanovitz, 2010).

Credit cards, in this film, are an abstract form of money. Conceptually, credit card users have the privilege of using the money lent by the bank to make transactions, which in the future the credit card holder has the obligation to return the loan money in accordance with the time limit and interest percentage that has been agreed upon by both parties. Credit cards provide flexibility for cardholders to transact without the physical presence of money. It forms the mentality that credit card holders have money, only in a different form. Rebecca took advantage of this privilege to buy the things she wanted. He felt that by having what he called in the first minute as magic cards, he didn't need money. Rebecca's mentality of seeing that the owner of the 'magic card' does not need money has a big effect on her life until adulthood. He considers that, the more credit cards he has, the greater his chances of buying luxury goods so that he does not hesitate to have a large number of credit cards.

Simmel argues that fashion is a social process that functions within the class hierarchy based on individual psychological passions (Kuźniarz, 2018). The emergence of fashion brands in various countries began with the practice of capitalism by the bourgeoisie. Capitalism makes the value of an item measured by money. Fashion brands have invisible attributes that consumers use to express themselves (Kim & Hall, 2014). To achieve an ideal qualitative social relationship, money is needed so that consumers spend money (Singh, 2016) on one item with a certain brand because the use of a certain product or brand has a symbolic meaning related to self-expression and social status.

The film *Confession of A Shopaholic* opens with a scene of little Rebecca seeing girls her age laughing at the shoes Rebecca wears and is supported by Rebecca's narration. "*When I was a little girl, there were a real prices and mom prices. Real prices got you shiny sparkly things that lasted three weeks. Mom prices got you brown things... that lasted forever*" (Hogan, 2009). This part is supported by Rebecca's mother's dialogue saying that she bought the shoes Rebecca wears at a 50% discount. The next sequence shows a scene of Rebecca looking into a shop window "*But when I look into the shop windows, I saw another world. A dreamy world full of perfect things*" (Hogan, 2009). These two opening scenes show how Rebecca sees the items she wears and the ones she wants. As a young child he was still under the full responsibility of his parents. Rebecca's attitude relates to how her parents treat money, namely frugality and saving diligently, which her mother explicitly said at 37:05. "*For all our married life we've been the kind of people that... we just spent, we save... a bignastic of money*" (Hogan, 2009). The disciplined attitude of her parents has implications for Rebecca's character, namely as a child who is not spoiled. Although she wanted the same shoes as other girls, she did not sulk to her mother. So little Rebecca had no choice but to obey her mother's shoes of choice. Studies show that childhood experiences have a role in adapting throughout life (Sjöblom, Öhring, & Kostenius, 2018). The inner child also plays a role in the management of individual emotions in deciding on a product. Studies show that memories that lead to good experiences such as games, fantasy stories, and a sense of security in childhood contribute to the formation of designs that can pull the inner child to the surface so that it affects product selection among other products (Sepahpour, 2015). In Rebecca's case, her pleasure in shopping was based on her unfulfilled childhood desires. This is because Rebecca's parents prefer to buy things at the second-hand market and save money, because the price of goods in the second-hand market is relatively much cheaper. Rebecca's realization that her mother is a frugal person

eventually formed an adult Rebecca who loved to shop and fulfill her fashion tastes as a form of fulfillment for her childhood wishes.

Another realization that led Rebecca to become a credit card user was when 12 years old Rebecca witnessed adult women buying things using credit cards. "*They don't even need a money. They have a magic cards! I want it one! Little did I know, I would ended up with twelve!*" (Hogan, 2009). As a child with little power, Rebecca finally did what she had long wanted when she had that power. In the end, Rebecca's childhood experiences became the main factor shaping Rebecca's shopaholic character. This also prompted Rebecca to work at Alette magazine.

Sale items or discounts are also the wheels that move Rebecca's emotions to shop. Basically, manufacturers provide discounted goods to attract the attention of consumers. Usually discounts are applied to the last stock item or old stock that has not been sold out. The use of the word sale for an item plays a role in playing with consumer emotions because the consumer will feel that he can get the goods at a much lower price compared to the original price. On the other hand, sellers also play a role in the price game in order to still benefit from the sale of discounted goods, for example by including the original price of the item as a discounted price so that the item seems to look more expensive than the price before the discount. Discount pricing is an effective marketing technique so that sellers offer fake discounts to lie to potential consumers (Armstrong & Chen, 2019). Rebecca's emotional is played out when she sees a sale in the 'Daniel&George' store. He was faced with two choices, namely not to buy a green scarf because he had just received his credit card arrears or to buy the scarf using his remaining credit card.

4. Discussion

4.1 Shopping: Expression or Escape

Fashion is one of the basic human needs. Culturally, clothing is able to form culture because there is a process of meaning (Meyrasyawati, 2013). For Rebecca, being a part of Alette magazine is a point of pride. She thinks that working at Alette magazine can make her happy forever. Therefore, Rebecca tried to support herself in the form of up-to-date clothing from famous fashion lines. She realized that to be able to work in a fashion magazine, she had to have an awareness of fashion. This realization also led Rebecca to feel the need to buy a green scarf when she was on her way for an interview in Alette magazine. At first, he wanted to give up his intention to buy the scarf because he remembered the credit card bill that he had not paid. But the mannequin doll said that her mother would give her a shabby scarf that she felt was enough. The memory related to the shabby items in Rebecca made her feel Back to being an unhappy child, so to get rid of these feelings she finally decided to buy the green scarf in various ways. This scene also shows Rebecca expressing through the fashion she wears. When trying on the green scarf, she assumed that her haircut looked more expensive and the mannequin doll said that "*The point about this scarf, is that it would become part of the true definition of you.. of your psyche*" (Hogan, 2009). The mannequin doll seemed to hypnotize Rebecca to still buy the scarf because by wearing the scarf, she could walk confidently to the interview site. The mannequin doll that speaks is a symbol of how an item is able to play with the emotions of its consumers, as if the prospective buyer is the most suitable to wear the item so that consumers are interested in buying it. Rebecca considered that the scarf was such an important item for her that she justified all sorts of ways to own it.

Rebecca's view that working at Alette magazine as a source of her happiness led Rebecca to strategize to join Alette, including by joining Successful Savings magazine—a financial magazine that falls under the same company as Alette. But it turns out that Rebecca gained great recognition when she joined Successful Savings by accident. Rebecca's joining Successful Savings was the beginning of Rebecca's turning point. At the 29th minute, after attending a seminar with Luke Brandon, Rebecca got a flyer on the promotion of sample items from various leading fashion brands. He finally decides to come over—ignoring Luke's order to send an article at 3 p.m.—and tries to convince himself that he doesn't need anything other than gloves. But when he saw a pair of boots at a price of 50%. Eventually he let his guard down and ended up buying other things he didn't need.

The next sequence shows Rebecca sitting alone with her groceries. He felt deceived when he read the composition of the material on his shirt label because he had bought clothes at high prices but low quality. This then prompted Rebecca to write an article that later made her known and recognized as competent in the field of financial management. The moment when Rebecca prefers to shop rather than finish her article shows that there is a drive in Rebecca that makes it hard to say 'no' when looking at the sale—even if it has to sacrifice time to complete her responsibilities. But when she was disappointed with the goods she got, Rebecca began to make writings that were able to resuscitate many people. In this case, shopping for Rebecca is something that can take her away from reality—that she has to finish her work. This statement is supported by Rebecca's dialogue in the 1:16:43 minute when she gives an

explanation to Luke Brandon. "Because when I shop the worlds gets better. The world is better. And then it's not anymore. And I need to do it again"(Hogan, 2009). Rebecca's statement clearly shows that shopping is where she runs from reality, that by shopping she feels her world is better that she needs to repeat it again and again. Another sequence that shows shopping as an escape from reality is when Rebecca confesses to Luke Brandon that when she shops, the world seems so much better that she needs to repeat it again and again—even if it affects her integrity. The impact of everything Rebecca did was somewhat clouded by her ambition to join Alette magazine.

4.2 Back to the Closest Person

Rebecca's turning point begins when she realizes that what she gets is not worth the money she has spent. This unrest he then wrote down into an article—which later influenced many Successful Savings readers. The culmination occurred when Rebecca lost the people she cared about, namely Luke Brandon and Suze. After being humiliated on national television, Rebecca decides to see her parents. Her father thought about selling the combi car he had just bought to help pay off Rebecca's debts. But Rebecca refused because she thought the car had a lot of meaning to her father. Then her father said that only Rebecca and her mother had any meaning to her. Rebecca's awareness of the value of an item seems to have begun to form from here. He no longer had the desire to pursue his career in Alette magazine because he felt that it could plunge him into the same mistake. This realization also eventually gave rise to Rebecca's idea to auction off all her belongings to pay off her debts.

This sequence suggests that a person's consciousness could be formed as a result of unwanted processes. Rebecca's return to her parents shows that her parents' role is so dominant in Rebecca's life that she is able to 'wake her up'. Another role that also helped build Rebecca's character is Suze, her best friend. Through Suze's efforts, Rebecca is forced to learn to control her desire to shop including joining the Shopaholics Anonymous club—a group for people who want to heal from excessive shopping appetite. Although Rebecca followed Suze's advice half-heartedly, she eventually returned to the club to help her sell the things she owned. Rebecca's meeting with her parents and Rebecca's return to the Shopaholic Anonymous club indirectly suggests that Suze played a role in her awareness process.

5. Conclusion

The film Confession of A Shopaholic shows the public that credit cards show as if society has money, even though reality says otherwise. Rebecca's mentality considers credit cards as magical items that are able to realize all her wishes have an effect on Rebecca's willingness to pay her credit card bills. Fashion, money, and brands are three interrelated things. This film shows that the influence of capitalism in the fashion industry has helped shape a consumptive society. Fashion has shifted from just a body covering to a trend and commercialized. The way Rebecca uses her credit card to shop for luxury goods shows that there is a symbolic role of a fashion brand that helps fulfill Rebecca's will that was not achieved when she was a child. Rebecca has the privilege of being a credit card user in the form of being able to buy the things she wants without worrying about not having enough money. This privilege he used to fulfill his passion as a child—which later led him to consumerism. Producers also play a role in fulfilling Rebecca's passion by offering huge discounts to trick consumers into buying the goods. The process of individual awareness of Rebecca's deviant behavior comes from her parents and best friends.

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