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# RESEARCH ON MARKET READINESS FOR FASHION BRAND ENTRY INTO SHIJIAZHUANG

Feasibility Study of H&M Company Entry into Shijiazhuang Market

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RESEARCH ON MARKET READINESS FOR FASHION BRAND ENTRY INTO SHIJIAZHUANG (Feasibility Study of H&M Company Entry into Shijiazhuang Market)

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out whether the Shijiazhuang City in China is a proper market for H&M. This thesis introduces the H&M Company, the situational analysis of the relevant market, and the attitude of Chinese people living in Shijiazhuang City towards H&M.

The author chose quantitative method as research methodology. Data was collected by using a questionnaire consisting of fourteen multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. The respondents were all native Chinese people living in the Shijiazhuang City. 52 responses were collected.

Through analyzing the feedbacks, the following was discovered: firstly, most of the respondents wished to have a H&M branch in the Shijiazhuang city. as there were already 47 stores in China, it would be easy to establish one in the Shijiazhuang city using the same operational mode; secondly, the purchase power of local people was low so the pricing strategies might have to be changed. In conclusion, the H&M company's entry into the Shijiazhuang market is a challenge and much consideration is required before any attempts to launch operations can be made.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1    Introduction of the Research

This study is to research the feasibility of H&M Company entering into Chinese market in Shijiazhuang City, Hebei Province, which is in the Northern part of China and 280 kilometers away from Beijing, the capital city of China as we can see it clearly in Picture 1 below. The main object is to find out the real attitude from local people of Shijiazhuang city to decide if it is a right idea for the company to enter into Shijiazhuang's market.



Picture 1. *Map of China*. (Google map website 2011)

As international business nowadays is gathering prosperity and locals can buy many products belonging to foreign brands in their own countries, like apparel, food, car and

nourishment, etc. An example would be apparel products. In the current fashion world, apparel would stand out as they serve as ambassadors for their own country. There have been a lot of other European brands entering into Chinese market till now, like H&M, ZARA, JIM JILL, VERO MODA, ONLY, etc. Among those several famous brands for young people, H&M brand is the most famous as its price is the lowest among the other brands. New products will appear in H&M stores in every week to appeal new customers and low price to keep old customers. This is why H&M can develop so quickly and successfully in China and around the whole world. In my opinion, this is so even its quality is not the best among those brands. However, for young people, they place much more priority on the fashion style over quality.

## 1.2    Description of H&M Company

### Brief information

H&M was established in Västerås, Sweden in 1947 by Erling Persson. H&M is short for Hennes & Mauritz as these two words are Swedish words and mean "HER & HIM" in English. H&M offers fashion clothes and cosmetics for women, men, teenagers and children that are assured of good quality at the best price. (H&M webpage 2011).

### H&M fashion concepts

The H&M products range is broad and varied, which is aimed at satisfying every customer of different tastes and requirements. H&M wishes to cultivate fashion interest into everyone and products are available at any H&M outlets at any time. Another important strategy is that collections of H&M are of a large scale and new products would appear in the stores every day. (H&M webpage 2011).

H&M's fashion concepts have been mainly divided into four parts: women, men, children and cosmetics. Since H&M consists of different groups or different fields, it has different characteristics and different functions. Firstly, **Women:** The collections for women of all age include everything from modern to classical, such as sportswear, maternity clothes and cutting-edge fashion. The collections are complemented by corresponding garnishes, underwear and shoes. (H&M webpage 2011) Secondly, **Men:** The collections for men also include everything that ranges from everlasting classics to modern fundamentals that show the newest trends of leisurewear and seasonal fashionwear. They are also complemented with matching accessories, underwear and shoes. (H&M webpage 2011) Thirdly, **Children:** The collections for children are divided into three segments: $0 - 18$ months, $1.5 - 8$ years, and $9 - 14$ years. The main objective for children's collections is to be useful, hard-wearing, safe and relaxed. (H&M webpage 2011) Fourthly, **Cosmetics:** Skin care and body care products are all included in H&M's cosmetics department which spans across a wide variety of makeup products. The aim is to maintain with the latest trends of modern fashions; and their cosmetics are continually updated by using fresh combination of colors, scents and products. There is no animal testing during the manufacturing and testing process. There are also strict requirement for suppliers whereby the contents, packaging and labels are all needed to reach EU quality and safety requirements. (H&M webpage 2011).

### *Stores around the world*

Now H&M has nearly 2, 200 stores around the world for selling clothes and cosmetics. (H&M webpage 2011) In China there are 47 distribution stores in the east of China. (See Table 1) There are new markets in Romania, Croatia, Singapore, Morocco* and Jordan* in 2011. (H&M webpage 2011).

Table 1. *H&M stores around the world.* (H&M website 2011)

| Country | Stores** | Country | Stores** | Country | Stores** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Germany | 377 | Denmark | 87 | Franchise*** | 50 |
| France | 151 | Italy | 72 | Czech Republic | 22 |
| USA | 208 | Belgium | 64 | Greece | 18 |
| UK | 192 | Canada | 55 | Slovenia | 11 |
| Sweden | 168 | Poland | 76 | Ireland | 12 |
| Netherlands | 112 | Finland | 43 | Luxembourg | 10 |
| Switzerland | 75 | China | 47 | Hungary | 15 |
| Spain | 122 | Japan | 10 | South Korea | 2 |
| Norway | 101 | Portugal | 21 | Slovakia | 7 |
| Austria | 66 | Russia | 11 | Turkey | 1 |

* Morocco and Jordan through franchise.
** As per 30 November, 2010, including H&M, COS, Monki, Weekday and Cheap Monday. Markets appear in order by the size of sales including VAT.
*** United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Lebanon and Israel.

## *Online shopping*

H&M also provides online shopping, which is currently available in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and the UK. Between 2011 and 2012, online shopping service will be available for the customers in the USA. (H&M webpage 2011)

## 1.3    Market Selection Criteria

### *Potential*

An attraction for new market for exporters should include pure sales value and volume, profits, and even market share; although it sometimes depends on the requirements of the company. In my opinion, Chinese market should be an attraction market on the volume section as the population scale is large. (Sherlock & Reuvid 2004. 49-50.) A company with large production capacity, like H&M Company, maybe interested in this

kind of market. It can be seen that the Chinese market is a potential market for H&M Company. In Shijiazhuang City the population scale is 9, 66 million and the population growth rate is 8.4 %; the data is valid at the end of 2008 that was based on some official news and statistics released by the Shijiazhuang Municipal Bureau of Statistics. (China tour Online. 2011) Compared with the whole Finland's population, 5.34 million which was calculated in 2009 (THE WORLD BANK. 2011), Shijiazhuang city seems to be a good potential market for entry. In addition, the purchase power of people living in Shijiazhuang city is increasing by each single year.

Here we can also observe from the chart of nominal GDP and trends of Shijiazhuang city from year 2001 to 2009 in Figure 1. Both nominal GDP and nominal GDP per capita almost increase by every year and in 2009, Shijiazhuang's nominal GDP has reached 300 billion RMB (Starmass dream company 2011); the factor of its economic strength is therefore not to be underestimated or even neglected.
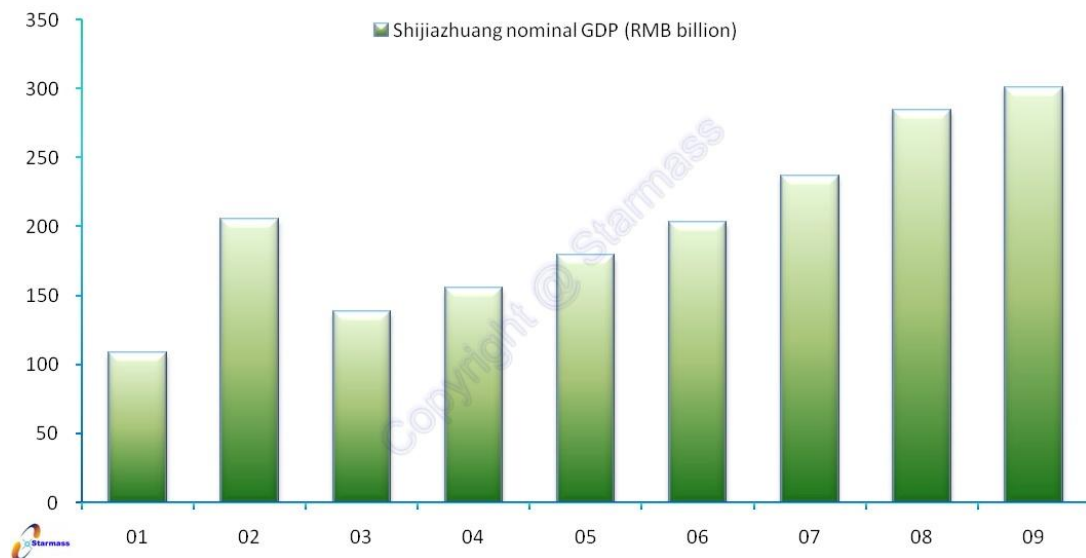


Figure 1. *GDP and trends of Shijiazhuang city from year 2001-2009.* (Starmass dream company website 2011)

*Accessibility*

For exporters, whether current or future potential as mentioned above, (Sherlock & Reuvid 2004, 50) accessibility is a critical consideration. To promote the growth of domestic industry as well as the careful planning of the existing industry, the government may set up such barriers to trade as tariffs, quotas, boycotts, monetary barriers, non-tariff barriers and market barriers. Barriers are the imposed elements of the import business of foreign businesses to protect the local business. Local industries would be encouraged with the barriers while there would be stimulation for the economical or political fields. (Ghauti 2010, 41).

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an institution which is not an agreement like GATT. WTO sets rules for its members and provides a group of experts to observe and regulate policies in order to minimise disputes between members on trade; but GATT is about decisions of binding issues. For the first time WTO requires all members in all aspects make a full participation of the current GATT and the Uruguay round agreements, through its improved physique and range, to provide a long-lasting, wide-ranging discussion to solve problems of the twenty-first-century global market. (Ghauti 2010, 49). Through years of international trade development, China has opened the gate of business for foreign countries and in recent years, more non-tariff businesses have been allowed. This is indeed good news for exporters who has wished to do business in China or with Chinese.

*Similarity*

Exporters who wish to open new markets must be familiar with current markets as similar marketing plans could be adopted to make development of the new market easier (Sherlock & Reuvid 2004, 50-51). As mentioned before, there are already 47

stores in different cities in China for years; H&M Company has been familiar with Chinese market already. In my opinion, the marketing plan should be the same with those 47 stores as the culture is more or less the same around China. Based on this element, H&M can enter Shijiazhuang market easier by using same control model and business idea for the market development.

# 2 STRATEGY ANALYSIS

For this research, it was an international market entry business which related to international marketing aspect. International marketing is a platform for businessmen that direct to sell the company's products and services to customers in more than one nation to make a profit. Between domestic marketing and international marketing, the only difference in the definitions is marketing activities happen in more than one country. In international marketing operations the difference shows the complication and variety that never happened or happened less in domestic marketing operations. (Ghauri 2010, 7.)

## 2.1    SWOT Analysis

SWOT is one kind of analysis method which is a basic model that serves as a foundation for the development of marketing procedure sans phrase so it is very famous now. It is used for companies which are to definite companies' environmental factors internal and external as strengths (**S**), weaknesses (**W**), opportunities (**O**) and threats (**T**) (QuickMBA 2011); then to set up new internal strategies and external strategies to combine with the internal and external conditions. SWOT model accomplishes the analysis process by assessing a company's: strengths, what a company can do; weaknesses, what a company cannot do; opportunities, a company's potential positive conditions; threats, a company's potential negative conditions. (Marketing Strategy 2011, 120) The SWOT analysis could provide information to help with the companies to operate companies better with combine internal and external elements together. (QuickMBA 2011)

SWOT analysis must be customer-focused to achieve maximum benefit and the strength turns to be an ability of a company. Although some weaknesses of a company may be

harmful but the company could avoid weaknesses during the decision making process it is better to pay more attention to weaknesses. (Marketing Strategy 2011) So it is significant to make sure company's strengths and weaknesses, and then know about the opportunities and threats which company that will face in the target market. Below is the SWOT analysis for H&M Company in detail.

### 2.1.1 Strengths

Strength belongs to internal environment of a company analysis which mainly analyzes the advantages of the company, products and services. Firstly, for H&M' market positioning are for all people but the main market segmentation is for young people and the Shijiazhuang market is suitable for H&M market position so H&M has advantage to enter this market. And the research respondents are mainly at 15 to 25 years old, it means the research has already research the main potential customers in Shijiazhuang city. So the advantage of H&M is the core product is essentially fit target customers' demand. Secondly, there is still has no H&M products sale point in Shijiazhuang so H&M products would act as a new role to full fill people's pursue for new style and new brand products. Thirdly, European culture now has affected Chinese people's fashion idea, so H&M also can make easier for Shijiazhuang customers to get European style products. Fourthly, the low price is also a big advantage that for this reason I have read a news that was people queuing round the block in front of the H&M store in Shanghai to buy clothes, some went to queue up maybe five hours earlier than the store's opening time.

### 2.1.2 Weaknesses

Weakness belongs to the internal environment which analysis the disadvantages for H&M that entry activity into Shijiazhuang market. The company needs to be developed not enough that only know the advantages but also should know about the

disadvantages and weaknesses which are necessary to be improved.　Firstly, although there are a lot of people like European style but some do not think so and the body types of Eastern people are different with Western people, so the style or clipping should be changed. Secondly, the people's purchase power in Shijiazhuang city is not very high so the pricing may need to be adjusted; but everything has two sides, 15 to 25 years old people are potential customers in the future.

### 2.1.3　Opportunities

Opportunity is one of the external elements in analyzing the external environment which facing customers, competitors, operational environment, etc. Firstly, there are 47 H&M stores in China as there must be a good selling model which specific suits for Chinese markets, so it is easy to follow the model to operate in Shijiazhuang city. Secondly, now in Shijiazhuang city that every product is in price inflation situation, so the adjustment of price strategy has a wide range to change; furthermore, to gain profit is apparent. Thirdly, online shop is also a welcome selling method that young people like buying products through the Internet as it is easy, convenient, cheap price level, and this kind of purchase way does not waste of time. The most attractant reason is cheap price that use a low price to get a same product which selling in a high price level in stores.

### 2.1.4　Threats

Obviously, threat is the external factor to analyze the external environment of the H&M Company entry activity. Firstly, there are already some brands from European, like JIM JILL, VERO MODA, ZARA, ONLY, etc. and there are a lot of exclusive shops, mall counters in Shijiazhuang city, so the competition is fierce. Competitors are the most important threats that H&M Company has got to face whatever in which market. To adopt other brands' good point and advantages then avoid H&M Company's

shortcomings to improve the disadvantages into advantages. So the competition may provide new opportunities for H&M Company if H&M treats competitors in a right mode. Secondly, the restriction for foreign brand by local policy it turns to be limitation for H&M this kind of brand. Thirdly, there may be some malicious competitions from local brands to compete with foreign brands. Fourthly, native policies are not only having restrictions for foreign companies/brands but also some for encouragement. To use the support policies in maximum to make more profit.

## 2.2    4PS Analysis

The marketing mix and the 4Ps analysis of marketing are the most common ones for companies to recognize the whole process of bringing a new brand or a new product or a new service to the target market for positioning the market offer successfully. (MIND TOOLS 2011) The 4Ps is the famous method to definite one market which was first used by E J McCarthy in 1960. (MIND TOOLS 2011) 4Ps is short for Products, Price, Place and Promotion. There are also 7Ps but 4Ps is the popular and simple and best known model and 4Ps could gather enough information for companies use.

All analysis is based on customer orientation as according to the marketing concepts, customers must be the major core of the marketing operation. Business moves to achieve the best profit from customers and to satisfy customers. (Zikmund 2002, 6) To satisfy customers is equal to keep customers. This is also work to build long-term relationships with suppliers, factories, sellers, etc. as with customers. As mentioned above, in the research, 22.7% respondents gather fashion and apparel information from their friends and colleagues; to keep more customers by using a long-term relationship the more customer sources would bringing by old customers. (Zikmund 2002, 7)

## 2.2.1 Products

To talk about products it must include quality, name/brand, image/profile, package, and services these elements (Savonia UAS Moodle material 2008). Firstly, the quality of H&M products cannot satisfy all the customers which could get information from the research result. As there were many respondents wish H&M to improve the products quality. Secondly, the name/brand of H&M is fixed and it already has a well fame in the target market. Thirdly, the image/profile of H&M has built as a brand for young people which were mostly covered with fashion concepts. Fourthly, in China, for each product that customer bought that individually has a box or a paper bag or a plastic bag to package. That may be different with European countries' packaging custom. Fifthly, the services were different in China, as there were always sellers helped you to take the products that customer ordered; in western countries, customers picked up the products themselves and try it in the fitting room. But now the western model for customers is novel for Chinese modern people. So the service method could be set based on the situation of Shijiazhuang market specially.

Here is also advice for H&M Company that entry Shijiazhuang market: H&M Company needs to know the demands and requirements that from customers and how to satisfy more customers. Take H&M's clothes as an example, clothes have taken a large percentage in H&M products and the design is the best known for H&M brand affection. Now the market has been chosen as Shijiazhuang market, the necessary procedure is to research customers' characteristics of purchasing custom, color preferences, clothes style, etc.

## 2.2.2 Price

In the topic of price there are four elements are necessary to talk: price strategy/policy, price level, discounts and terms of payment (Savonia UAS Moodle material 2008).

Although the low price is a good price strategy for H&M Company to entry other markets but now in Shijiazhuang market it cannot be the big advantage as the purchase power of the native people is not very high. Make a general survey of the price of commodities in Shijiazhuang city and concerning at question 3 to research the purchase ability of native people living in Shijiazhuang and the result was 65.4% respondents expense money for buying apparel under 30 Euros in one month, and in question 6 there were 38.5% respondents going for one shopping in every three months. Combining these two questions and these figures showed the purchase power is not in a high level, the pricing strategy should basic on this principle at a low price level. The price level should be adjusted by following the price of commodities. There could be discounts during festivals, such as Spring Festival which is the most important holiday for Chinese, Women's Day, International Labor Day, and Valentine's Day; even order a sale for the H&M store's anniversary are all good ideas. It also can be seen as a good idea for sales promotion.

### 2.2.3    Place

H&M has already become an internationalization company that operated in about 30 countries around the world. Now, place is not a problem to search for which country or which city to enter into but to research which kind of sales point suitable for Shijiazhuang customers as concentrate on Shijiazhuang as the target market.

In the marketing research's question 6 there were 49% respondents like shopping for apparel in exclusive shops and in question 10 there were 61.8% respondents wished to have exclusive shops in Shijiazhuang city. Exclusive shops can be considered as the first distribution channel in Shijiazhuang city. Furthermore, to establish online shops can be the second selection for H&M in the future as online shopping is easy, convenience, fast and popular for young customers.

## 2.2.4 Promotion

Promotion is the most effective method to broadcast and let more people to know the brand of H&M as the promotion can be seen as a communication with customers. Also promotion has four elements: personal selling, advertising, sales promotion and public relations (Savonia UAS Moodle material 2008). Personal selling is a direct way to introduce products to customers that sellers use their own communication skills to attract customers. Advertising is the most popular method to broadcast products and services as this is the most effect method in promotion. Sales promotion, like mentioned before in price part, the effect of discounts is remarkable. With the development of market economy, the public relation attracts wide attention because the PUBLIC is not only includes people but also includes government, society and media, etc. (BAIDU BAIKE 2011)

After the research there were a few advices and suggestions for the promotion strategy that H&M Company entry Shijiazhuang market. First, H&M could use the intrinsic reputation/frame to open the Shijiazhuang market as respondents indicated they have waited for a long time to have a sales point of H&M in Shijiazhuang city. (Question 15) Second, make an attractive webpage as 28.4% respondents gather fashion and apparel information from the Internet or the official webpage. Internet is a well-suited platform to spread information to more people. Third, there are a lot of famous magazines introducing fashion, local fashion magazines like Xinwei, Ruili, Lady Friend; and foreign brand: ELLE, VOGUE are for female readers; Fashion Sir, Man's Uno, Men Clothes are for male readers. Posting fashion advertisements on these magazines is efficient for promotion. Fourth, H&M could use movie stars and singing stars' affection to the young people to gather more reputation by using those stars as model to show H&M's products or choose some to be representatives for the brand.

# 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Why Research is Required

Research studies can help us to work systematically and learn to critically analyze issues/matters before believing in them or acting upon them (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2002, 8). Research includes two methods: quantitative research methods and qualitative research methods. Quantitative methods are based on numbers but qualitative methods are based on judgments and opinions (Waters 2008, 4). Not only in business studies but also in our life and in the work we will do in the future, research will also be needed. For example, if a person wants to buy a mobile, he/she will need to do some research to find out which mobile satisfies his/her demand and where to buy it at a cheaper price. This research study will also be the same, to research the target market and find out whether is it a proper market for the brand H&M and to find out the demand in the targeted market as well as to set a proper pricing for the targeted customer group. Thus this research will find out whether Shijiazhuang City is a good market for H&M or not and elucidate hidden weaknesses and possible solutions with the ideas from the respondents' answers.

## 3.1.1 Quantitative Research Methods

As introduced before, quantitative method is based on numbers. The advantages of quantitative methods are: firstly, is that numbers are clear and accurate to measure as numbers are visualized to show the meaning. (Waters 2008, 3-4) Like the temperature is 11 degrees and people will know how warm it is and to decide to wear what kind of clothes. On the contrary, something that cannot be measured in numbers, it will be difficult to describe. For example, somebody got a headache. It is difficult to say how bad it is and others cannot understand the pain he/she is feeling. Secondly, numbers could be used in calculations; (Waters 2008, 3-4) like, the sales price for one bottle of Coca Cola is 1.5 Euros and if you buy two bottles you need to pay 3 Euros to the seller.

Although quantitative research method data are numbers which are easy to understand but they are difficult to analyze. Figure 2 below (Waters 2008, 10) illustrates the detail of using quantitative research method to solve problems process. Firstly, the researcher needs to know the details of the problem before choosing an appropriate research method that includes finding out key variable and relationships. Secondly, collect data from the targeted people who the researcher has set. Thirdly, use the model to analyze data to get the results. Analyzing quantitative data will need a systematic approach. The SPSS used in the approach is the skill taught by a business research teacher in Savonia UAS.

```
                 Consider different approaches
                             |
                             v
                    Check previous work
                             |
                             v
                 Study the details of the problem
                             |
                             v
      Identify key variable and relationships between them
                             |
                             v
                    Build a model and test it
                             |
                             v
                    Collect and analyse data
                             |
                             v
                    Test the model and data
                             |
                             v
          Experiment with the model and get results
                             |
                             v
                     Analyse the results
```
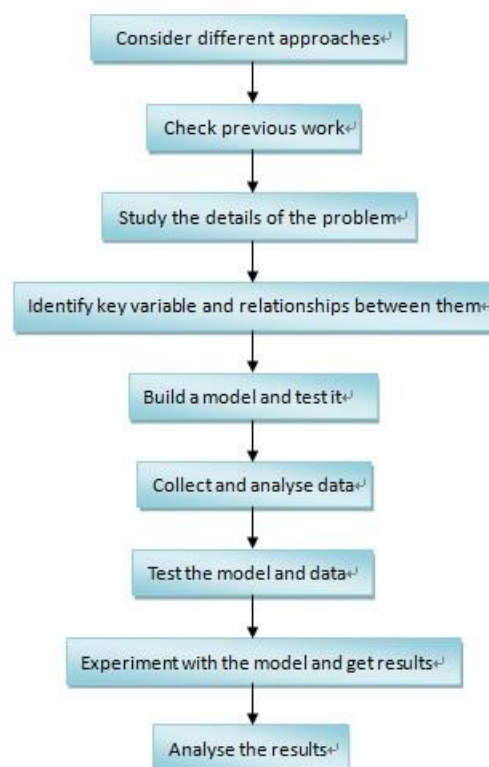
Figure 2. *The role of modeling in solving a problem: detail in quantitative method.*
(Waters 2008, 10)

### 3.1.2   Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research is seeking for 'why' and not 'how' through analyzing unstructured information, like interview transcripts, survey responses, emails, notes, feedback forms, photos and videos. The analyzing is not based on numbers or statistics as they belong to quantitative method. (QSR International 2011) Qualitative research study can provide the knowledge and information that we need in our life and business. We can systematically organize those knowledge and information to guide our process. There are many research types, such as interviews, ethnographies, texts, audiotapes, videotapes, and multiple methods. (Silverman 2000)

For qualitative research method, data collecting is a complicated procedure but the data are visual and easy to read. When you are analyzing the data of qualitative research method there are three steps which are really important: noticing, collecting and thinking. These three steps are used in a cycle, like noticing, collecting, thinking, noticing, collecting, thinking, noticing... this kind of repeating noticing and collecting these two steps. The final part of qualitative research methods is to analyze the data collected from this process to make a conclusion of these ideas. The process of qualitative data analysis was shown in Figure 3. (Seidel 1998, 2)
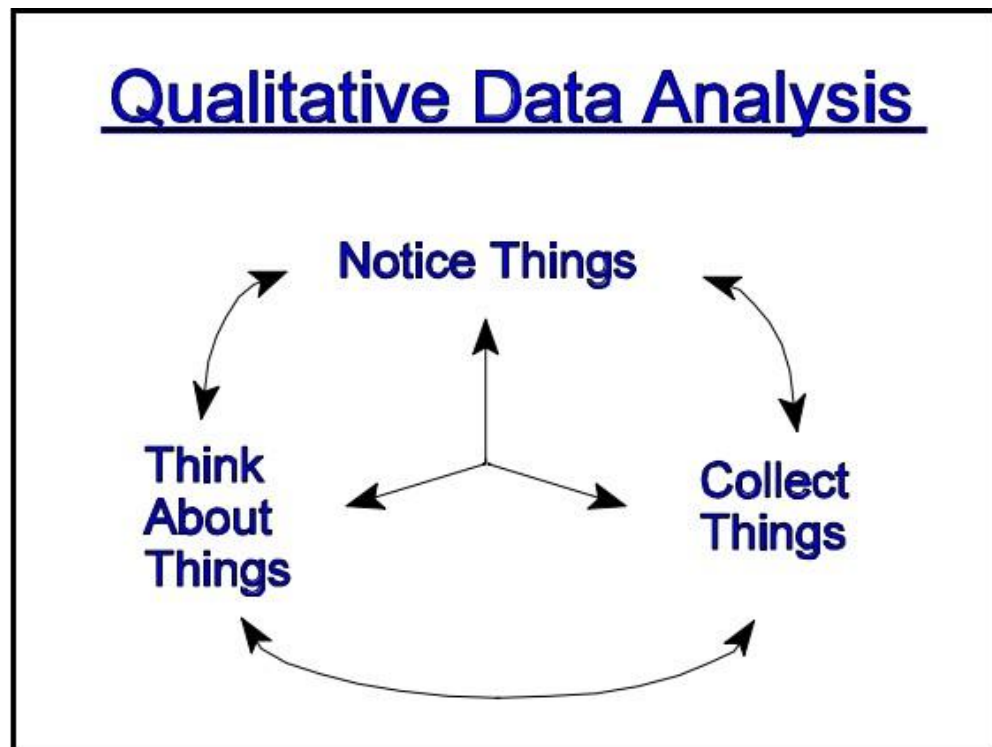
Figure 3. *The data analysis process.* (Seidel 1998, 2)

## 3.2    Research Process

For this study, qualitative methods and quantitative methods both have been chosen, but quantitative methods were the main research approach and these methods had been implemented by using questionnaires sent to potential customers in the target market, Shijiazhuang City in China. In the questionnaire, there were totally 15 questions, 14 questions were multiple-choice questions that belonged to quantitative methods and only the last one question belonged to qualitative methods.

Through Figure 4, my whole research processes are in a cycle. First, research design; second, data collection; third, data analysis; these three steps are the main procedures and after those three steps I got the result for the research. Let's have a look at the details of those three steps.
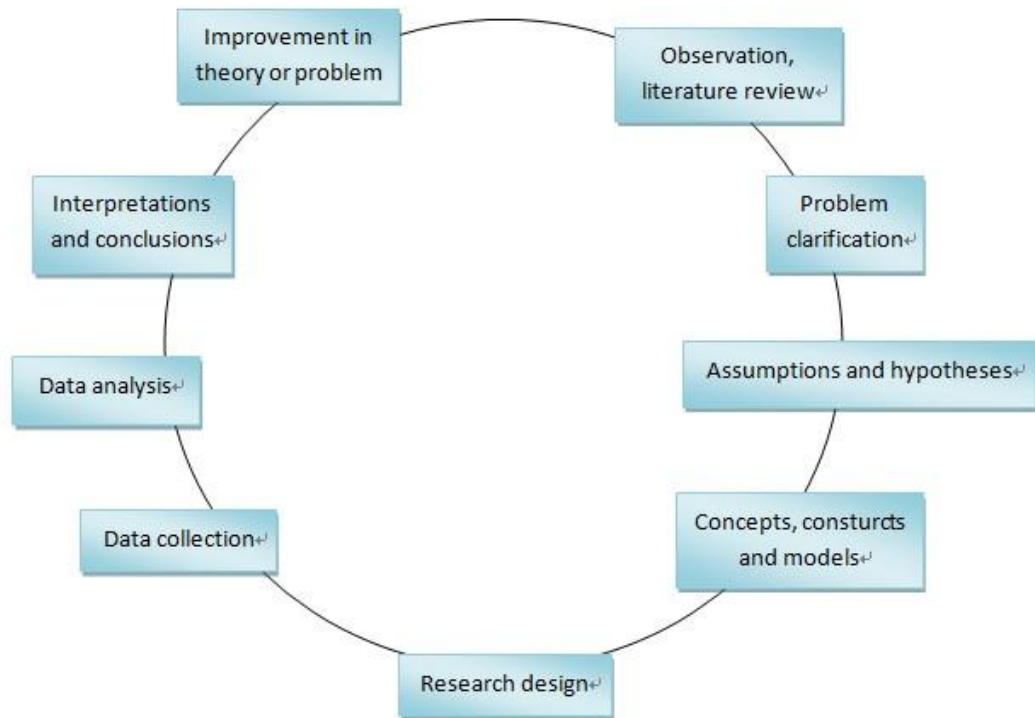
Figure 4. *The wheel of research.*

**Research design:** The aim of this questionnaire is to find out whether the Shijiazhuang market is right for H&M or not. Firstly, target customers' basic information were needed as a reference, like gender, age, how much they spend for apparel every month, how often they go shopping; Secondly, do they know about H&M and how much they know; Thirdly, the attitudes of the customers are very important for H&M to decide whether it is feasible to enter the market; Finally, for those people who have bought products of H&M, their evaluations of the quality and price are necessary as it could help with locating of outlets and factory and pricing problems in the future.

**Data collection:** Through sending questionnaires to target customers in Shijiazhuang city are 172 questionnaires in total and received 52 responses. The main objective is to

collect and analyze a large number of target customers' attitude on this project and searching for a suitable way to enter the target market.

**Data analysis:** All the data has divided into two parts to analyze: quantitative methods data analyzed by using SPSS software and qualitative methods data analyzed by using the model like Figure 4 shown. It was a complex process for quantitative methods data as there was a large amount of numbers needed to be managed although it would be easier to use the SPSS software to analyze the figures automatically but it was still a complicated work. Every question needed to be analyzed individually and cross tabulations were done in this analysis. In part 3, there will be an introduction about data analysis in detail.

## 3.3     Questionnaire Argument

Those questions in the questionnaire and SWOT analysis were well connected as the results from respondents provided useful information for SWOT analysis. For example, Question 2 revealed respondents' age distribution to know about which age group is the potential customer for H&M brand. The result indicated that it was strength for H&M Company the young age group cared about H&M brand. Otherwise, Question 3 researched how much those respondents pay for apparel in one month to know about the purchase power of native people; but the result belonged to weaknesses field. Furthermore, respondents' answers of the last qualitative question provided many advice and suggestions as opportunities; for example, respondents like buying apparel from online shops, so H&M Company could establish online shops in China too like the online system in European countries. This idea seemed to be a good opportunity for H&M to explore a new market in China. The questionnaire was designed as simple to answer and clearly to understand and it has two versions for respondents to choose. The questionnaire was based on basic information research about target market and potential

customers in Shijiazhuang city. In addition, the results of questionnaire would offer helpful opinions and information for H&M Company's decision making.

## 3.4    Respondents Selection Criteria

The respondents have been selected by using the cluster sampling method. There are many email addresses in my email address notebook and I selected the group that consist of people who living in the Shijiazhuang city. There were three reasons to indicate why I chose this group as the research object. Firstly, those respondents knew the situation of target market clearly. They are living a life in Shijiazhuang city, the Shijiazhuang city's situation of economic, business environment, etc. so they can provide useful information for H&M Company's entry. Secondly, those respondents could be considered as potential customers in the target market. After reading this research, readers and H&M Company managers could know about the characteristics of target customers, such as their purchase power, how often they go shopping for apparel and how much money they spend on apparel in every three months. Thirdly, based on their own opinion, those respondents could provide advice and suggestions for H&M Company's entry. These advice and suggestions would be help with pricing or distribution strategies when the H&M Company enter the Shijiazhuang market.

# 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data analysis is the procedure is an important step which covers a large percentage among the whole work. Also the complex work takes a long time to complete. As every question in the questionnaire was all about the attitude, purchase characteristics, purchase power and basic inquire of target customers. So each question has been analyzed alone; otherwise, questions that have relations have been analyzed in a cross tabulation method additionally. In this research, there were 172 questionnaires being sent out to those considered as potential customers of Shijiazhuang city and since there were 52 answers in total, the response rate was 30.23%. (SPSS software 2011).

## 4.1    Basic Description

Basic description was the analysis of the first six questions that include respondents' age and gender which aim to find out whether is there any difference among these elements for buying apparel. As the left questions were concerning about target customers purchase characteristics for apparel, such as how often they go shopping for apparel and how much they spent for apparel in every three months and where do they get information of apparel or fashion, etc.

Through SPSS statistical analysis software, the result had shown for the first question of gender; 23 female respondents and 29 male respondents each covered 44.2% and 55.8% of the total number of respondents and it is easy for researcher to analyze the attitude comparing female with male. The second question is about respondents' age and four choices were set. The results were: 15 to 25 years old, 78.8%; 26 to 35 years old, 9.6%; 36 to 45 years old, 3.8%; and above 45 years old, 7.7%. The result was clearly showed that 15 to 25 years old people could be considered as the main research group for this research as it covers a largest percentage. The figure from cross tabulation of question 1

and question 2 shows that in the age group of 15 to 25 years old, there were 16 female and 25 male.

The third question is about the respondents' expenses on apparel in one month and the answers from respondents are: under 30 Euros, 65.4%; 30 − 50 Euros, 15.4%; 50 − 70 Euros, 13.5%; 70 − 100 Euros, 1.9%; more than 100 Euros, 3.8%. From these figures, we know that more than half of respondents pay under 30 Euros for one month on average to buy apparel.

The cross tabulation of Question 1 and Question 3 in Table 2 is find out the relationship between the connection and comparing the gender and expenses for apparel in one month. Most female and male's expenses for apparel in one month are under 30 Euros but for 30 − 50 Euros and 50 − 70 Euros, there are more female customers than male customers. It seemed like female customers are willing to spend more money than male customers for apparel.

Table 2. *The crosstabulation of Q1 & Q3.*

**Q1Gender * The expense for apparel in one month. Crosstabulation**

| | | The expense for apparel in one month. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Under 30 Euros | 30-50 Euros | 50-70 Euros | 70-100 Euros | More than 100 Euros | Total |
| Q1Gender | Female | 12 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 23 |
| | Male | 22 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 29 |
| Total | | 34 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 52 |

Table 3 explains whether is there any relationship in different age groups that spend money for apparel in one month. The result showed either the younger generations or the senior citizen will spend less than 30 Euros on apparels and the former will spend more money than the latter in buying apparel. This is good news for H&M as the marketing positioning for H&M is also set for young customers. There were two restrictions in this research; wide range of the respondents' ages and very few respondents from age 36 and above.

Table 3. *The crosstabulation of Q2 & Q3.*

**Q2Age * The expense for apparel in one month. Crosstabulation**

|  |  | The expense for apparel in one month. | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Under 30 Euros | 30-50 Euros | 50-70 Euros | 70-100 Euros | More than 100 Euros | Total |
| Q2Age | 15-25 years old | 31 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 41 |
|  | 26-35 years old | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
|  | 36-45 years old | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
|  | Above 45 years old | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Total |  | 34 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 52 |

Through Question 4 we can find out how and where the respondents obtain their fashion news. The tabulations are shown below in Figure 5. This question has a range of choices for answers, thus the result has more than the usual 52 answers. The results are as follows: magazines, 14.8%; newspaper, 3.4%; TV ads, 12.5%; Brochures, 4.5%; Internet or official fashion website, 28.4%; friends and colleagues, 22.7%; sellers' guide, 6.8% and others, 6.8%. The results show that the most famous way was search for information on the Internet as it is the fastest method to spread information around.

Thus H&M should make use of the internet to promote its products and to obtain customers' feedback.
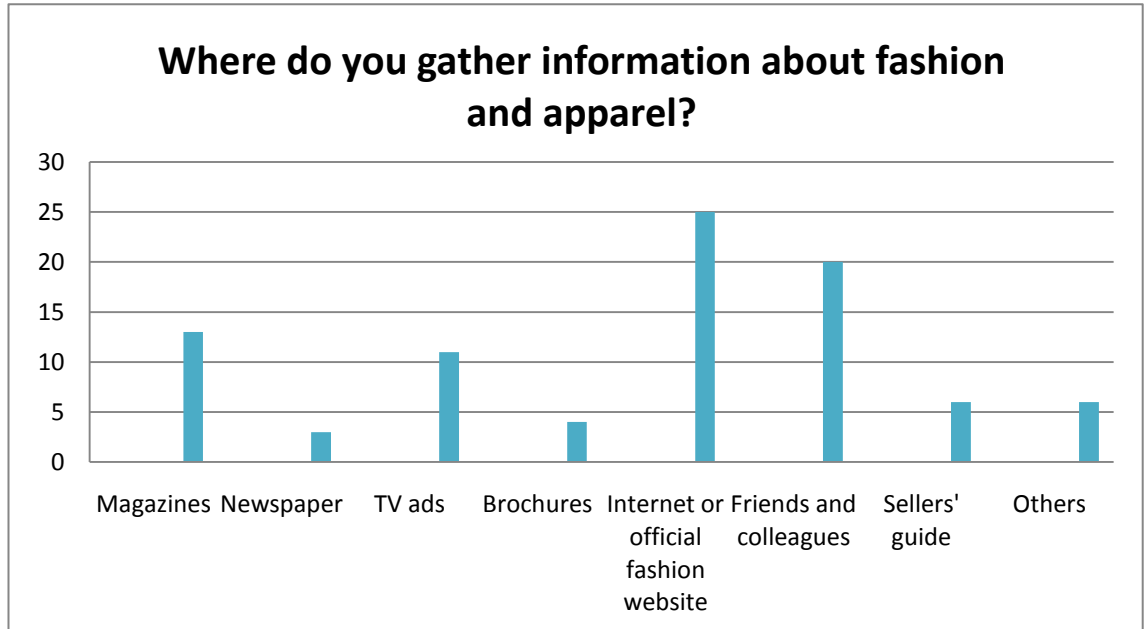


Figure 5. *Histogram of Q4.*

If we know the expenses of respondents for one month, we will know how often they go would shop for apparel, so question 5 is to find out how often they would shop for apparel. Through SPSS analysis, the result shows 11.5% of the respondents will shop for apparel in every half a month and 32.7% of the respondents shop once in one month. 38.5% of the respondents which is the largest percentage will buy apparel every three months. 7.7% in every six months and 9.6% in more than six months. As the result shows, people will usually buy apparel in every 3 months time.

Table 4 is the result of the cross tabulation of Question 1 and Question 5 to show the difference between female and male on how often they go shopping for apparel. As the figures shown below, more females tend to go shopping than males. In the first two

options half a month and a month, female respondents are more than male respondents; but in the last three options, it is obvious to see that male respondents are more than female respondents. And in the last two options there were only two respondents which are female. Also female respondents like shopping for apparel that has been launched for never more than three months long. The conclusion was female apparel market was larger than male market. For example, the H&M store in Kuopio, Finland was a two floors building, there were only a small place for display of male products.

Table 4. *The crosstabulation of Q1 & Q5.*

**Q1Gender * How often to shopping for apparel? Crosstabulation**

|  |  | How often to shopping for apparel? | | | | | |
|  |  | Half a month | A month | Three months | Six months | More than six months | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1Gender | Female | 4 | 10 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 23 |
|  | Male | 2 | 7 | 13 | 3 | 4 | 29 |
| Total |  | 6 | 17 | 20 | 4 | 5 | 52 |

The responses of Question 6 revealed clearly that 49% respondents like buying apparel in exclusive shops, it has counted as a half percentage of total; the numbers of respondents like buying apparel in mall counters and online shops are the same at 23%; only few respondents go to supermarkets or other places to buy apparel. Exclusive shop should be the first choice for H&M if the brand wishes to enter in Shijiazhuang market.

## 4.2    Research Questions about H&M

The last six questions were concerning at how much that target customers know about H&M this brand, have they ever bought any products of H&M, what was the evaluation for H&M products' price and quality. Based on the information collected from these six questions, H&M could improve shortcomings that target customers did not like also keep strong points.

From the question 7 in the questionnaire there are 7 questions about H&M. Question 7 was asking respondents that do they ever heard about H&M this brand and the answers are 51.9% people have heard H&M and 44.2% respondents have not heard H&M before. In this question, there were two respondents' answers missing. This result indicated that the situation in Shijiazhuang city for H&M was still far from being satisfactory; but it also could be a business opportunity for H&M to develop in Shijiazhuang city as it is a really new brand.

Through Table 5, we could get information about respondents that have ever heard about H&M or not in different age groups. We can see that whether in every age group, the respondents that heard about H&M before and never heard about H&M were equal except in 26 – 35 years old group. But still in 26 – 35 years old group we could know that more young people have heard about H&M. It seemed that the promotion of H&M should be more strengthened in the future in Shijiazhuang city.

Table 5. *The crosstabulation of Q2 & Q7.*

**Q2Age \* Have you ever heard about H&M? Crosstabulation**

|  |  | Have you ever heard about H&M? | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | Yes | No |  |
| Q2Age | 15-25 years old | 20 | 19 | 39 |
|  | 26-35 years old | 4 | 1 | 5 |
|  | 36-45 years old | 1 | 1 | 2 |
|  | Above 45 years old | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Total |  | 27 | 23 | 50 |

Question 8 was researching on respondents that know how much about H&M brand and the products. 11.5% respondents know both brand and products very well, 36.5% respondents only know brand but not familiar with the products and 48.1% respondents know neither about the brand nor the products. For those six respondents who knows both brand and products very well I have inquired the in detail as they travelled or studied in other cities in China which has H&M stores there so they can get information about the H&M company and products. Also they got information about H&M products on the internet. So the situation is normal that a lot of people do not know about the H&M products as there are no stores in Shijiazhuang city till now.

The research result revealed 23 respondents never heard about H&M, 27 respondents heard about H&M before and two answers were missing. Apart from those 23 respondents, among those 27 respondents who has heard about H&M that most people only know brand but not familiar with the products. Those six respondents who know both brand and products very well were buying H&M products in other cities in China or in foreign countries that travelled or studied that mentioned above. Brand spread was

easy but detail information about products was hard to get for respondents in Shijiazhuang city.

Question 9 was relating to the respondents' attitude for H&M set up a point of sales in Shijiazhuang city. 17.3% respondents were absolutely welcome to and 44.2% respondents were welcome to H&M set sales point in Shijiazhuang city. Totally there are 61.5% respondents who welcome H&M to enter Shijiazhuang market. Only 21.2% respondents have no idea to this business idea and 13.5% respondents did not care about.

The result of researching for respondents' attitude for H&M set up a point of sales in Shijiazhuang city was most respondents were welcome never mind of female or male respondents. So the female products and male products could keep pace with each other to develop in Shijiazhuang market. (Table 6)

Table 6. *The crosstabulation of Q1 & Q9.*

**The attitude for H&M set up a point of sales in Shijiazhuang city. * Q1Gender Crosstabulation**

|  |  | Q1Gender | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | Female | Male | Total |
| The attitude for H&M set up a point of sales in Shijiazhuang city. | Absolutely welcome | 4 | 5 | 9 |
|  | Welcome | 12 | 11 | 23 |
|  | Have no idea | 3 | 8 | 11 |
|  | I don't care | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Total |  | 23 | 27 | 50 |

Exclusive shops are the most welcome way for respondents to buy apparel and they wished to have H&M exclusive shops in Shijiazhuang city. 34 respondents wished H&M to have exclusive shops in Shijiazhuang city as the exclusive shop is the most convenient way for customers to select products; 16 respondents wished supermarkets could sell H&M products as now large-scale supermarkets in China have became multifunctional shopping sites; only two respondents chose mall counters because products selling in mall counters would be much expensive than exclusive shops; three respondents chose other ways which have no detailed explanation. As there are 47 stores in the whole China so to establish a store or an exclusive shop is easy for H&M so this could be a feasible method. (Figure 6)



Figure 6. *String diagram of Q10.*

In question 11, the result showed that only 11.5% respondents have bought products of H&M as mentioned before they travelled or studied in other cities that have H&M stores or some people were buying in foreign countries. 88.5% respondents have not

bought any products of H&M. 88.5% is a huge percentage which could be considered as a big new market to full fill.

As there was only 11.5 percentages which included 6 respondents have bought products of H&M so question 12 and question 13 were asking about their attitude for H&M products quality and price. The answer could help H&M Company to make an improvement and also could help with the pricing segment in Shijiazhuang market. In question 12 there are five options to describe the quality of H&M products: very good, good, not so bad, bad and very bad. 2 respondents chose good option and the other 4 respondents chose not so bad option. We can get useful message from this result that those six respondents felt basic satisfaction for the quality of H&M products. For price, there were also five options: very expensive, a little expensive, appropriate, cheap and very cheap. There were 2 respondents felt a little expensive and 4 respondents felt the price were appropriate. It seems that the price level is suitable.

As mentioned above, there were only six respondents have bought H&M products before, only them can do the assessment for H&M products' quality and price. As a whole, the assessments were not very high and not very bad which in the middle. For H&M products' quality, it should be further enhanced as only two assessments for good quality and no one assessment was very good as "very good" was the first option in questionnaire. And four respondents chose "not so bad" revealed the quality of H&M no so satisfied. For H&M products' price, two respondents thought it was a little expensive and four respondents thought the price is appropriate as the price should either be suitable for the Shijiazhuang market or only need small range to change. (Table 7)

Table 7. *The crosstabulation of Q12 & Q13.*

**The assessment for H&M products' quality. \* The assessment for H&M products' price. Crosstabulation**

|  |  | The assessment for H&M products' price. | | Total |
|  |  | A little expensive | Appropriate |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The assessment for H&M products' quality. | Good | 1 | 1 | 2 |
|  | Not so bad | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Total |  | 2 | 4 | 6 |

There were 88.5% respondents who have not bought any products of H&M so the question 14 was asking these respondents if there will set a H&M store do they want to have a try about H&M's products, 71.2% respondents said YES, 15.4% said NO and 13.5% were missing. It seemed that Shijiazhuang people like trying new things and it was good news for H&M to enter Shijiazhuang city.

Question 15 is an opening question concerning at qualitative method which was asking about respondents' advices and suggestions for H&M's entry. First, most of respondents wished to have a store of selling H&M products then they do not need to go to other cities to buy or only see the pictures on the Internet. Second, a few of respondents suggested that the quality of H&M's products need to be upgraded. Third, fewer respondents thought if the price could be lower they would be satisfied.

## 4.3    Validity and Reliability of Research

Validity and reliability are important for both of quantitative and qualitative research study. Validity refers to the estimation on reflects or specific concept correctly, while reliability has relationship with practical measurement apparatus or procedure's veracity. (Colorado State University 2011) Reliability is based on actual experiments, examinations or any measuring practice yields to make the results trustable by readers but not make out a result in purpose by researcher self.

The validity of this study is based on the truth of respondents and respondents' answers. As the respondents were selected from the native people of Shijiazhuang city they know well about this market and the major objective of this research is searching for their customs of purchasing apparel products in their own city.

All results of this research come out by using SPSS analysis software as this research concerning more in quantitative method that get a large scale of choice answers through 14 multi-choice questions.

The research results of this study are most useful for the case company, H&M; and it is also useful for the similar companies which want to enter into Shijiazhuang market and the all the results are valid and reliable.

# 5 CONCLUSION

This study is about research for H&M's entry into Shijiazhuang market. Research includes both quantitative methods and qualitative methods via sending questionnaires to target customers who are the local people living in Shijiazhuang city by email. By the end, researcher has got 52 respondents' feedbacks. Based on the research there are advantages and disadvantages among this entry activity.

The advantages for H&M's entry activity are: first, H&M is famous in China and there are many people welcoming to have a sales point in Shijiazhuang city; second, H&M already has 47 stores around the whole China so it is easy to set another store in Shijiazhuang city by using the same control methods; third, Shijiazhuang city has no H&M store, this time would be the first step into facing Shijiazhuang people's enthusiasm. Everything has two sides so there are also disadvantages for this entry activity. First, there are already some familiar style clothes brands stay in Shijiazhuang city, so the competition will be necessary to be faced. Second, the purchase ability of Shijiazhuang people is a little low so the promotion work should be strength and pricing strategy may have to change a little.

The final conclusion for this study is H&M's entry into Shijiazhuang market will be a challenge and a balanced consideration in multiple aspects will be important for H&M's managers to make a decision. As all businesses must face risks during the process, it is worthwhile to note that any risks or challenges would change into opportunities that managers could operate on after know every procedure well.

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# APPENDIX 1 Questionnaire in English Version

# MARKETING RESEARCH OF H&M IN SHIJIAZHUANG CITY, CHINA

## (ENGLISH VERSION)

**Instructions to questionnaire:**

Dear respondent,

This survey is for my final thesis study and the purpose of this survey is to research the market for H&M in Shijiazhuang City, China. As the result of your answer could provide me useful information to my thesis study, I would be greatly thankful if you can spare 3 or 4 minutes to answer this questionnaire set.

Best wishes,

Mengjia Chang

Savonia University of Applied Sciences

1. Your gender is:
   A. Female
   B. Male
2. Your age is:

    A. 15-25 years old

    B. 26-35 years old

    C. 36-45 years old

    D. Above 45 years old

3. How much money do you spend on your apparel for each month?

    A. Under 30 Euros

    B. 30-50 Euros

    C. 50-70 Euros

    D. 70-100 Euros

    E. More than 100 Euros

4. Where do you gather information about fashion and apparel?

    A. Magazines

    B. Newspaper

    C. TV ads

    D. Brochures

    E. Internet or official fashion website

    F. Friends and colleagues

    G. Sellers' guide

    H. Others_____

5. How often do you go shopping for apparel?

    A. A week

    B. Half a month

    C. A month

    D. Three months

    E. Six months

    F. More than six months

6. Which way you think is suitable for you to buy apparel?

    A. Exclusive shops

    B. Online shops

    C. Supermarkets

    D.  Mall counters

    E.  Others_____

7. Have you ever heard about H&M?

    A.  Yes

    B.  No

8. How much do you know about H&M and its products?

    A.  Know both brand and products very well

    B.  Only know brand, not familiar with products

    C.  Know neither brand nor product

9. What is your attitude for that H&M set up a point of sales in Shijiazhuang City?

    Absolutely welcome

    A.  Welcome

    B.  Have no idea

    C.  I don't care

    D.  Unwelcome

10. Which sales point do you wish to have in Shijiazhuang City?

    A.  Exclusive shops

    B.  Mall counters

    C.  Counters inside supermarkets

    D.  Others_____

11. Have you ever bought any products of H&M?

    A.  Yes

    B.  No

*If your answer of question NO. 11 is "YES" please answer the following question NO. 12, question NO. 13and question NO.15; but if your answer is "NO" please jump to question NO. 14.*

12. How is your assessment for the quality of those products you have bought from H&M?

    A.  Very good

  B. Good

  C. Not so bad

  D. Bad

  E. Very bad

13. How is your assessment for the price of H&M?

  A. Very expensive

  B. A little expensive

  C. Appropriate

  D. Cheap

  E. Very cheap

14. If you never bought any products of H&M, do you want to have a try?

  A. Yes

  B. No, why_____

15. Do you have any advice or opinion to provide for H&M that entry into Shijiazhuang City, China?

**Thanks for your answers! Also thanks for your help to me!**

# APPENDIX 2 Questionnaire in Chinese Version

## 有关 H&M 品牌在中国石家庄的市场调查

**(CHINESE VERSION)**

**调查问卷介绍：**

亲爱的答卷者：

　　此调查问卷是本人论文中的部分,这个调查问卷的目的是研究 H&M 这个品牌在中国石家庄发展的可能性。您的回答可以提供很多有用的信息帮助我完成我的论文研究,所以,如果您可以花费 3 到 4 分钟回答此问卷,我将感到非常感谢！

　　最美好的祝福！

Mengjia Chang

Savonia University of Applied Sciences

1. 您的性别是：

　　A. 女

　　B. 男

2. 您的年龄是：

    A. 15-25 岁

    B. 26-35 岁

    C. 36-45 岁

    D. 45 岁以上

3. 您每个月花费在服饰上的钱有多少？

    A. 低于 300 元人民币

    B. 300-500 元人民币

    C. 500-700 元人民币

    D. 700-1000 元人民币

    E. 多于 1000 元人民币

4. 您平时在哪里得到有关时尚和服饰的信息？

    A. 杂志

    B. 报纸

    C. 电视广告

    D. 宣传册

    E. 网上或者时尚官方网站

    F. 朋友和同事

    G. 销售者的介绍

    H. 其他＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

5. 您平时多长时间购买一次服饰？

    A. 一周

    B. 半个月

    C. 一个月

    D. 三个月

    E. 六个月

    F. 多于六个月

6. 您觉得哪种服饰购买方式最适合您？

    A. 专卖店

    B. 网上商店

    C. 超市

    D. 商场柜台

    E. 其他_____

7. 你听说过 H&M 吗？

    A. 听说过

    B. 没听说过

8. 您对于 H&M 和它的产品了解吗？

    A. 都很了解

    B. 只知道牌子，不了解商品

    C. 都不了解

9. 您对于在石家庄市设立一个 H&M 的销售点的态度如何？

    A. 绝对的欢迎

    B. 欢迎

    C. 不知道

D.　不关心

E.　不欢迎

10. H&M 在石家庄市的哪种销售方式您更期待？

A.　专卖店

B.　商场柜台

C.　超市柜台

D.　其他＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

11. 您购买过任何 H&M 的产品吗？

A.　是的

B.　没有

*如果您对于第 11 题的回答是"是的"，请回答接下来的第 12,13,15 题；如果您的回答是"没有"，那么请跳到第 14 题。*

12. 您对于您曾购买的 H&M 的产品质量有何评价？

A.　非常好

B.　好

C.　还可以

D.　不好

E.　非常差

13. 您对于 H&M 产品的价格有何评价？

A.　非常贵

B.　有一点点贵

C.　价格适当

D. 便宜

E. 非常便宜

14. 如果您从来没有购买过任何 H&M 的产品，那您想不想尝试一下？

A. 可以尝试

B. 不想尝试，为什么

15. 对于 H&M 进入石家庄市场，您有何意见或建议，请提供作为参考。

**谢谢您对于本调查问卷的回答！也感谢您给予我的帮助！**