How Second Hand and Vintage purchases affect consumer experience of Fashion & Luxury brands?

Luxury brands as liquid assets for a new, sophisticated Fashion consumer.

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to explore the ways in which consumers experience *second hand* and *vintage fashion & luxury brands* through qualitative research methods. Most innovative contributions are the application of Fournier's *consumer-brand relationship* concept (1998) to pre-owned fashion & luxury purchases, with the introduction of two *new relationship typologies in the specific domain of fashion & luxury brands bought pre-owned,* as well as the identification of consumer sense of *psychological empowerment* as fundamental driver for both second hand and vintage purchases in fashion & luxury. According to the research, *"as long as it lasts (on trend)"*, consumer relationship with fashion & luxury brands bought second hand, appears *superficial*, *short term oriented* and characterized by low *commitment* levels. Oppositely, the relationship customers create with fashion & luxury brands bought vintage, *"true fashion romance"*, seems more *intense*, *long-term oriented* and defined by greater levels of *intimacy*. Consumer sense of *psychological empowerment* arising from pre-owned purchases in fashion & luxury results connected to *price consciousness* in *second hand purchases* (customers limit resource expenditure by bypassing conventional market channels), and to *need for uniqueness* in vintage purchases (buying vintage, consumers feel part of an elite of fashion experts). After giving a set of managerial implications to both re-sale sites and established brands in fashion & luxury, the research highlights how the spread of business models involving the re-sell of luxury goods could potentially both guarantee new profitable opportunities for fashion & luxury brands and have positive consequences for the environment, with the ultimate scope to integrate ethics, aesthetic and economic principles in the successful management of fashion & luxury companies.

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1 Introduction

For decades, second hand and vintage have been the secret weapon of designers and fashion insiders. One unique find can be the inspiration for an entire design concept, collection, or runway show. Repurposing a garment or finding a unique print can be the catalyst to the creative process that ultimately ignites or re-ignites a worldwide trend.

But in the era of e-commerce, street style, and Instagram, resale is no longer a Seventh avenue secret; the secret is out […]. The second hand industry is gaining incredible momentum. With heightened interest from consumers, investors and retailers, online resale is becoming a way of life. […] It is not a question of if but when hundreds of millions of people all over the world make resale their new healthy habit.

(Paula Sutter[1], 2016).

This research examines how second hand and vintage purchases affect the ways in which consumers experience fashion & luxury brands.

My interest in exploring this topic in more depth is driven by several factors. Firstly, the rising importance of second hand and vintage consumption in worldwide fashion and luxury markets. Secondly, a genuine interest in the development of alternative business models, able to combine economic and aesthetic logics – already characterising the fashion business - with the logics of ethics, in order for fashion companies to achieve a sustainable, long-term competitive advantage that develops in accordance with environmental, ecological and societal needs (Testa & Rinaldi, 2013). Thirdly, by a lack of sufficient coverage by literature of this relatively new and unexplored topic.

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[1] Diane von Furstenberg former President and TredUP Board Member.

Second hand and vintage consumers constitute, in fact, a largely untapped segment for luxury brands. To date, prior discussions of luxury consumption and marketing have indeed focused on brand-new luxury goods (Hung et al., 2011; Truong et al., 2010; Han et al., 2010), hence largely neglecting the emergence and availability of previously owned luxury products (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015).

2 Research Questions

As previously mentioned, the primary objective of this thesis is to understand how purchasing second hand and vintage items from fashion and luxury brands affects the ways in which these brands are experienced by consumers. From this purpose directly derives the main research question.

Main research question: *How do second hand and vintage purchases affect consumer experience of fashion & luxury brands?*

The word *how* describes the exploratory nature of the study, the words *second hand and vintage purchases* and *fashion & luxury brands* define the scope of the research and the word *experience* opens up to different interpretations that will be clarified through subquestions. The *consumer* is the point of view taken, under the belief that the luxury brand experience is created in consumer minds.

Firstly, the main *consumer motivations to buy second hand and vintage fashion & luxury brands* will be addressed, starting from the literature on the specific field from Turunen & Leipamaa (2015) and Cervellon & al., (2012).

Subquestion 1: *Which are the main drivers for purchasing second hand and vintage fashion & luxury brands?*

Secondly, Fournier's concept of *consumer-brand relationship* (1998, 2008) will be applied, in order to understand the different types of relationships between consumers and fashion & luxury brands as well as the ways in which purchasing second hand and vintage items affects them. This concept was never extensively applied by the literature to second hand and vintage consumption in fashion & luxury markets. More precisely, different second hand consumption studies have explored fashion and clothing (Guiot & Roux, 2010; Roux & Korchia, 2006), but they did not take a specific perspective on the luxury world (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015).

Subquestion 2: *What types of relationship exist between consumers and second hand and vintage fashion & luxury brands?*

3 Theoretical Framework

Starting from literature on branding (Keller, 2013) and fashion & luxury brands (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Heine, 2012), the research applies theory on *consumer-brand relationships* (Fournier, 1998; Fournier, 2008) as well as recent work on *second hand* and *vintage market,* with Guiot & Roux (2008); Cervellon (2012); Turunen & Leipamaa (2015) as cornerstones.

Theoretical framework, first at a general level, and subsequently within the context of the fashion & luxury sector, will be explained in the following pages. In order to fully understand the above-mentioned concepts, some preliminary notions will be firstly illustrated. It would in fact result difficult to the reader to fully comprehend the phenomena under consideration, if firstly the concepts of *fashion, luxury, brand, consumer-brand relationship, fashion & luxury brand, second hand* and *vintage* are not clearly defined.

3.1 Brand

Brands, and the ways in which they are experienced by consumers, constitute the central point of this thesis. However, notwithstanding the fundamental importance of the brand concept in modern marketing literature, no clear and univocal definition of what does a brand constitute has yet being produced.

A brand is classically defined as *"a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate them from those of competitors"* (*American Marketing Association*, 1997).

This definition has been considered outdated by recent literature for its lack of capability in describing the *intangible elements* connected to the brand in consumer minds, and the set of *symbolic meanings* associated to the brand, that, together with the set of tangible associations, constitute its *brand image*.

Branding is in essence creating a difference through both tangible (related to brand *performance*) and intangible (related to the set of *symbolic meanings* that the brand represents) product attributes. In order for a brand to be successful, it should be characterized by *strong, favorable and unique associations* held *in consumer minds* (Keller, 2013).

The value of a brand, traditionally defined as a financial value or as a potential to exploit consumer brand loyalty through brand extensions, is conceptualized as *brand equity*. Keller introduced the *Customer-Based Brand Equity* (CBBE) concept, defining brand equity as the differential effect that *brand knowledge* has on consumer response to a brand marketing efforts. In order to create brand knowledge, consumer *brand awareness* is necessary, given by both *brand recognition* (ability to confirm they have been previously exposed to the brand) and *brand recall* (ability to retrieve a brand in a set of brands associated to the product category).

In this optic, a brand with positive brand equity has loyal and less sensitive to price customers, larger margins and a more inelastic demand to price increases.

Finally, Keller introduces the *Brand Resonance Pyramid (Table 1)* to guide marketers in their development of successful brands. In order for a brand to be strong, the first step is for it to construct *salience,* a deep and broad *brand awareness* who enables consumers to recall the brand both as *top-of-mind* and for a different range of purchase situations. Secondly, consumers need to deeply understand the set of *meanings* associated to the brand, both at a *performance* (brand capability to satisfy consumer functional needs) and *imagery* level (brand capability to satisfy consumer psychological and social needs through the set of symbolic meanings associated to the brand, its values and heritage). Then, having a clear understanding about what the brand stands for, consumers have to be able to give positive responses to the brand in terms of *judgments* (cognitive responses about the brand quality, credibility and superiority) as well as *feelings* (emotional responses).

The final step of the model focuses on creating *brand resonance*, the ultimate *consumer-brand relationship* level, involving deep identification between the brand and the consumer. Brand resonance is usually translated by consumers in: brand *behavioral loyalty* (high frequency and volume of purchase), *attitudinal attachment* (consumers treating specific branded objects as their favorite possessions), *sense of community* (strong feeling of affiliation with other brand users) and *active engagement* to promote the brand (involving time, effort and money investments).

TABLE 1. **Brand Resonance Pyramid** – Keller, 2013
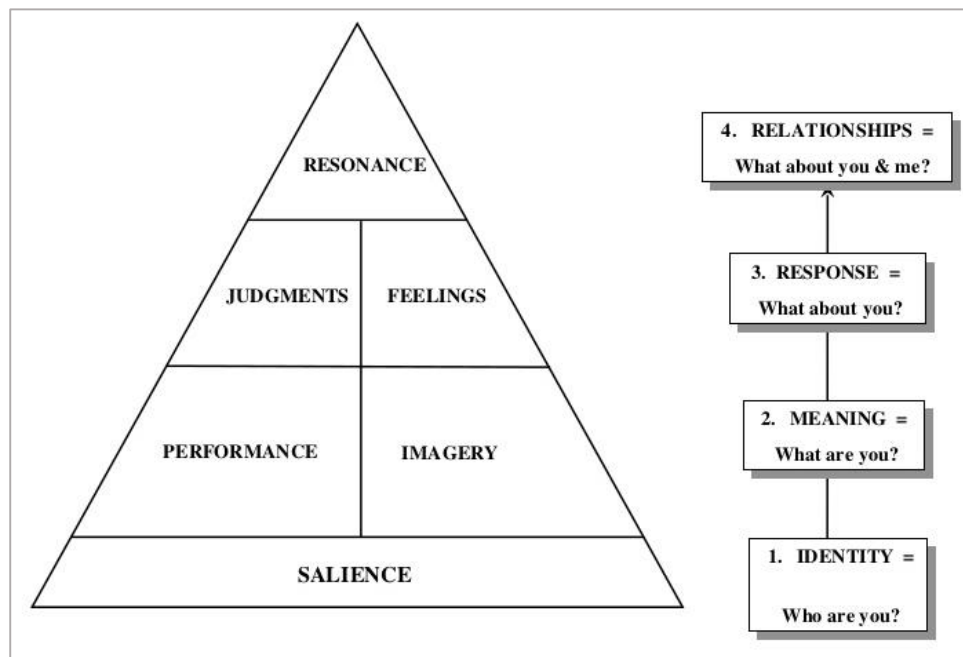
3.2 Consumer-brand relationship

An understanding of the array of relationships between consumers and pre-owned brands, together with similarities and differences with consumer-brand relationships created with new branded products, are essential in analyzing second hand experience of fashion and luxury brands.

Fournier states that, as people create different kinds of relationships with other people, they do the same with brands (1998). She states that a consumer decision to be loyal to a brand is more than a *"narrowly cognitive, utilitarian decision making process"*, being similar to *"a talismanic relationship"* (Belk & al., 1989, p. 31): brands can become valuable relationships partners.

Fournier's work starts from Hinde's definition (1995) of *interpersonal relationships*, as relationships involving reciprocal exchange between active and independent relationship partners, being purposive and based on the provision of meanings from both the parts involved. Interpersonal relationships are conceived as *multiplex* and *process phenomena*, meaning that they embody different dimensions and they evolve over time in response to their

environment. Within this line of reasoning, she introduces the concept of *Brand Animism,* explaining how the brand can be seen as a vital entity and therefore humanized in the relationship with the consumer.

On the one hand, brands can be humanized in consumer minds through the extensive use of spokespersons in advertising, through personal associations with family, friends and acquaintances or through a complete *anthropomorphization* of brand objects through the transfer of human thoughts, intents and emotions. On the other hand, an interpersonal relation needs *reciprocity,* meaning the performance of a set of actions by both parts involved.

At a considerable level of abstraction, the simple execution of the marketing plan by brand strategists can be identified with actions of reciprocity. In this optic, every brand manifestation could represent an action, capable to affect positively or negatively *consumer-brand relationship*, to contribute to its maintenance, enhancement or dissolution, together with the fluctuations caused by variations in the contextual environment. Of course, assumed that the brand has no actual existence if not as a set of consumer perceptions and mental associations, consumer-brand relationship will never be characterized by a perfect parallelism.

Within this perspective, it is important to highlight another core aspect: interpersonal relationships are born to provide *meanings* to the parts involved that can be able to reinforce *self-esteem* and *self-concept* (Aron, 1995).

According to McCracken (1986), brands are in fact capable to carry *symbolic meanings* that have the power to affect and enrich consumer lives. This makes consumers see the brand as a relationship partner and points of contact with the brand as meaningful relationship exchanges. In particular, a person's *life themes* - profound existential concerns or tensions that individuals address in daily life (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979) - can shape the portfolio of brands selected by them, and this in turn can contribute in the negotiation of life

themes directed to strengthen a valid and rewarding concept of self (Fournier, 1998).

In the context of *hypersignified postmodern consumer society*, characterized by value disintegration and societal liquidity, brand image appears as a powerful ally to express the self (Goldman & Papson, 1994) and the multiplicity of potential selves (Gergen, 1991). Postmodern society has in fact been described as *"liquid",* as characterized by constant mobility of identities, relationships and society, and individual freedom from social networks and their restrictions in all its glory and fullness (Baumann, 2000).

In this context of a constantly changing, never fully defined reality, the individual finds in consumption of branded products no more just functional benefits, but a way to define his/her identity (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

This makes the understanding of *consumer-brand relationship* concept and its implementation crucial in the investigation of consumer brand experiences.

3.2.1 Typologies of consumer-brand relationship

From a cross-case study on phenomenological interviews, Fournier theorizes *seven different dimensions* capable of defining consumer-brand relationships:

1. *Voluntary (deliberately chosen)* vs *Imposed;*
2. *Positive* vs *Negative;*
3. *Intense* vs *Superficial (Or Casual);*
4. *Enduring (Long-Term)* vs *Short-Term;*
5. *Public* vs *Private;*
6. *Formal (Role or Task-Related)* vs *Informal (Personal);*
7. *Symmetric* vs *Asymmetric.*

According to these dimensions, she identifies several relationship forms. Relationships can be classified as marriages, friendships, "dark" and negative relations of various types, as described in *Table 2*.

TABLE 2. **Typologies of consumer-brands Relationship** - *Fournier,1998.*

RELATIONSHIP FORM	CHARACTERISTICS
Arranged marriages	*Long term, exclusive commitments characterised by low levels of affective attachment and imposition by third parties.*
Casual friends/buddies	*Friendships characterised by sporadic engagement and intimacy and limited expectations of reciprocity.*
Marriages of convenience	*Long term committed relationships driven by environmental factors and relationship benefits.*
Committed partnerships	*Long term, voluntary relationships high in love, trust, commitment and intimacy and characterised by exclusivity.*
Best Friendships	*Voluntary unions based on reciprocity and characterised by high intimacy, positive rewards, revelation of the true self and common interests.*
Compartmentalized friendships	*Situationally confined friendships characterised by limited scopes and high emotional attachment.*
Kinships	*Non-voluntary unions given by circumstances.*
Rebounds/avoidance driven relationships	*Relationships born from desire to move away from previous ones.*
Childhood Friendships	*Friendships from a far past, enabling to reconnect with past selves.*
Courtships	*Initial stages of a potential committed relationship.*

Dependencies	*Obsessive attractions defined by irrational anxiety of separation.*
Flings	*Short-term engagements with high emotional rewards.*
Enmities	*Connections defined by negative affect.*
Secret Affairs	*Highly emotive, private relationships.*
Enslavements	*Non-voluntary union connected to the other part's desires and expectations.*

3.2.2 Brand Relationship Quality construct (BRQ)

Finally, Fournier develops the *Brand Relationship Quality construct (BRQ)* in order to evaluate overall quality, depth and feel in a relationship, according to *six different variables* taken from the interpersonal relationship domain.

3.2.2.1   Love and Passion

Every strong relationship is led by a *deep socio-emotive attachment*. As in interpersonal relationships, feelings of love for a brand can range from affection, to passion and dependency.

3.2.2.2   Self-connection

This variable expresses the degree to which the brand reflects consumer personality, taste and identity, therefore the extent to which it is seen as able to *express the consumer true self* – ranging from past, to current and possible future (possible or desired) selves.

3.2.2.3   Interdependence

This dimension refers to the *frequency of consumer-brand interactions*, the scope and diversity of brand-related activities, as well as the intensity of these interactions.

3.2.2.4   Commitment

Commitment, meaning *intention to behave in ways intended to support the relationship in the long term*, is capable to highly affect brand loyalty and therefore consumer-brand relationships.

3.2.2.5   Intimacy

Intimacy refers to the level of consumer *affection* towards the brand originating from a brand relationship memory of association with symbolic meanings and brand experiences over time.

3.2.2.6   Brand Partner Quality

It refers to consumer evaluation of the *brand performance in the role of relationship partner*, depending on consumer perception of various components. Firstly, the extent to which the brand demonstrates a positive attitude towards the consumer (i.e. making the consumer feel listened to and cared of). Secondly, the brand's ability, reliability and predictability of acting according to consumer expectations on the relationship and unwritten relationship rules. Thirdly, consumer trust in the brand capability to deliver expected results and comfort in their accountability.

Consumer-brand relationships created with brands bought second hand or vintage could be significantly different from the ones created with brands bought as new. This could be due to differences in meanings that consumers attach to brands they buy, different expectation of reciprocity in the relationship (expected levels of quality, performances, after sale services) or to

the quality of the relationship itself (various degrees of love, self-connection, interdependence, commitment, intimacy). These important aspects will be deep-dived through primary research.

3.3 Second Hand

Despite its long tradition in Europe, the second hand market has not yet been deeply addressed by literature.

Second hand shopping is defined as "*the acquisition of second-hand objects through methods and places of exchange that are generally distinct from those for new products*" (Guiot & Roux, 2008, p. 66).

Going more into depth, second hand purchases are connected to two different dimensions: not buying new (a product dimension) and frequenting channels with specific characteristics (a sales dimension). Finding itself at the intersection between product acquisition and channel use related themes, the second hand market has been in fact usually addressed according to a mere distribution-related perspective (Guiot & Roux, 2008).

Second hand markets have, for a long time in the past, been limited to local, informal exchanges, whose main driver was the acquisition of desired products at a decreased price for lower social classes (Williams and Windebank, 2000; Williams and Paddock, 2003). With the spread of the internet and a change in consumer perception of second hand goods, online retailers and marketplaces started to sell pre-owned products that can be purchased for different motivations than lover prices, or can be not comparable to brand new ones (Guiot & Roux, 2008).

The French term for second-hand, *d'occasion* (from Latin: *occasio*), describes a lucky break, a well-timed event. By extension, the word indicates a transaction that is advantageous to the buyer, together with the object of the transaction,

whose price is convenient for the depreciation related to its previous ownership and use (Guiot & Roux, 2008).

Second hand goods are therefore conceptualized as previously owned and used items whose acquiring is often motivated by lower prices in respect to brand new products or the search for a more sustainable lifestyle (Carrigan & al., 2013).

3.4 Vintage

The word vintage was originally used to describe prestigious, superior quality wines produced in specific years in the past, deriving from the old French *vendenge*, meaning grape harvest.

The term currently refers in a wider sense to *different item categories* among which wines, clothing, accessories, musical instruments, vehicles, appliances, etc., *designed and produced in a past era, commonly in the 20th century*. Vintage objects are usually pre-owned and they are considered *"cults",* for motivations related to their superior quality, functionality, aesthetics (in comparison with other prior or subsequent productions of the same artifact) or to cultural reasons (Garzanti, 2015).

3.5 Antecedents for buying Second hand and Vintage items

The first part of enquiry of this thesis focuses on *consumer motivations to buy second hand and vintage items*.

Antecedents for buying second hand and vintage products will be exposed having as a framework the grouping effort by Guiot & Roux (2008), framework that will be integrated and adapted according to other relevant literature.

3.5.1 The Economical dimension

Guiot & Roux (2008) identify a first set of antecedents to second hand shopping as *economic related factors*. These factors are driven by *a self-related motivation* towards limiting the expenditure of material resources (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015), including: willingness to purchase goods and services at a *fair price*; *bargain hunting*; *willingness to pay less* and *allocative aspects of the price*.

Fair price can be conceptualized as a price perceived as adequate for the goods and services purchased, while *bargain hunting* refers to the shopping motivation to find the lowest price or an unbeatable price. *Allocative aspects of the price* are finally related to the possibility of purchasing more or more qualitative products if an amount of money is saved by choosing second hand purchases (Gregson & Crewe, 1997; Stone & al., 1996; Bardhi & Arnould, 2005).

3.5.2 The Hedonic dimension

Roux & Guiot (2008) focus on a *hedonic dimension* in second hand shopping behaviors, related to both to the *offering* itself and to the *place of exchange*.

As regards factors related to product offering, *product originality, nostalgia, self-expression* and *congruency with purchased items* are described as relevant.

Product originality and *self-expression* as hedonic dimensions of buying previously owned products are both related to consumer *need for uniqueness*, that has been illustrated as *"the trait of pursuing differentness relative to others through the acquisition, utilization and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's social and self-image"* (Tian & al., 2001 p. 52).

On the other hand, *nostalgia* has been defined as *"a positive preference for the past involving negative feelings towards the present or future"* (Davis, 1979, p. 18), *"a bittersweet longing for the past",* a desire to come back to an idealized era to which is impossible to return (Holak & Havlena, 1992). Research has shown that consumers are able to show nostalgic feelings for both experiences they have had in their own past and related objects (*personal nostalgia*), and for times in human history they have not directly experienced (*historical nostalgia*; Stern, 1992; Phau & Marchegiani, 2009). Customers are prone to feel nostalgic for objects that are no more produced and sold or with which they have lost contact, and therefore for vintage objects.

Shifting to hedonic motivations linked to shopping outlets characteristics of second hand channels, as identified by Stone et al. (1996): *social contact, stimulation,* and *treasure hunting* could be mentioned.

Second hand shopping channels are typically characterized by the physical or virtual (in the case of e-commerce sites) presence of a *community*, available for giving advices, expressing product interests and availability and sharing the shopping experience with customers. These environments stimulate unplanned and impulse purchases and have the potential to create social bonds between individuals.

The last fundamental hedonic motivation behind second hand purchases is *treasure hunting*, described as *"the serendipity ensuing from the unexpected encounter with certain objects"* (Roux & Guiot, 2008, p. 67).

3.5.3 The Ethical and Ecological dimension

Buying second hand items could be connected to willingness to impact positively on the environment through *reducing waste* by *recycling* and prolonging product life-span (Roux & Guiot; 2008, 2010).

At a higher level, deciding to purchase second hand could be a statement choice against materialism, consumerism and overconsumption, *"associated*

with voluntary simplicity and various reducing behaviors"; a form of rebellion against the *"Kleenex society"* (Roux & Korchia; 2006, p. 30).

3.5.4 The Empowerment dimension

This dimension relates to the possibility of bargaining and to the desire to escape from regulations imposed by conventional shopping channels. It is closely related to Mano and Elliott's (1997) *smart shopping* concept, described as *the desire to by-pass the conventional market system and to take advantage of products that other people no longer want at reduced costs*, and it could be connected to the willingness of being part of an *"elite of experts"* in specific markets (Roux & Guiot, 2008).

3.6   Second hand and Vintage Fashion & Luxury Brands

This section will be an attempt to apply the above-mentioned theoretical concepts to the fashion & luxury sector, in order to focus on its specific characteristics and to narrow down the research process. To proceed in this sense, *fashion* and *luxury* concepts need to be defined.

3.6.1 Fashion

Fashion is commonly defined as *"the more or less changeable usage that, deriving from the prevailing taste, is imposed on habits, ways of living and forms of dress"* (Garzanti, 2015).

Nevertheless, the meaning of the word fashion is relative to time, space, culture and social groups, making difficult to give any unambiguous definition of the term. In general, a product, service or social behavior is considered fashionable when it is widely approved by a specific public, in a specific time and social context. Therefore, fashion ultimately constitutes a *system of*

meanings where the logics of style and aesthetic predominate on functional benefits (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009).

A unique characteristic of the fashion system - seen as a direct result from the interaction from consumer creative adoption of fashions and industrial processes – is *planned obsolescence*. According to fashion logics, in fact, seasonal demand is induced by defining out of fashion items that according to their functional and technical characteristics could have a considerably longer life cycle. Consequently, a *fashion cycle* is represented by the period of time between the introduction of a certain fashion and its replacement by a new one, passing through phases of growth, maturity and decline.

Thorstein Veblen in its renowned *"Theory of the Leisure Class"* (1899) defines fashion as *"conspicuous consumption".* In his conception, the element of novelty, driving seasonal change of trends and fashion rules and generating additional demand, appears as a cornerstone of the fashion system and it is able to guarantee to upper classes the possibility to show their economic power through clothing. Therefore, Veblen's fashion definition presupposes an important tie between fashion and pecuniary culture.

The semiotician Roland Barthes in his *"Système de la mode"* (1968) defines fashion as *"a collective, organised, formal and normative phenomenon"*, *"an authorless system"* that, as human language, is meant to carry a set of meanings and to communicate to others.

Finally, Grant McCracken (1986) describes the fashion system as a system that *"serves as a means by which goods are systematically invested and divested of meaningful properties"* (p. 7). He sees the fashion system as having an important role in the transfer of culturally constituted meanings to consumer goods.

From a more practical point of view, highly fashionable products are usually present in *clothing, handbags, small leather goods, footwear, silk accessories, perfumes, watches and jewelry industries*.

3.6.2 Luxury

The definition of luxury is not clear or concise either. Luxury has been defined as "*anything that is desirable and more than necessary or ordinary*" (Heine, 2012, p. 40). Bearden & Etzel (1982) imagined the *necessity-luxury dimension* as a *continuum* ranging from absolute necessity to absolute luxury. The concept of luxury is usually associated with something *timeless, hard to find, extravagant, non-necessary, with opulence and willingness to express socio-economic status*. The world luxury originated from the Latin term *luxus,* associated with exuberance, abundance and excess for self-gratification. (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2012).

It can be easily understood that, as the concept of necessity and desirability are relative (Büttner et al., 2006), *luxury* is a *relative concept*. The relativity of luxury is described according to four crucial dimensions: *regional, temporal, economic, cultural* and *situational relativity.*

Firstly, *regional relativity* refers to the classification of resources on the necessity-luxury continuum according to local availability. Some goods can in fact be common in specific geographical areas but rare in other environments. Secondly*, temporal relativity* is about changes in the perceived luxuriousness of resources over time, due to changes in their availability or desirability. Thirdly, *economic relativity* regards differences in perception of luxury due to different access to resources. Fourthly, *cultural relativity* refers to desirability of luxury items depending on cultural contexts in which people live. Specific products can be considered luxury by people from a specific culture or subculture, ordinary or even undesirable from others. Lastly, *situational relativity* is connected to the fact that the same resource could be considered as a luxury or as a necessity depending of the specific circumstances (Heine, 2012).

3.6.3 Fashion Brands

Fashion brands *enable apparel and accessories producers to differentiate their offer from the ones of their competition through the creation of strong, positive and unique associations in the minds of consumers*. Fashion brands can achieve consumer awareness and salience through different *brand strategies*, corresponding to four fundamental business models (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2012).

3.6.3.1   Fashion Designers

These brands compete mainly on the *apparel market*, proposing *fashion-forward, innovative designs* characterized by high level of quality and stylistic research, on worldwide catwalks, at high or medium-high prices. The success of these brands is usually related to a famous founder/head designer, and their offer is typically more *product-oriented* than *market-oriented*, even if it is usually complemented by different, more commercial brand extensions. Typical examples of fashion designer brands can be found in the Italian fashion market: Giorgio Armani, Gianni Versace, Prada, Valentino.

3.6.3.2   Fashion Luxury Brands

Luxury fashion brands usually base their success on *timeless, top quality, precious products*, mostly in *leather goods, jewelry* and *timepieces categories*. Their merchandise is less subject to Fashion trends, very high in price, and their aura of intangible associations is not related to a specific fashion *persona*, but more to the brand heritage and iconic products. Best examples in this category are the French brands Chanel, Dior, Hermès and Louis Vuitton.

3.6.3.3   Premium Brands

Premium brands are characterized by medium-high prices and a product offering targeting younger consumers. These brands can usually be distinguished by the predominance of *market logics* and *innovative* and

extensive mass media communication, a good price-quality ratio and a *lifestyle offering* with extensions in sportswear, fragrances and accessories lines. The Diesel brand could be considered the best representative for this category.

3.6.3.4   Fast Fashion Retailers

Fast fashion vertical retailers are a group of players currently dominating the Fashion mass market, capable of offering *fashionable merchandise* at *low consumer prices* by reducing time to market and costs through extremely efficient, fully controlled logistic processes. Best in class in this category are Zara, H&M, Forever 21, Mango.

This research will be focused on *fashion designer brands* and *fashion luxury brands* (or *fine fashion brands*) that, for price positioning as well as functional and symbolic meanings associated to them, can be assimilated to luxury brands, whose main characteristics are more precisely described in the following section.

3.6.4 Luxury Brands

Luxury brands are defined in a broad sense as "*associated with products which exceed what is necessary and ordinary compared to the other products of their category*" (Heine 2012, p. 49).

According to Heine (2012), an *expert-based* (Kapferer, 1997; Kotler & al., 2009) and a *consumer-based* approach (Dubois & al., 2001) in defining luxury brands could be distinguished. If the first approach gives a definition of luxury brands starting from expert opinions and literature analysis, the second relies completely on empirical study of luxury consumers to define what a luxury brand is.

From a *consumer perspective,* luxury brands could be defined as "*images in the minds of consumers that comprise associations about a high level of price,*

quality, aesthetics, rarity, extraordinariness and a high degree of non-functional associations", (Heine, 2012, p. 60). This *consumer-based definition* results as more adapt to the context of the research, due to the fact that the ways in which luxury brands are experienced by consumers themselves constitute the central focus of this thesis.

In this optic, all luxury brands are conceived and managed in order to present the following characteristics.

3.6.4.1   High Price

Luxury brands offer products that are among the most expensive both in an inter-category and in an intra-category comparison, thus requiring a considerable *premium price* in respect to products with comparable functional characteristics (Kapferer 2001). Price has been defined as the simplest and the most objective criterion to evaluate the luxuriousness of a product, (Mutscheller, 1992) nevertheless, a price increase does not automatically correspond to an increase in perceived luxuriousness of a brand in consumer minds (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

3.6.4.2   Superior Quality

Luxury brands offer *top-of-the-line products* that are likely to pass the test of time, not to be disposed of but repaired if damaged, and to be transmitted from generation to generation. Customer perception of quality refers to the following characteristics.

The *expertise of manufacturer* is highly important in defining a luxury product for both its technical competences (industrial experience, *R&D*) and stylistic competences (associations with famous designers). In parallel, *manufacturing complexity,* meaning craftsmanship and time needed to manufacture the products plays a central role.

The product itself is the crucial determinant, through its concrete characteristics, in defining a brand as luxury. Luxury products are differentiated by *premium materials* and components, absolute *attention to details* and *special features*. They should be designed for *durability, comfortability* and *functionality*. Finally, luxury items are always accompanied by a high level of *service*: they *"must have a strong human content"* (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009), from the purchase service to the management of the after-sale relationship (Cailleux et al., 2009). The most valued services for luxury consumers are usually customer advice and support in boutique, possibility for product customization and reparation services. Lastly, luxury products should be comfortable, easy to use and they should perform *better than needed.* They are meant to be everlasting and to maintain (or even augment) their value over time, to be reliable and enduring (Berthon et al., 2009).

3.6.4.3   Superior Aesthetic

Through the use of carefully orchestrated marketing efforts, artistic and incredibly expensive advertising campaigns, wherever the brand is seen, it would embody a perfect world of beauty and elegance. Luxury products as they *"not only look beautiful but also are (and should be) pleasant to hear, smell, taste or touch"* and therefore offer a "*source of sensual pleasure*" (Dubois et al., 2001, p. 13).

3.6.4.4   Rarity

Luxury brands play hard to get and it they are not available in all times and spaces. Luxury companies ensure rarity through *limiting production* and *distribution*, developing and launching *limited editions* and giving their customers the possibility to *customize* their products (Catry, 2003).

3.6.4.5   Extraordinariness

The brand has a *unique style* and a specific set of *stylistic codes* distinguishing it from all the others. Extraordinariness can be achieved by a different and avant-garde design, innovative functional attributes or a unique history and manufacturing process (Heine, 2009).

3.6.4.6   Symbolism

A clear set of *symbolic meanings* is clearly associated to the brand by consumers, so that symbolic benefits are likely to exceed functional benefits. Symbolic meanings usually refer to human values and lifestyles, they contribute to the creation of different *brand* personalities (Heine, 2009) and they need to be in line with aesthetics, worldview and tastes of the upper class (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, p. 314). These meanings are associated to luxury brands through the use of powerful communication strategies, including *storytelling* and elite advertising (displayed on the most expensive media, starring only supermodels or top opinion leaders, etc.), with the aim to guarantee *"the dream factor"*, making this brands cover themselves in an aura of myth and desirability (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2012).

In sum, a mix of a functional, an experiential and a symbolic dimensions differentiates luxury items from non-luxury items (Vickers & Renand, 2003), creating *"coherent systems of excellence"* (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2012, p. 26). All the variables behind the previously described luxury dimensions are summarized in *Table 3*.

TABLE 3. **Main Luxury Brands Characteristics** - *Heine, 2012.*

Major Characteristics	Manufacturing Characteristics	Concrete Product Characteristics	Abstract Product Characteristics
Price		Price	
Quality	Expertise of manufacturer	Material & Components	Durability & Value
	Manufacturing complexity	Construction & Function principle	Comfortability & Usability
		Workmanship	Functionality & Performance
		Features	Safety
		Product size	
		Service	
Aesthetics			Aesthetics
Rarity		Rarity	
Extraordinariness			Extraordinariness
Symbolism			Symbolism

3.6.5 Consumer-brand relationship with Fashion & Luxury brands

Consumer-brand relationship with fashion & luxury brands has not yet been specifically addressed by literature. Primary research will focus on giving an original contribute on the topic.

3.6.6 Second hand Fashion & Luxury

Second hand clothing is basically defined as *"any piece of clothing which has been used before, notwithstanding the age of the clothes"* (Cervellon & al., 2012). Accordingly, second hand fashion is represented by clothes and accessories that pass from a first owner to a second one (and potentially to a third and so on). Second hand fashion & luxury items are therefore divested from meaningful properties from the original owner, *"re-commodified"* and sold on the market, acquired and finally reinvested of symbolic meanings from a second owner (McCracken, 1890).

3.6.7 Vintage Fashion & Luxury

The term *vintage* is commonly used in the world of fashion and luxury to indicate *"a rare and authentic piece that represents the style of a particular couturier or era"* (Gerval, 2008).

An alternative definition, which seems to have gained a broad acceptance, identifies clothing as vintage *"when it is produced in the period between the 1920s and the 1980s"*. Clothes originating from before the 1920s are classified as *antiques*, while clothes produced after the 1980s are not considered to be vintage yet, being called modern or contemporary fashion (Cornett, 2010).

In this perspective, apparel or accessories can be defined as vintage regardless of the fact that they have been used or not, but considering their age. In fact, some of the most luxurious vintage pieces have never been worn, or worn only on the catwalk. Moreover, rare vintage pieces can be sold at significantly higher prices in respect to modern comparable items (Guiot & Roux; 2010).

Vintage fashion has been on the spotlight from the '90s, due to media attention, celebrity endorsement and a renewed interest by fashion designers, to take inspiration for future collections. "*Retro"* and *"vintage style"* collections are extremely popular on today's catwalks, as shown by the recent renaissance of the Gucci brand driven by Alessandro Michele's vintage aesthetic.

Moreover, the rediscovery of vintage fashion has been connected to the global economic crisis in 2008 - due to consequent consumer restraints in economic resources and their willingness to restore authentic values from the past - as well as to the spread of the internet (Cassidy & Bennett, 2012).

Vintage consumption has been associated by literature with different symbolic meanings, primary related to *nostalgic consumption, need for authenticity and individuality* (Veenstra & al., 2013). More interestingly, the connoisseurship of vintage fashion has been identified as a *subcultural capital:* people dress vintage clothes to be identified as part of a different, elite group, distinct from

the masses ad having proper communication codes (Thornton, 1995). Vintage is *"dressing for knowing audiences"* (Gregson & al. 2001, p. 12).

3.7 Antecedents for buying Second hand and Vintage Fashion & Luxury branded items

This section will be focused on antecedents to buy second hand and vintage items that are specific to fashion and luxury purchases. Drivers behind purchase of second hand fashion & luxury items have been investigated by recent literature (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015; Cervellon, 2012). In particular, if some sources identify two different groups of antecedents in buying vintage and second hand items (Cervellon, 2012), others do not specifically make this distinction (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015).

3.7.1 The Economical dimension

The *economical dimension* behind second hand and vintage fashion & luxury purchases has been taken into account by Turunen & Leipamaa (2015) in their definition of *real deal*, an antecedent to second hand shopping behavior referring to consumer price sensitivity and willingness to obtain the best value for money.

Lastovicka & al. (1999) came up with a more holistic variable including price sensitivity that results as more adapt to describe consumers buying second hand and vintage fashion & luxury: frugality. *Frugality* is described as *"a unidimensional consumer lifestyle trait characterized by the degree to which consumers are both restrained in acquiring and in resourcefully using economic goods and services to achieve longer-term goals"* (p. 88). Frugal consumers are less materialistic and they spend their money carefully. They do not purchase compulsively, but they make smart, long term oriented money choices. Therefore, they tend to buy classical pieces that last and they are prone to buy second hand garments or re-use their own fashion items.

Cervellon & al. (2012) identify frugality as the main driver behind *second hand* consumption, however economics related factors and frugality should not be related to vintage purchases, given incomparability of vintage products with existing ones (and their prices) and their rarity.

3.7.2 The Hedonic dimension

Consumer *need for uniqueness* – intended as the creation of a personal dressing style through the acquisition and wearing of unique and original products and brands for the Fashion & Luxury world – has been described as an antecedent for *vintage purchases* (Cervellon & al., 2012). Vintage dressing, presenting itself as unique and exclusive in contrast to regular fashion clothing (Gladigau, 2008), represents in fact a way for consumers to express their individuality.

Moreover, vintage luxury items can be perceived as more precious for the superior levels of craftsmanship and detail characterizing manufacturing processes in the past. The association of luxury previous possessions to personal stories can further contribute to make the *pre-loved items* appear as *"more than just a commodity"* (Turunen & Leipamaa, p.6), for their capability to carry a series of mental associations related to the prestige and glamourous lives of previous owners. This perception of uniqueness is related to perceived *product originality* (Roux & Guiot, 2008) and has been referred to by Turunen & Leipamaa (2015) as *pre-loved treasure*.

As regards hedonic motivations related to *shopping channels* in fashion and luxury pre-owned purchases, Turunen & Leipamaa (2015) define *unique find* the pleasure of discovering something rare and exclusive, to be found not only in the final object of discovery but also in the process itself. These variables could potentially be related to *both second hand and vintage purchases.*

3.7.3 The Ethical and Ecological dimension

According to the increasing global understanding of the impact of the fashion industry on the planet and growing concerns about the environment at large, buying second hand clothes and accessories could be connected to *willingness to impact positively on the environment through reducing waste* by *recycling and prolonging product life-span* (Roux & Guiot; 2008, 2010). This implies making a *sustainable choice* by associating ecological and responsible meanings to second hand product acquisition, therefore having a *social-related motivation* as main driver for second hand consumption (Turunen & Leipamaaa, 2015). These variables could potentially be related to both second hand and vintage purchases.

3.7.4 The Empowerment dimension

The psychological feeling of power coming from both feeling part of an *elite of experts* and from *choosing purchasing channel and merchandise that are not chosen from the masses* could potentially be connected to both vintage and second hand purchases. This aspect has not been extensively covered by literature in the specific context of fashion & luxury brands, therefore primary research will be focused on developing an original contribution to the topic.

3.7.5 The Fashion involvement dimension

In the specific context of fashion & luxury products, a last variable could be added. *Fashion involvement*, described as *the extent to which a consumer views fashion clothing as personally relevant and the level to which he/she is therefore involved in fashion products* (O'Cass, 2000), is identified by Cervellon (2012) a crucial factor in influencing positively the purchase of *vintage pieces.* This is connected to the fact that actively searching and purchasing vintage pieces requires a certain connoisseurship in fashion history and specific collections, and often more significant efforts in respect to regular clothing shopping.

On the other hand, buying *second hand* pieces could be a manifest of willingness to distance themselves from mass consumption, mass tastes and the overall fashion system, reversing the Veblen effect in an *anti-ostentation logic* (Guiot & Roux, 2008).

4 An overview of the Second hand and Vintage Fashion & Luxury Market

The global luxury market accounted for more than 1 trillion dollars in 2015. The personal luxury goods market has been estimated at $ 280 billion. In this context, unused luxury apparel and accessories represent a large, untapped market, considering that *on average a woman has in her closet approximately 90 items, of which 51% are not used anymore* (Bain & Company, 2015).

It appears clear at this point that the huge potential of the second hand and vintage fashion and luxury market can no more be ignored. High-quality resale is already a multi-billion dollars industry and it is among the fastest growing segments in retail, with an average growth rate for online apparel resale market of 82% (compared to a 14% growth rate for e-commerce and a 3% growth rate for the overall retail business; *ThredUp Resale Study,* 2016). With the emergence of online and mobile players, resale is attracting consumers from all income levels, and with still relatively low levels of market penetration, *the global resale market is expected to reach a 25$ Billion value in 2025* (*ThredUp Resale Study*, 2016).

According to projections, this growth will be fueled by capturing share from adjacent markets such as value retail and offline thrift. Value retail - including off-price retailers, outlet stores, discounters and mainstream department stores – represents globally a $175 billion market that is currently growing. Offline thrift is a $12 billion global market today and an increasing portion of

this market is moving online in order to offer a wider selection of brands and styles to a broader customer audience.

4.1 Environmental impact of the Fashion Business and the search for a more sustainable lifestyle

The global fashion business represents a vast industry sector in terms of production and consumption, as well as a *resource-intensive industry, having measurable social and environmental impacts*. Cotton, one of its main inputs, accounts for 2,6% of global water use: a typical pair of jeans takes 7000 liters of water to produce, and the simplest t-shirt needs 2700 liters – the amount of water drunk from an average person in 700 days. Moreover, over 1,7 millions of tons of chemicals are used every year in the process of dying textiles and leather, mostly leaving a permanent impact on the environment (Greenpeace International, 2016).

Total global consumption of garments amounts to 1.4 trillion of US $ or an estimated 91 billion garments sold. The vast majority of the industry still operates with a linear production model and a *take-make-waste* mentality, generating high levels of textile waste. According to estimations, *15 million tons of garments are discarded every year across Europe and US only, ending up in landfills* (Ellen McArthur Foundation, 2013).

It is therefore apparent that clothing waste represents a crucial issue for contemporary society and an evaluation of alternative business models for a viable future is a priority for all fashion companies. Fashion companies need to re-evaluate their business models in order to find ways to integrate products end-of-life aspects into their organisations and to extend product-life-cycles (Kant Hvass, 2015).

In this context, *the business of purchasing and selling second hand and vintage fashion and luxury items can be considered from fashion & luxury*

companies as a viable alternative both for the creation of new strategic markets, based on the exploitation of precious liquidity captured into sleeping products, *and for the promotion of new, sustainable business models*.

From a sustainability perspective, in fact, collecting, *sorting and reselling a pre-owned garment is between 10 and 20 times less energy consuming and environmentally damaging then acquiring a new item* (Flechter, 2008; p. 100).

4.2   Best Practices: the Vestiaire Collective case

Vestiaire Collective, clear European leader in the re-sale and vintage market for fashion and luxury brands, has created a *community-driven* marketplace for pre-owned fashion and luxury items. The online marketplace was founded in 2008, when the only competition in the market was the industry giant E-bay. According to his co-founder and CEO, Sebastièn Fabre, the company mission can be summarized as follows: *"To create liquidity from sleeping products. To create an ethical business capable to fight consumerism. To create a dynamic online community."*

From a scholar point of view, the site could be identified as a *multi-sided platform*, for its capability to *enable direct interaction between two or more distinct sides affiliated to the platform* (Hagiu & Wright, 2015). On-site interactions regard *trading, pricing, marketing and delivering second hand and vintage fashion & luxury goods*, and they are direct, since the involved parts retain great control over them. Furthermore, there is a *necessary affiliation* of the involved parts to the site (ibid.) – in the form of an obligatory inscription to the community to access its content – meaning that all users have to make *platform-specific investments* needed to join the interactions, as spending time for registration.

According to the new definition of the *US Department of Commerce* in the *Sharing Economy Space* (June 2016), the site can be characterized as a *digital*

matching firm. These type of firms can be distinguished by a set of specific elements.

Firstly, the *use of information technology and web based platforms, such as websites or mobile "apps" to facilitate peer-to-peer transactions.* Vestiaire functions as an online marketplace and has both a responsive site version and IOs and Android "apps". Half of the site transactions are made through mobile, and 60% of supplied items are registered on the site through a smartphone.

Secondly, the *reliance on user-based rating system for quality control, ensuring the production of trust mechanisms between buyers and sellers.* Vestiaire has a system of "likes" on all products offered that is able to show the likeability of products offered from community members, but this is complemented by a process of careful quality control and authentication by fashion experts made internally. For this particular aspect, its model distances itself from the traditional digital matching firm.

Thirdly, the *offer of flexibility in participation and engagement to the platforms to all buyers and sellers.* All users are invited to participate in the exchange on the site, without any limits on quantity and value of number of products exchanged, neither on the amount of time to spend in the involvement.

Lastly, the *reliance on buyers and sellers participation to the platform to drive the business model.* Vestiaire relies completely on private sellers to be able to offer its merchandise to buyers.

Finally, from an industry point of view, platforms like Vestiaire are identified as *re-sale online marketplaces* (Bain & Company, 2015), or *re-commerce sites* (Forbes, 2016).

Vestiaire Collective is active mostly in French, German, UK and US markets, currently registering more than 100 million euros of *GMV*[2], and a 2014A-2016E

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[2] *Gross Merchandise Value*, indicating the total value of merchandise sold over a given period of time through a customer-to-customer exchange site.

61,5% *CAGR*[3]. Its leadership in Europe has been achieved through curation, authentication and streamlined operations that have helped Vestiaire in the process of building trust, loyalty and brand recognition in the second hand luxury market.

This marketplace's business model success is related to its capability to deliver different kinds of benefits to all key luxury market participants: buyers, sellers and brands, in a *win-win-win* logic (Bain & Company, 2015).

Firstly, this marketplace is able to guarantee to *sellers* liquidity for their products, access to buyers across geography and good selling prices.

Secondly, it provides *buyers* with access to authenticated, curated luxury at accessible prices: every single item sold on the platform goes in fact through a process of *quality control* and it is *authenticated* from fashion experts, therefore shoppers are certain to be provided with good quality standards and to spend their money only on authentic items. Rare and hard to find, iconic vintage pieces are also available on the platform. This extensive quality and identification control, together with the objective to constitute the most aspirational second hand and vintage product catalogue in the world, represents a point of difference and a significant competitive advantage for the firm in respect to its main competitors. Nonetheless, ensuring absolute product quality and authenticity has its costs: every item that is sold on the platform has to be shipped to the central warehouse and authentication center in Paris, causing additional expenses and slowing product delivery.

Thirdly, it preserves authenticity and quality standards for *luxury brands*, respecting their positioning and communication codes – Vestiaire refuses approximately one third of products provided by its sellers, accepting only items that are in line with current market trends. It encourages luxury purchases – particularly purchases of fashion items characterized by high

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[3] *Compound Annual Growth Rate*, indicating the mean annual growth rate of an investment over a specified period of time longer than one year.

seasonality - by creating liquidity for pre-owned luxury products. In addition, it *"gives money back"* to luxury buyers in order to buy new luxury and continue following the latest fashion trends, therefore it enlarges luxury brands consumer base and enables young trendsetters to participate to fashion dynamics buying luxury products.

Finally, Vestiaire was the only marketplace to sign the *Fight Against Online Counterfaiting Charter*, to ensure its merchandise quality and authenticity, in cooperation with European governments (Bain & Company, 2015).

From 2009, as the market opportunity became clear, competitors and investors jumped into the space - pouring more than $400 million into the sector from 2009 to 2015. Today, a selected group of companies has consolidated their place in the market through important scales and profitable, similar business models. Among them*: The RealReal, Tradesy, Rebelle, ThredUp, Poshmark, Vinted.*

5 Research Design

Having established an ad-hoc theoretical framework, as well as the importance of the second hand and vintage markets for fashion and luxury goods, for both its current size, predicted future growth, environmental and economic induced benefits, this section is aimed at explaining research design construction, methodology used, research structure and sampling techniques adopted.

5.1 Methodology

This research started with a review of relevant academic and trade literature in the field of branding, consumer-brand relationship, fashion & luxury brands,

second hand and vintage shopping phenomena, to clearly identify key insights to deep dive through *primary research*.

Considering the novelty of the phenomena under consideration, meaningful insights could be gained only through the acquisition of *primary data*. The research has been conducted using a qualitative approach, through *in depth-interviews* and *netnography*.

Firstly, *four exploratory, semi-structured in-depth interviews* (each during approximately ½ hour – 1 hour) were conducted in order to gain meaningful, preliminary insights on the phenomena under consideration. Semi-structured interviews were selected to both guarantee the interviewees freedom of expression and capability to articulate complex thoughts, real life situations and symbolic meanings associated to products and their use; and the author to keep focus on research objectives to the aim to increase data consistency.

The interviews were mainly aimed at interpreting consumer perceptions, attitudes, emotions and beliefs, meaning the interviewer to *"step into consumer minds"* (Daymon & Halloway, 2010). The goal of qualitative research is indeed to *"better understand human behavior and experience...grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are"* (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 38).

They were focused especially on *consumer-brand relationship* (Fournier, 2008) that needed, being a complex, holistic phenomenon, involving subconscious feeling, in-depth probing and understanding. In order to have a full comprehension of the whole picture including the phenomena under consideration, general attitudes towards fashion & luxury sectors, sharing consumption patterns and online shopping behaviors were also tested at this point. Moreover, interviewees were probed on their *motivations behind buying second hand and vintage fashion & luxury items*.

In addition, to gain relevant knowledge on the Vestiaire Collective case and on the re-sale fashion & luxury market, an *interview with industry expert,* President and CEO of the company Sebastièn Fabre was conducted.

Finally, to complete the picture from a consumer perspective, a *netnography* of 150 discussion posts on *<www.trustpilot.com>,* containing customer reviews of a set of resale sites (Vestiaire Collective, Tradesy, Poshmark, Thredup and Vinted) was executed. *Netnography*, or ethnography on the internet, is a qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through computer-mediated communications (Kozinets, 2002). It was employed in the research with the specific scope *to understand consumer experience of second hand and vintage luxury brands through observation of their own spontaneous comments and evaluations on the internet*.

As a matter of fact, netnography uses the information publicly available in online discussions and forums to identify and understand the needs and decisions of *relevant online consumer groups* – as consumer purchasing pre-owned fashion & luxury brands in the research. Compared to traditional "offline" ethnography, netnography results as less elaborate, less time and money consuming and entirely unobtrusive. This research method is capable to provide the researcher with a window into naturally occurring *Word-Of-Mouth* in a specific online context, therefore it results particularly useful to investigate *behaviours, needs and wants of a specific online community* (Kozinets, 2002).

5.2 In-depth interviews

5.2.1 Sample

For in-depth interviews, a *non-probability, judgmental sample* was selected by the researcher. The researcher handpicked four interviewees based on her

personal judgement, among *Millennials with important levels of interest in sharing economy and the fashion and luxury industry, purchasing second hand and vintage and regularly shopping online*. According to Vestiaire Collective data[4], this consumer group constitutes in fact *the main target of digital matching platforms selling vintage and second hand fashion & luxury products, as well as the group of consumers with the greatest potential for re-sell sites*[5].

In order to select only respondents in line with sampling criteria, before proceeding with the interviews, the researcher asked them some filter questions:

"What's your age?"

"Do you know what sharing economy is?"

"Are you interested in fashion & luxury?"

"Have you ever bought second hand and vintage fashion & luxury?"

"Have you ever bought fashion & luxury items online?"

Judgmental sample reduces research reliability but it has significant benefits in terms of convenience and it is in fact aimed at gaining meaningful insights in short time frames from a very specific consumer group.

Convenience sampling, including simply respondents resulting easy to reach for the researcher, could alternatively have been used, but judgmental sampling seemed more adapt to the scopes of the inquiry for two reasons. Firstly, consumers with strong levels of interest in fashion are prone to develop *stronger relationships with fashion & luxury brands* they buy than the rest of

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[4] *47% of Vestiaire Collective registered users has between 18 and 34 years old.* Privileged information obtained from Vestiaire Collective, July 2016.

[5] *41% of registered new sessions on Vestiaire Collective are from internet users between 18 and 24 years old.* Privileged information obtained from Vestiaire Collective, July 2016.

consumers, resulting more interesting to deep dive in the research. Secondly, second hand and vintage luxury shopping still constitutes a *niche phenomenon* in fashion & luxury, therefore, in order to gain meaningful insights, respondents had to be familiar with the specific context.

The use of *probability samples* would finally have resulted as not adapt to the scope of a qualitative exploratory research, as well as more time and money consuming.

Second-degree sampling was applied, meaning that people connected to family, friends and acquaintances were interviewed. This was made for ensuring that the interviewees were not aware of terms and objective of the inquiry and therefore they could give spontaneous responses (McCracken, 1988, p. 27).

The four interviews were conducted in Milan between October 26th and December 9th 2016. In order to enable participants to express at their best their perceptions, attitudes and feelings related to the phenomena under consideration, they were conducted in their native language (Italian), and in the interviewees' apartments.

The personal profiles of selected respondents have been shortly described below.

Pier. 25 years old young man, from Italy, recent graduate in business administration and working in a luxury fashion company, born in Southern Italy but currently living in Milan. He usually goes out in alternative, niche clubs. He is very interested in fashion and street-style in particular. He very often buys second hand and vintage clothes to express his unique taste and personality.

Elena. 24 years old young woman, Italian, from Rome, recent graduate in marketing management and intern in an international fashion company,

currently living in Milan. She likes to go out in "cool" Milanese venues. Very fashion conscious, she has an eye for emerging designers. She buys vintage and second hand pieces to mix them with clothes and accessories following the latest trends, to give a unique signature to her style.

Leonardo. 23 years old young man, Italian, medical student, from southern Italy but currently living in Florence. He is passionate about music and cinema. He mostly shows a classical, elegant personal dressing style and he appreciates vintage luxury watches. He uses them to add a subtle personal touch to its outfits. He usually shops fashion & luxury online.

Sara. 26 years old young woman, Italian, recent graduate in finance, from northern Italy, currently living in Milan. She usually goes out in nice restaurants. She is interested in long lasting luxury pieces to "invest in", to build a classy, timeless style. She usually buys vintage to get the best pieces that have passed the test of time.

5.2.2 Interview structure

The in-depth interviews started with an *introduction* ensuring to interviewees full anonymity and partially explaining the main purposes of the research, in order for them to provide honest and unstudied answer.

Afterwards, *grand tour questioning* (Leech, 2002) started through inquiries on general evaluation of sharing economy, fashion & luxury shopping behaviors, vintage & second hand shopping. Some *grand tour questions* were:

"Do you know what sharing economy is, and what do you think about this phenomenon?"

"Are you interested in fashion & luxury?"

"How would you define a second hand or a vintage fashion or luxury item?"

"Have you ever bought pre-owned fashion & luxury and if yes, through which channels?"

"Do you usually shop for clothes and accessories online?"

Following, *drivers behind second hand and vintage shopping* were investigated. Common inquiries were:

"What is your favorite fashion or luxury item that you bought second hand/vintage and why is it your favorite?"

"Why do you like buying second hand/vintage fashion & luxury? Do you perceive any difference between the two categories?"

"For which reasons do you value second hand/vintage purchases in respect to the purchase of brand new items?"

"Are there any negative sides of purchasing pre-owned fashion & luxury?"

Later, *consumers* were probed on their *relationship with fashion & luxury brands bought pre-owned.* Some of the questions were:

"Which second hand and vintage clothes and accessories have you bought?"

"Please try to describe how you feel about them"

"Please try to compare your experience with second hand and vintage fashion & luxury items in respect to the ones you had with brand new items"

"Do you believe that buying second hand and vintage fashion & luxury items branded products has changed your relationship with those brands, and in which sense?"

"Please tell me in which way buying a second hand or vintage fashion/luxury item has enriched you"

"If you buy a second hand or vintage fashion & luxury branded item that you like, are you likely to buy it again? Are you likely to tell friends?"

During all the interviews, probing expressions as *"why do you say that", "tell me more about that", "please, could to argument on that?"*, were used by the researcher in order to ensure probing and in-depth understanding of consumer perspectives.

Lastly, some *socio-demographic* and *biographic data* were collected to ensure that the sample was in line with research objectives.

5.3 Netnography

As previously mentioned, an online observation of 150 discussion posts on *<www.trustpilot.com>* was conducted with the aim to gain relevant knowledge of consumer perception of second hand and vintage fashion & luxury brands.

The research proceeded according to guidelines from Kozinets (2002). It started with the interviewer *"making cultural entrée"* (Kozinets, 2002, p.4): after a careful evaluation of research questions, the researcher analyzed different online spaces that could be meaningful for research purposes. After an attentive exploration of the online community of *<www.vestiairecollective.com>* and the interactions on the Vestiaire Collective *Facebook* and *Instagram pages*, the researcher decided to focus on the online community represented by *Trustpilot's users writing reviews of Vestiaire Collective, Tradesy, Poshmark, Thredup and Vinted sites*.

This choice was made for different motivations. Firstly, because of the fact that not all the mentioned sites have an important *community interaction* on their web spaces, therefore insights from different communities are not to be found comparable. Secondly, to have a *complete picture* on customer shopping

experience of pre-owned fashion and luxury brands, through a comparison of consumer reviews on their experience with different re-selling sites. Thirdly, for the considerable amount of *traffic* registered on the Trustpilot site.

Trustpilot is an *independent web page* providing free consumer opinions and advocacy of a series of e-commerce sites, with approximately *200 thousands visitors per day* and *an average of 500 thousands new customer reviews per-month*.

After familiarizing with language and behaviors of Trustpilot users, the researcher proceeded with data collection and analysis.

5.4 Data Analysis method

First, preliminary insights were gained from *qualitative research* going through the steps of *transcription, categorization* and *coding*. Insights with common themes were labelled as belonging to a common category, in order to understand central elements and shared patterns in consumer behavior.

From the identification of central themes and categories and their integration, a new theoretical framework was created according to *grounded theory* logics - inferring relevant concepts from data according to an inductive form of reasoning. Moreover, *MEC laddering technique* was applied in order to understand the connection behind product desired *attributes* (physical, concrete or abstract in nature), consumer desired *benefits* (functional, psychological, social, etc.) and underlying *values* (both instrumental and terminal; Evans et al., 2006), therefore to gain relevant customer perspectives on the topic.

Specifically for netnography, the researcher focused on *ensuring trustworthy interpretation* (Kozinets, 2002) by trying to discern authentic customer reviews

from possibly inauthentic ones, looking at their richness and number of details provided.

Due to the exploratory nature of qualitative research, the process was *iterative*, meaning that different subsequent analyses were conducted, going through the data several times at different depths.

6 Analysis and Findings

This section is focused on clarifying research findings and presenting main insights from the research.

6.1 Findings from in-depth interviews

First, introductory questions have been focused on understanding interviewees' *interest in fashion and luxury and general attitudes towards sharing economy and online shopping*. These questions were asked with the aim to confirm that the interviewees were part of the potential customer base of a *digital matching platform* oriented to the exchange of pre-owned fashion & luxury products. In fact, consumers who have already adopted *sharing economy* should be more likely to embrace innovative consumer habits, as shopping second hand or vintage.

All interviewees show definitely *positive attitudes towards sharing economy* and they have already used services like Uber, AirBnb, BlaBlaCar, Car to go and similar services. They are aware of the fact that *sharing economy* enables them to enjoy products and services at a higher level than they can usually afford. One of them, Elena, who regularly uses BlaBlaCar, is also aware of the "*environmental and economic benefits of sharing*". She declares: "*I really believe in sharing economy for its capability to guarantee optimal allocation of resources and to reduce waste, as regards both products' liquidity and environmental impact*".

Regarding involvement with fashion & luxury products, two of the interviewees, Pier and Elena, have a strong *interest in fashion*, and they refer to fashion as *"one of my greatest passions"* (Elena) and *"a way to display my identity"* (Pier). Among their favorite brands is it possible to find Gucci, Prada, Saint Laurent, Valentino, Balenciaga, Vetements.

The others, Leonardo and Sara, are more *interested in luxury products* and timeless style. Sara mostly enjoys timeless handbags and accessories: she is a Chanel and Hermès affectionate. Leonardo appreciates in particular luxury watches from Blancpain, Jaeger Lecoultre, Omega, Longines.

All participants have bought fashion and luxury products on the internet, mainly for lack of time to go to physical stores (Elena, Pier, Sara) or to make better, more carefully evaluated purchase decisions. Leonardo, for instance, declares: *"I usually buy fashion and luxury products on the internet in order to enjoy a vaster assortment and to be able to compare prices. I evaluate carefully product descriptions, taking all the time I need and without feeling any pressure from sales associates"*.

As regards *pre-owned fashion & luxury purchases*, the interviewees have already bought brands like Gucci, Hermès, Chanel, Fendi, Burberry, Salvatore Ferragamo, Valentino, Saint Laurent, Moschino, Omega, Longines, Hamilton.

Preferred channels to purchase second hand and vintage are *online marketplaces* and *specialized online forums* (especially for watches), *flea markets, specialty stores*. The online channel is described as full of advantages in terms of convenience. Pier says: *"browsing through piles of old stuff can be fun but it is really time consuming, sometimes I prefer to find a smaller selection by a retailer that I can trust online"*. The capability to gain more detailed information on products and vendors is also an important advantage of online platforms: *"on online marketplaces I can usually find community*

members feedbacks on products […] even experts' product descriptions that usually guide me through the selection process" – adds Leonardo.

From in depth interviews, consumer perceptions about the difference between second hand and vintage do not appear clear. Only one of the three interviewees, Elena, declares to be able to clearly distinguish vintage pieces as *"pieces created from the '20s to the '80s"*. The other two do not really rely on a definition based on specific time of production and distribution, but they both associate the term *vintage* to fashion trends, better quality and style, while, on the other hand, they have negative mental associations with the term *second hand*.

Pier affirms: *"For me vintage is anything that is able to reflect a trend or a trend revival, as Kitch from the '90s […] I do not associate the term second hand to fashion or, if I do, I relate it to a pile of used, old clothes that you could find at every street corner".*

"The word vintage brings into my mind a glorious moment of a brand past history and it reminds me of its heritage and tradition […] I associate the term second hand to hardship and poverty" – adds Sara.

The interviewees appear therefore more willing to buy vintage pieces in respect to second hand ones, and willing to pay more for them, for the simple difference in symbolic meanings associated to the two terms. If the word *vintage* is in fact connected to a mysterious aura of past glamour, consumers still have difficulties in linking a fashion & luxury imagery to the term *second hand*, traditionally associated to poverty, at least in the minds of Italian consumers. This could also be due to specificity of Italian parlance: the interviewees tend to refer to second hand garments and accessories with the term *"usati",* meaning subject to wear and tire, with a negative connotation.

The interviewees were also asked if they typically recommend to others brands they buy second hand. Respondents declared that they were extremely happy to disclose to others their findings of unique vintage pieces, but they were not so prone to advertise their second hand purchases if they were *"nothing special"* or *"driven only by desire to save some money"* (Pier).

This suggests both the fact that buying pre-owned is not yet a widely socially accepted consumer choice as regards fashion and luxury purchases, and a *better perception of fashion and luxury vintage products in respect to second hand ones*.

Going on to the first fundamental focus of the research, *motivations to buy pre-owned products*, antecedents in acquiring second hand pieces were firstly investigated through the interviews.

The *first motivation behind shopping second hand* products, intended as equivalent or comparable to products that are currently on the market, but pre-owned, is, according to the interviews, *price consciousness.* This variable can be conceptualized as the extent to which consumers carefully evaluate their purchases, comparing prices and buying options from different sources. It is strictly related to consumer *frugality*, consumer willingness to avoid worthless money waste for short-term gratification in order to commit to long term-oriented causes (Lastovicka & al., 2009), but it is also related to consumer desire to pay a *fair price* for their purchases (Guiot & Roux, 2008) and to their consideration of *allocative aspects of the price* (Guiot & Roux, 2008).

Leonardo says: *"I usually evaluate carefully all my purchases, comparing prices from different sources thanks to the internet...you could not believe what you can save simply by being informed! […] I am thinking about saving money to buy an apartment, therefore I do not want to waste it in daily purchases if it is not worth it".*

In Pier's words: *"Buying second hand I can buy unique or cult products at fair prices* [...] *I don't mind purchasing second hand products, in order to be able to enrich my personal style, having the possibility to purchase more items, if quality standards are good."*

More interestingly, the capability to obtain the best value for money by buying second hand, finding *"real deals"* (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015) is capable to generate in consumers a sense of *psychological empowerment*, coming from perceived superior competence in choosing fashion & luxury products. This sense of psychological empowerment seems to have a predominant role in consumer decision to buy second hand products. In fact, consumers buying second hand fashion & luxury see themselves as *"smart shoppers"* (Mano and Elliott, 1997), for their unique capability to spare economic resources through bypassing conventional shopping systems, ensuring themselves the desired products at their lowest possible prices.

"I enjoying buying through second hand channels because I know I am not overpaying what I buy to sustain marketing or administrative costs. By buying second hand, I am the one that buys at the best price-quality ratio and this is very important to me" – declares Elena.

"I really like the possibility to negotiate the price to obtain the best value for what I buy, it makes me feel in power and satisfied. And it is an aspect that I really relate only to this type of purchases" – says Pier.

"I like following auctions and then buy quality products at their lowest price. It feels good" – adds Leonardo.

It should be noticed that interviewees seemed all enthusiastic about their experience with pre-owned purchases in terms of price quality ratio obtained. This is probably due to the fact that they have bought second hand items mostly at specialized stores or markets – being able to directly verify products' quality levels - or from sites performing an extensive quality control on products on sale, as Vestiaire Collective.

"When I bought my Chanel mini-bag from Vestiaire Collective, it arrived exactly as I expected. The on-site description was very extensive and truthful and I was very happy for the purchase, I made a real deal!" – explains Sara.

In conclusion, it appears that the more consumers are *price-conscious*, the more they will feel *empowered* from finding *second hand* fashion & luxury good quality products at their lowest prices, the more they will be interested in purchasing them.

Another motivation behind second hand purchases emerging from the interviews is the *ethical-ecological factor*. One of the interviewees, Elena, is particularly conscious about the environment and prone to make *sustainable choices* (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015). She appears fashion conscious but at the same time willing to adopt a classical, timeless style to contribute to the reduction of clothing waste and environmental and economic costs associated to obsessive trend adoption. She declares: *"I do not like fast fashion for its habit to generate millions of identical copies, imposing a seasonal complete renovation of personal style. This causes enormous and unnecessary money expenditure, damaging the environment and worsening fashion employees' work conditions [...] I buy second hand because I love fashion: I don't like superior style and quality pieces to go wasted or forgotten in someone's closet".*

On the other hand, crucial antecedent behind *vintage purchases* appears to be, as theorized by Cervellon (2012), *need for uniqueness*, consumer willingness to create a unique personal style with the aim to differentiate themselves from others. Consumers buy vintage original, unique clothes, mostly to distinguish themselves from mass tastes.

"I like vintage because every piece I buy is unique. When I wear it, I am sure that no one of my friends does…and this is not easy with the spread of fast fashion. […] This is the fundamental motivation for me to buy vintage: to affirm my personal, unique identity" – answers Pier.

"I like to wear unique pieces that nobody else wears, to show my interest in fashion and my unique style. I like following fashion trends but I usually try to create my personal style through timeless elegant pieces" – affirms Elena.

"I like to wear prestigious, iconic vintage pieces to make my look stand out from the crowd" – adds Sara.

Furthermore, respondents declare to feel a sense of *psychological empowerment* from vintage purchases, but with a different connotation in respect to the one generated by second hand purchases. Due to the fact that buying iconic vintage pieces is usually connected to a deep understanding of fashion and luxury trends during past history, to buy vintage becomes a mean to feel part as an elite of *empowered fashion experts*, capable to achieve a clear distinction from mass tastes. This sense of empowerment coming from the capability to construct a distinctive personal style seems to have a crucial role in determining consumer decisions to buy vintage fashion & luxury items.

"When I buy vintage, I like to feel part of an elite of a specific group, an elite of fashion experts" – declares Pier.

"I like to feel part of a specific group of people who do not limit themselves to buy every trend adopted by fast fashion retailers" – adds Elena.

"I like to define myself as an expert of vintage watches, that is why I follow internet forums on the topic and I like discuss about it with friends who have the same interest or to start discussions in specialized online forums" – concludes Leonardo.

In fact, consumer feeling of empowerment is based on the vintage customer perceiving himself/herself as able to understand fashion logics and to

appreciate products re-invoking important trends in fashion history. Therefore, the more consumers feel the need to express their uniqueness trough fashion & luxury product ownership and display, the more they will feel empowered by vintage purchases, and the more they will be interested in buying vintage products.

A second motivation for vintage purchases is the thrill of *treasure hunting*: the interviewees refer to a feeling of excitement connected to unexpectedly finding a unique or cult vintage piece. According to their comments, this feeling of excitement increases for vintage items from their favorite brands.

"Of buying vintage, what I enjoy the most is the discovery of new, precious, unforeseen pieces." – says Elena.

"If I find a Chanel or a Fendi piece in a vintage market, it gives me emotions because I found a piece of fashion history. A piece of what the brand was and that was probably fundamental in defining what the brand is now." – adds Pier.

Moreover, *superior quality and aesthetic* were mentioned as reason to buy vintage pieces, described as *"superior quality products that passed the test of time"* (Leonardo). This conception could be related to *nostalgic feelings*, related to consumer beliefs that *"things were better in the past"* (Holak & Havlena, 1992).

"Me wearing some of my vintage pieces refers to my superior interest for past styles, culture and values" – declares Pier.

In addition, other factors that seem capable of enriching customers' shopping experience of second hand and vintage fashion & luxury are related to *personal contact and interactions with vendors* and *shopper communities.*

Pre-owned objects are seen as *"pre-loved treasures"* (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015). Consumers value the set of mental associations from previous owners as something enriching the products and making them go beyond a simple commodity state.

In Pier's own words: *"I like buying vintage pieces because they have been part of someone's life, and that someone has carefully preserved them for several years…so they should really have an important value for them!"*

For this reason, they are interested in finding out products' history. Pier continues*: "I really like to know the personal story of the seller and the product to construct on it a new personal story".*

Moreover, interaction with a *community* is particularly appreciated when the customer has not sufficient information on the products on sale and additional information about the merchandise on sale, as well as feedbacks and suggestions, are generated on site.

Leonardo affirms: *"When I buy pre-owned items on marketplaces like Ebay and Amazon or on online forums, other users' comments and reviews are crucial to make me trust sellers on product quality."*

After focusing on main antecedents behind the second hand and vintage shopping experience in fashion & luxury, the interviews sought to explore respondents' *relationships with fashion and luxury brands*. It appears that the relationship between consumers and their favorite fashion & luxury brands can be affected in various ways from buying pre-owned products.

Being able to spend less time and money resources in acquiring a *second hand* item, *"deprived"* from flawless quality and superior customer service commonly constituting an essential element of the luxury experience, consumers buying *second hand* appear as l*ess involved in their fashion and luxury purchases* and *less willing to commit to the brands they buy in the long term*.

In addition, the possibility to resell products after that the first short period of "flame" with them has passed, as granted by digital matching platforms, makes consumer-brand relationships fickler, more transitory and less loyal. If consumers are aware of reselling possibilities for branded products, the level of commitment with brands created through purchasing those products lowers significantly.

"By buying second hand luxury watches I can buy them at lower prices. So I can buy more of them and easily change the watch that I am wearing for different occasions or different moods" – explains Leonardo.

"Buying second hand from re-sale sites enables me to mix & match different clothes and accessories to construct my unique personal style, and I can easily resell them when I get bored!" – adds Sara.

"Buying second hand makes all the process easier […] I do not need to wait in line for the chance to get a Hermès bag, it is just a click away! And when it does not feel as appealing as before, or I simply prefer to switch…I can just re-sell!" – Elena.

For these reasons, from *committed partnerships* (Fournier, 1998), characterized by high levels of love, trust, commitment and exclusivity, consumer-brand relationships with fashion and luxury brands bought *second hand* tend to be transformed into *casual friendships* (ibid.), which can be distinguished by a sporadic engagement between parts, low levels of intimacy and a short-term orientation. Consumers buying second hand are often prone to resell their "treasures", in order to recover from monetary loss and to buy new items to stay updated with the latest trends.

The relationship respondents seem to have with fashion & luxury brands they have bought second hand could be described as: *"as long as it lasts (on trend)".* The interviewed consumers tend in fact to stick to the brands they have chosen until their products are in line with current fashion trends, moods and inspirations, to "get rid" of them through re-sell soon after. This kind of

relationship appears more *superficial* and *short-term oriented* (Fournier, 1998) then the ones created with fashion & luxury brands bought brand new, as well as characterized by lower levels of *commitment* (ibid.) with brands from consumers.

To sum up, consumer perceptions of second hand fashion & luxury products seem to have as a consequence the creation of *multiple, shorter and less committed consumer-brand relationships with fashion & luxury brands*. This could signify that *the diffusion of second hand items, if perceived as outside luxury brands exclusivity aura, could potentially damage consumer brand image, as well as negatively affect consumer feelings towards fashion & luxury brands, causing decreasing purchase intentions and brand loyalty in the long term.*

On the other hand, the acquisition of *vintage* fashion & luxury branded products makes the interviewed millennial consumers, who typically constitute aspirational customers, able to buy them more or less regularly, making them feel as a consequence nearer to these brands. In their own words:

"When I buy vintage luxury branded products I feel closer to the brand, not only because I am able to purchase it, but since I can afford a unique piece of its history" – says Pier.

"Buying vintage is for me a way to connect with what the brand has been in the past…to understand its value and heritage and to have a better knowledge of fashion history and dynamics" – adds Sara.

"Buying vintage for me is a way to acknowledge and appreciate the brand's heritage and history […] *I feel much closer to a brand when I own a vintage branded piece"* – explains Leonardo.

Due to positive symbolic association with the word *vintage* and a deeper connection with brands' past history, vintage purchases appear to have the

potential to increase consumer-brand relationship *intimacy*: buying vintage, it is like the consumer has experienced the brand past history and he/she is able to better understand and appreciate its values and heritage. Hence, the consumer becomes more affectionate to the brand as he/she had acquired brand manifestations and symbolic meanings over time. Therefore, vintage purchases have ultimately the potential to increase c*onsumer brand attachment* and consumer positive feelings towards fashion & luxury brands, and thus to transform consumer-brand relationships with fashion & luxury brands from *casual friendships* into *committed partnership* (Fournier, 1998).

In this sense, from interviews' findings, consumer-brand relationships with fashion & luxury brands bought vintage could be understood as *"true fashion romances".* They result more *intense, long-term oriented* (Fournier, 1998) and characterized by higher levels of *intimacy* (ibid.) between consumers and brands in respect to the ones consumers have with fashion & luxury brands bought brand new. *Buying vintage, consumers develop a better understanding of brand values, heritage and history and potentially deeper relationships with fashion & luxury brands they buy, more likely becoming brand loyal customers and brand ambassadors.*

New types of consumer relationships with fashion & luxury brands bought second hand and vintage are summarized in *Table 4* on the next page.

***TABLE 4**. Consumer brand relationships with fashion & luxury brands bought second hand and vintage*

RELATIONSHIP FORM	CHARACTERISTICS
As long as it lasts (on trend)	*Short-term oriented, superficial relationship characterised by a low level of commitment from the consumer. The consumer sticks to the brand only as long as it represents the latest trend, and then resells.*
True fashion romance	*Long-term oriented, intense relationship characterised by a high level of intimacy between the consumer and the brand, due to deep understanding of its history, values and heritage by the consumer.*

6.2 Findings from Netnography

Due to the nature of the Trustpilot site, gathering consumer opinions on specific web shops, the online community on *<www.trustpilot.com>* is mainly constituted by *"tourists",* customers with lack of both strong ties within the community and strong interest in the subject, and *"devotees",* with strong interest in the subject but weak ties with the community (Kozinets, 2002). This second class of consumers usually gives more detailed evaluations of their shopping experiences and they compare different fashion re-sale sites in their recommendations, showing greater familiarity with the specific business.

Five fundamental themes connected to consumer experience of pre-owned fashion & luxury brands emerge from this netnography.

Making the luxury dream real. Most recurrent consumer appreciation for re-sale sites derives from their offer of designer luxury fashion at accessible prices. What consumers value the most appears to be the capability of these sites to offer fashionable merchandise in good conditions, at a fraction of retail price.

"Tradesy has made it possible for me to own the best without breaking my bank" - Marva Joy on <www.trustpilot.com> 03/01/2017

"I feel pampered every time I receive my order from Vestiaire. Thanks to you I can access these items easier now" – Agnes T. on <www.trustpilot.com> 07/10/2016

"I love that they have designer brands at any budget" – Corissa Horban on *Tradesy* on <www.trustpilot.com> 03/01/2017

The attention to money saving aspects from consumers reviewing re-sale sites on Trustpilot confirms the importance of *price consciousness* as main motivation behind second hand purchases, as showed by in-depth interviews. Moreover, the way consumers refer to fashion & luxury brands they have bought pre-owned (ex. *"own the best"* from Marva Joy) makes the researcher understand how, notwithstanding the fact that they are preowned, they are still perceived as luxury by consumers, in accordance with Heine's *"luxury relativity"* concept (Heine, 2002).

A fashionistas' secret. Second main theme is related to consumer browsing these sites in order to find rare fashion & luxury items that they are not able to find anywhere else. Re-sell sites are indeed typically characterized by a huge catalogue, including clothing and accessories from previous collections that consumers are no more capable to find in stores, with great possibilities of choice. In fact, due to increasing number of yearly collections sold by fashion designers, seasonal clothes and accessories have a very limited shelf life and customers are not always able to buy them before they are sold out. Rare vintage pieces reflecting fashion trends from the past that could be relevant again are also available on these sites. On top of that, some re-sale sites like Vestiaire Collective contain editorial content on trends, celebrities and fashion inspiration, highly appreciated by customers since they help them to construct their unique personal style.

"You find items that aren't on sale anymore" – Deanna Campbell on *Tradesy* on <www.trustpilot.com> 13/12/2016

"I bought a used pair of shoes and I had been searching them for a year and a half" – Sandra on *Vestiaire Collective* on <www.trustpilot.com> 29/01/2016

"Online editorials and trend researches always reflecting the latest fashion and a huge catalogue!" – Barbara on *Vestiaire Collective* on <www.trustpilot.com> 29/01/2016

These aspects appear related to customers browsing re-sell sites and purchasing pre-owned pieces in order to create a *unique personal style*, as it emerged from in-depth interviews.

Fun, fun, fun! Another important theme emerging from netnography is how consumers enjoy re-sell sites as a new, more fun and engaging shopping channel.

This recreational dimension of pre-owned fashion & luxury shopping is mainly related to two of their characteristics. Firstly, the thrill of *treasure hunting*, as the serendipity of the unexpected (Roux & Guiot, 2008):

"Fun, fun, fun, treasure hunt!" Petra Muse on *Thredup* on <www.trustpilot.com> 13/05/2016

"Highly addictive […] I enjoy selling and shopping on this site. Exploring about the new fashion brands and expanding myself, my personal shopping business, and how I should sell items in the future" – Crystal on *Poshmark* on <www.trustpilot.com> 30/07/2016

Secondly, the *sense of community* that some of these re-sell sites give to consumers, through the presence of dedicated forums (Vinted) and possibility to comment and to express appreciation on products and editorials content (Vestiaire Collective, TheRealReal):

"The forums are the best because you are able to chat and talk and even make friends with the Vinted community" – Cecilia Maria Jurado on <www.trustpilot.com> 14/10/2016

"I like it because its community is very in line with my tastes in fashion" – Viviana on *Vestiaire Collective* on <www.trustpilot.com> 29/01/2016

These findings, related to consumer thrill of treasure hunt and community interaction, confirm findings from in-depth interviews: *a positive, new shopping experience has an important role in encouraging pre-owned purchases*.

Authenticity. Fourth fundamental aspect results in consumers being reassured on product authenticity. Since they would incur in consistent monetary losses buying a fake fine fashion or luxury product, they highly prefer sites were a careful authenticity control is guaranteed, as Vestiaire Collective or Tradesy.

"Items are controlled before being shipped to customers, so there is no risk of receiving a fake" – Daniela on *Vestiaire Collective* on <www.trustpilot.com> 29/01/2016

"Being sure about products' quality state and authenticity is the best!" – Tiziana on *Vestiaire Collective* on <www.trustpilot.com> 29/01/2016

From netnography findings*, perceived authenticity* appears therefore crucial in influencing pre-owned purchases, in particular the ones involving the online channel, where the customer has less information of product quality state before purchase.

Expectations vs reality. Notwithstanding the presence of all these positive elements about the pre-owned fashion & luxury consumer experience on digital matching platforms, sites like Trustpilot are also extensively used from

consumers to make complaints and to try to have refunds from re-sell sites. Usually, users who are the most and the least happy with the provided services are the ones that are more willing to comment, as proved from the alternation of single star and five star evaluations.

Most common problems are connected to the nature itself of pre-owned goods and the online channel, as *quality state* different from the expected one:

"Item too subject to wear and tear, not corresponding to description and photos on site" – Antonella on *Vestiaire Collective* on <www.trustpilot.com> 01/02/2016

"The past couple orders that I received the items were damaged and there were holes in items that were marked in great condition" – Amy on *Thredup* on <www.trustpilot.com> 30/12/2016

This is due to possible different perspectives on quality state – which are ultimately subjective – between buyers and sellers. If a consumer perceives a pre-owned garment or accessory as a luxury item, he/she certainly expects flawless quality (Heine, 2002) but, on the other hand, if the piece is pre-owned, some signs of use are likely to exist in any case. On top of that, the online channel, due to the fact that consumers are able to see only pictures of desired products before purchase, increases the level of information asymmetry between buyers and sellers on product quality state.

Other difficulties regard *sizes*, a common issue for fashion e-commerce sites, in the specific case worsened by the fact that pre-owned pieces are usually only available in one size and not refundable.

"I have started to be really careful because there often is something wrong with sizes" – Fulvia on *Vestiaire Collective* on <www.trustpilot.com> 30/01/2016

Finally, the most important problem results in *shipment delays*. This issue seems crucial for European retailers as, due to legal restrictions, consumers

who decide to sell their merchandise on these sites have up to 30 days to ship their items, after they have been selected by a buyer. This regulation, together with the time needed for quality and authentication controls, could generate important levels of customer frustration:

"You should know that they have a 30 days period for item to be delivered!! In this day and age?" - Vikkie on *Vestiaire Collective* on <www.trustpilot.com> 13/12/2016

"There are no punctual indications on shipment and delivery timings" – Elisabetta on *Vestiaire Collective* on <www.trustpilot.com> 29/01/2016

"Now as for the other product Ref: 3349087, this is still under "awaiting receipt". I timed my purchases to arrive before 26 December 2016. Is the seller even sending this item?" – Helga F on *Vestiaire Collective* on <www.trustpilot.com> 23/12/2016

It is noticeable that these negative sides of the second hand and vintage shopping experience did not emerge from in depth-interviews. This could be mainly attributed to the use of a limited sample and to its characteristics. All interview respondents are keen on fashion & luxury, so they are capable to carefully evaluate a purchase before buying, and they have mostly bought their pre-owned pieces in physical stores (where the evaluation of price-quality ratio is easier) or on Vestiaire Collective (exercising a tight quality control on its merchandise, therefore supposedly limiting in number negative shopping experiences).

As regards *consumer-brand relationship*, due to both the complex, psychological nature of the phenomenon itself and the type of platform selected (focused on shopping experience with e-commerce sites) it was difficult to gain meaningful insights. What it is possible to conclude from netnography is that consumer experience of fashion & luxury brands can be

completely different with the use of pre-owned channels in respect to the classic luxury experience, with both positive and negative aspects.

In this optic, consumers could see a negative shopping experience with a specific fashion & luxury brand as a *lack of brand partner quality* (Fournier, 1998), this *negatively affecting consumer relationship with the brand*. In fact, a bad shopping experience, even if not directly controlled by the brand company, could be understood from the consumer as *the brand breaking relationship rules and consumer trust in its delivery of expected results*, causing *asymmetry* in consumer-brand relationship. This effect on consumer-brand relationship could influence negatively future shopping behavior, making *both second hand and vintage purchases potentially risky in affecting consumer-brand relationships with fashion & luxury brands*.

7 Conclusions

This last chapter will be dedicated to summarize main research outcomes, to draw implications both for managerial practice and for theory and research, and to assess research credibility and limitations.

7.1 Main research findings

This research takes a consumer perspective in understanding how second hand and vintage fashion & luxury purchases affect the ways in which consumers experience fashion & luxury brands. Differences behind second hand and vintage shopping experiences and motivations behind purchase of pre-owned fashion & luxury items are explored.

The first important consideration emerging from the research is that *consumer perception of second hand and vintage fashion & luxury products are*

substantially different. In fact, if the term *vintage* is usually associated to "cult" pieces, strongly connected to past fashion trends or to specific fashion "eras", the term *second hand* has commonly a negative connotation of no more fashionable, dusty and uncool merchandise. This perceptual difference, probably related more to the set of traditional negative associations with the term second hand than to actual diversities in quality and style between the two product categories, could be able to *considerably affect consumer purchase intentions and willingness to pay for pre-owned products*.

This phenomenon is probably connected to the fact that negative associations with second hand branded products held in consumer minds are likely to decrease the "*dream factor*" typically associated with fashion & luxury brands, as well as their traditional link with flawless quality and style. On the other hand, vintage items, as being perceived as unique and destined to an elite of experts sharing a specific *subcultural capital* (Thornton, 1995) connected to fashion history, are able to preserve a mysterious aura of fashionability and desirability, notwithstanding the fact that they have been previously used.

First fundamental focus of the research is constituted by *antecedents behind pre-owned fashion & luxury purchases*, as well as specific differences between motivations behind second hand and vintage product acquisition.

Main motivation behind second hand purchases results in *price consciousness*, intended as consumer willingness to decrease expenditure of economic resources for product acquisition. Price consciousness is strongly connected to consumer *frugality* trait (Lastovicka & al., 1993), conceptualized as willingness to avoid unneeded resource expenditure in the short term to prioritize long-term goals, and to consumer willing to pay a *fair price* for what they buy (Roux & Guoit, 2008).

As emerged from netnography, what consumers appreciate the most of pre-owned channels is specifically the possibility acquire designer fashion & luxury

items at reduced prices, therefore economic-related motivations are fundamental in driving second hand purchases. However, with the spread of fast fashion business models consumers can easily acquire fashionable merchandise at reduced prices, therefore second hand items appear desirable for a *better price quality ratio* more than simply for a reduced price.

In fact, what it is interesting to observe is that price conscious consumers feel *empowered* from second hand purchases for their capability to save considerable amounts of resources on fashion & luxury goods by bypassing conventional market channels. This sense of psychological empowerment from obtaining *"real deals"* (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015) appears as a determinant antecedent in second hand purchases.

Last significant motivation behind second hand products' acquisition results in *ecological concerns:* consumers who are aware of the environmental impact of the fashion industry but still are fashion conscious and willing to adopt the latest trends, buy second hand in order to make a *sustainable choice* (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015). Doing so, they are capable to fight product perceived obsolescence and to lengthen product life cycles, making clothes and accessories pass through different owners before disposal.

Shifting focus to *vintage* purchases, most significant antecedent clearly results in *need for uniqueness,* as the willingness to pursue differentness to enhance social and self-image (Tian & al., 2001). Consumers buy vintage in order to express their unique taste and style, they look for one-of-a-kind products that are *"more than just commodities"* (Turunen & Leipamaa, 2015), to make a statement on their personality.

The search for unique, rare products that are not available in "regular" boutiques results as a fundamental motivation to appreciate re-sale sites also from netnography. Due to the diffusion of "m*ix & match*" style, consumers do not limit themselves in following top designers' dicta – as with the *"total look"*

in the 80s -, but they mix and match proposals from different brands, styles and moods in order to construct a unique personal style. This phenomenon highly contributes to consumer research of unique pieces on re-sell sites to create outfits that no one else is wearing.

Furthermore, consumers buying vintage pieces feel *empowered* from the fact that buying vintage presupposes customers' possession of a specific *subcultural capital* related to fashion trends and knowledge of fashion history. Therefore, the more consumers feel the need to express their uniqueness trough personal fashion style and to be recognized as part of an elite of fashion experts, the more they will be interested in buying vintage fashion & luxury pieces.

Other important antecedent behind the purchase of vintage pieces on re-sell sites is the thrill of *treasure hunting*. As emerged from both in-depth interviews and netnography, consumers find browsing re-commerce sites recreational, for the possibility to come across unforeseen, precious pieces, and they feel excited from their unique finds.

Finally, vintage fashion & luxury purchases could be driven by nostalgic feelings and consumer belief that product quality and style were "*better in the past"*.

In addition, as it emerged from netnography, for both second hand and vintage purchases *perceived authenticity* appears fundamental in determining consumer purchase intentions of pre-owned products. Due to the risk of important monetary and reputational losses connected to the purchase of a "*fake",* consumers seem to prefer re-sell sites with authenticity controls, even if their presence makes the shipping process significantly longer.

Interpersonal interactions with vendors and on-site *communities* are finally considered as an important recreational aspect typical of pre-owned purchases,

encouraging consumers to prefer re-sell sites, as it emerges from both in depth interviews and netnography. Consumers enjoy exchanging opinions and advices in appositely constituted forums or through the possibility of leaving on-site comments.

The second fundamental focus of the research is constituted by consumer-brand relationships in fashion & luxury, and in particular by the *different effects of second hand and vintage purchases on consumers' relationships with fashion & luxury brands*.

Due to higher accessibility, lack of flawless quality and superior shopping experience, and to the possibility to easily resell on online marketplaces, from in-depth interviews it emerged that consumers buying *second hand* tend to be less committed to fashion & luxury brands, creating multiple *casual friendships* and not any *committed partnership* with them (Fournier, 1998).

This new kind of consumer relationship with fashion & luxury brands, generated or affected by second hand purchases, could be referred to as *"as long as it lasts (on trend)"*. It is *superficial*, *short term oriented* and characterized by consumers having low levels of *commitment* (Fournier, 1998) and loyalty towards fashion & luxury brands. In this optic, consumers select their preferred fashion & luxury branded pieces relatively easily, sticking to their favorite items only as long as they are in in line with current fashion trends, to re-sell them on digital matching platforms soon after.

Oppositely, from in-depth interviews, *vintage* purchases do not seem to represent a threat for customers' relationships with fashion & luxury brands, indeed they seem to have the potential to transform them from *casual friendships* into *committed partnerships* (Fournier, 1998)*.

The kind of relationship customers create with fashion & luxury brands bought vintage could be conceptualized as *"true fashion romance"*. It appears more *intense* and *long-term oriented* than the ones developed with fashion & luxury brands bought new, and characterized by greater levels of *intimacy* (Fournier, 1998) coming from consumers' deep understanding of brands' history, values and heritage through the purchase of vintage branded products. Consumers buying vintage could become therefore potentially more attached and loyal to the fashion & luxury brands they buy.

On the other hand, as it emerged from nethnography, consumer experience with re-sell sites could be frustrating for *differences between expectations and reality*, mostly connected to the nature itself of pre-owned fashion and luxury goods and the online channel. In this context, the purchase of vintage iconic pieces could also affect negatively consumer brand relationship with fashion & luxury brands. After a negative shopping experience, in fact, the brand could be seen from the consumer as *not capable to be a good partner in consumer-brand relationship*, with negative consequences on his/her future shopping behavior. This is likely to happen even if, as in the case of pre-owned purchases on re-sell sites, the brand company is not directly responsible for *"breaking consumer trust"*.

In sum, *if second hand purchases might affect negatively consumer-brand relationship with fashion & luxury brands, this is not likely to happen for vintage purchases.*

7.2 Implications

7.2.1 Managerial implications

The first set of managerial implications will be addressed to *second hand and vintage retailers*, with a specific focus on *digital matching platforms*.

The first important implication for pre-owned fashion & luxury retailers that can be driven from this research is the fact that consumer have a clearly better perception of vintage fashion & luxury products than of second hand ones. For this reason, *re-sell sites should construct their brand positioning with a focus on their vintage offer*, and they should tend to present all products reflecting specific trends from the past as vintage, in order to increase consumer purchase intentions and willingness to pay for them.

As regards *second hand* products that clearly come from recent collections, what is important for this kind of retailers is to focus on *respecting communication codes associated to luxury*, in order to avoid consumer mental negative associations with second hand to affect their willingness to purchase these products. As shown by the success of the Vestiaire Collective case, all second hand products should be presented to customers with *codes that are proper of luxury brands* (shiny advertising campaigns, PR events, obsessive attention to product quality and packaging).

Moreover, second hand product prices should be enough lower in respect to new comparable products' prices to encourage purchases by *frugal consumers*, but not low enough to give an impression of lack of attribution of luxury characteristics to the products. *This difficult tradeoff between guaranteeing greater accessibility of fashion & luxury products and maintaining a connotation of exclusivity probably constitutes the most important challenge for second hand retailers.*

In addition, to increase consumer sense of empowerment deriving from making "*real deals*" (Turuneen & Leipamaa, 2015) with second hand purchases, *retailers should enable consumers to compare retail prices with prices of their second hand alternatives*.

Shifting focus to *vintage* products, vintage *fashion & luxury online retailers could emphasize the importance of subcultural capital associated to their products proposing on site editorials and educational content* on vintage, to

encourage consumers to feel as experts in the category (and therefore to feel empowered from purchasing their products). Considering that fashion forward consumers are usually more prone to adopt innovative consumption patterns in fashion, as buying vintage, those editorials could even include selections of vintage pieces related to latest fashion *"revival"* trends.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that for both second hand and vintage purchases, *product perceived authenticity* plays a fundamental role in determining consumer purchase intentions. Consumer perception of product authenticity appears in fact crucial, as consumers may take a considerable financial and a reputational risk when acquiring second hand luxury items, as theorized by Turunen & Leipamaa (2015). Therefore, *authenticity control,* constituting and important competitive advantage in the case of Vestiaire Collective, *should constitute a common practice for second hand and vintage retailers and it should be effectively communicated to customers*. This is particularly true for the e-commerce channel, considering that consumers are less likely to assume product authenticity if they are not able to have direct contact with the product before purchase.

A last managerial implication for re-sell sites emerging from netnography could be the indication to *prefer the conciergerie business model* (already adopted from TheRealReal, Tradesy and partially from Vestiaire Collective) *to direct consumer-to-consumer on site interaction* (adopted by Vestiaire Collective, Thredup, Vinted). In the *conciergerie* model, professionals from the company directly pickup pre-owned items from sellers, shot professional pictures and put the merchandise online only when it is ready to ship, avoiding shipments delays. In the second model instead, sellers can directly post pictures of the products and put them on the site, this potentially causing consignment delays and misunderstandings on shipping times that could seriously damage the relationship between the re-sell site and on-site buyers. On the other hand, the adoption of the *conciergerie* model could increment costs for sellers and it

could determine an important reduction of product offer, so it probably represents the best choice only for upscale luxury businesses.

As regards managerial implications directed to *fashion & luxury companies*, this research testifies that, for its increasing scope and predicted future growth, the second hand and vintage market for fashion & luxury goods can no longer be ignored. *Fashion and luxury companies should therefore create collaboration mechanisms with second hand and vintage retailers in order to ensure that their brands are communicated to customers in these new channels as consistently as possible with internal branding guidelines*. In the development of these collaborations, fashion & luxury companies should *prefer re-sell sites adopting careful quality controls and based on the conciergerie model*, since their activity would result potentially less risky for consumer relationships with their brands.

Ultimately, *second hand and vintage retailers can have important positive effects on luxury fashion brands, encouraging consumer purchases for greater product perceived liquidity of fashion & luxury products*. If fashion forward consumers are aware of reselling possibilities on digital matching platforms, they will be in fact more willing to purchase fashion & luxury items and in particular highly seasonal products, that they will not be likely to wear for the following seasons. Moreover, *if pre-owned items are conveyed to customers in line with luxury fashion codes, the fact alone that they are resold on the market as previously owned enhances consumer perception of their value and of their capability to conserve it over time.*

Likewise, *fashion & luxury companies could establish themselves direct channels to sell pre-owned branded products*, with the possibility to enlarge their customer base by attracting consumers with lower willingness to pay, different levels of fashion consciousness or diverse consumption drivers, who may not otherwise buy luxury goods (Tururen & Leipamaa, 2015). However,

luxury firms should carefully evaluate this option to avoid brand dilution risks,
maybe limiting the integration of pre-owned products in their offer to vintage
exclusive pieces, capable to communicate effectively their heritage, with the
potential to develop *"true fashion romances"* with customers.

7.2.2 Implications for theory and research

*This research attempts to explore consumer experience of second hand and
vintage fashion & luxury brands through qualitative research methods.* Most
innovative contributions are the application of Fournier's *consumer brand
relationship* concept (1998) to pre-owned fashion & luxury purchases, with the
introduction of *new consumer-brand relationships' classifications in the specific
domain of pre-owned fashion & luxury purchases,* as well as the identification
of consumer sense of *psychological empowerment* as a fundamental driver for
pre-owned products' acquisition, both second hand and vintage, in fashion &
luxury.

A first significant issue arising from the research is *whether a used luxury
possession is still perceived as luxury by consumers*, lacking the traditional
attributes of luxury goods, such as exclusive service, high price and flawless
quality (Dubois et al., 2001). Consumer strong interest in second hand and
vintage fashion & luxury purchases demonstrated by the research develops in
accordance with Heine's theory of *luxury relativity* (2012), showing that one
person's trash could effectively be another person's treasure. To sum up,
*luxury should be considered as a relative concept and luxury brands as
intangible assets, since second-hand markets are able to transfer the
experience of luxury from one customer to another, considering the set of
symbolic meanings associated to second hand luxury purchases* (Turunen &
Leipamaa, 2015).

Furthermore, the fact that consumer brand-relationship results to be affected by consumers purchasing fashion & luxury brands through channels that cannot be directly controlled by fashion & luxury companies, opens the road to possible application of *multi-stakeholder branding* theories (Kornum & Gyrd-Jones, 2012; Gyrd-Jones & Miller, 2013) to pre-owned fashion & luxury research field. These theories are founded on conceiving brands as no more defined simply internally from companies, but as continuously re-shaped by multiple external actors, making collaboration between firms and stakeholder ecosystems crucial for successful branding.

Moreover, other studies could focus on *enriching understanding of customer-brand relationships with fashion & luxury brands*, and specifically of *companies' practical efforts to develop and maintain them*, in order to add an industry perspective to the inquiry.

Lastly, this contribution should be seen as *an incentive for future research on fashion & luxury brands to include the second hand and vintage consumer*, as this will give a more holistic picture of the luxury brand experience.

7.3 Authenticity

Due to the nature itself of qualitative research methods, the research is *exploratory* and it presents a low degree of *consistency* and *transferability:* measurements and findings are not found easily repeatable and generalizable to other cases or contexts (Daymon Holloway, 2010).

Considered the exploratory essence of the study and the adoption of a consumer point of view, both *in-depth interviews* and *netnography* appear as the right research "instruments" to *"step into consumer minds"* and to gain relevant consumer perspective on the topic (ibid.).

The study results as *fair* to participants (ibid.), as flexibility, a natural conversation flow and anonymity were granted to respondents during in-depth interviews, and, due to consumers being identified with nicknames on the Trustpilot site, anonymity was also guaranteed in netnographic analysis, where, in any case, no sensitive information was revealed.

Even if there is no grant of all *participants valuing the study to better understand the phenomena under consideration* (ibid.), from positive feedbacks obtained during the research, the researcher believes that the interviewees enjoyed the research process.

From all these elements, it can be concluded that *the research results authentic*.

7.4 Credibility

Research *credibility* was ensured by making one of the interviewees, who had already used a re-sell site to purchase pre-owned fine fashion items, *check research results* (Daymon Holloway, 2010). The interviewee judged the results as coherent and reasonable.

All findings result in line with research questions, and can be traced with specific utterances in transcripts (in Appendix), so the study results as *confirmable* and *dependable* (ibid.).

Finally, with the aim to increase research credibility, different research methods (*secondary data collection*, *in-depth interviews* and *netnography*) were used to ensure *triangulation* and verify consistency of findings.

From all these elements, it can be concluded that *the research results credible*.

7.5 Limitations

There are of course many limitations regarding the scope and execution of the research.

Firstly, for lack of time and money resources to administer a questionnaire in a proper manner, *only qualitative research methods were used*. Therefore, research findings need to be considered *exploratory* and to be deep dived through quantitative research.

Secondly, *sample composition* affected interview findings and validity of results: the study focused on *millennial consumers* being pioneers of second-hand and vintage purchases, particularly through the online channel, but with limited spending power, therefore *not necessarily representing net value consumers in the short term for fashion & luxury companies*.

Thirdly, the research includes some of the *typical limitations of netnography*: there is a narrow focus of online communities, informants' backgrounds and identities are very difficult to identify and, as for in-depth interviews, interpretative capabilities of the research are capable to affect results (Kozinets, 2002).

Fourthly, *cross gender and cross-cultural differences were not evaluated properly*, and they could result meaningful in better understanding the phenomena under consideration.

Lastly, the impact of other factors like *need for status, materialism* and *self-monitoring behaviors* (Cervellon, 2012) on motivations behind the purchase or pre-owned goods could have been considered.

7.6 Final considerations

Overall future impact of the development and growth of pre-owned fashion & luxury market is difficult to predict.

On the one hand, with diffusion of fashion & luxury *vintage* purchases, consumers could appreciate more fashion items for their superior quality and durability over time. *This mechanism could lengthen natural product life cycles and ensure a reduction of environmental costs associated to supply chains of fashion and luxury products*, in opposition to fast fashion logics.

On the other hand, consumer greater accessibility to *second hand* fashion & luxury products on digital matching platforms could determine an *acceleration of trend diffusion and substitution mechanisms* by quickening *snob effect*, defined as the demand decrease for certain products deriving from its extensive usage from a high number of consumers (Cappetta & al., 2006). In these circumstances, *product life cycles would be again lengthened, with items passing through different owners characterized by diverse levels of lead-userness, fashion expertise and economic power, before their final disposal, with positive impact on clothing waste reduction.*

In this optic, consumers buying and selling their fashion & luxury items on digital matching platforms could *change their fruition modalities of fashion & luxury brands, from a consumption model based on long-term ownership, to one aimed at extracting brand symbolic meanings* (McCracken, 1986) *from fashion & luxury products, to resell them on the market.* Therefore, with the progressive development of pre-owned channels, consumer will look at fashion & luxury branded products as *liquid assets*, *"transient possessions",* easy to monetize on the market. The key to this simple monetization is constituted by brands, functioning as a guarantee of superior quality and value over time.

Consumers buying second hand and vintage items appear in this context as sophisticated since they are moved by d*ifferent drivers behind purchase* in respect to traditional fashion & luxury customers, as *superior style content, need for self-expression* and *group identification* (driving the acquisition of vintage pieces), or *willingness to avoid waste and to protect the environment* (in second hand purchases). They do not (or not primarily) acquire fashion & luxury items for their flawless quality, to show status or to enjoy a superior shopping experience; for these reasons *they tend to distance themselves from mass tastes and mass consumption patterns.*

Likewise, *consumers selling on re-sell sites appear sophisticated, being able to extract optimal value from branded products*, to acquire brand symbolic meanings and to enjoy brand experience, without bearing the economic costs connected to long term ownership.

In conclusion, the spread of re-sell business models could potentially guarantee both economic benefits and new profitable opportunities for fashion & luxury brands, and have positive consequences on the environment, *with the ultimate scope to integrate ethics, aesthetic and economic principles in the successful management of fashion & luxury companies.*

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Appendix

1. Transcript and coding of qualitative interviews

Coding legend: <mark>Treasure Hunting</mark>, <mark>Price-related motivations</mark>, <mark>Personal interaction with vendors</mark>, <mark>Consumer-brand relationship</mark>, <mark>Superior aesthetic and quality</mark>, <mark>Need for uniqueness</mark>, <mark>Feeling of being part of an elite of experts</mark>, <mark>Community influence/interaction</mark>, <mark>Environmental attention</mark>.

a. Pier

Ciao Pier, grazie per aver scelto di partecipare a questa intervista. Premetto che la tua identità rimarrà al 100% confidenziale e che non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate, lo scopo di questa intervista è infatti soltanto per me cercare di capire le tue opinioni e attitudini riguardo i fenomeni presi in considerazione. Psrleremo di Sharing Economy, moda, lusso, Vintage e Second Hand. Ora possiamo iniziare.

Sai cos'è la Sharing Economy e cosa pensi a riguardo?

Mi piace e mi interessa la sharing economy perchè permette a persone come me che non hanno eccessiva disponibilità di denaro immediata ma hanno un reddito costante di vivere esperienze che altrimenti non potrebbero vivere. Inoltre è un nuovo fenomeno economico che crea numerose opportunità di lavoro.

Quali sono gli ambiti in cui di solito sei convolto in forme di Sharing Economy?

Utilizzo spesso Airbnb sia come host che come guest, Uber, Enjoy e CarToGo.

Parliamo di piattaforme e-commerce. Quanto spesso acquisti online?

Molto spesso per motivi legati al fatto che ho poco tempo libero per andare in giro per negozi.

Il tema principale di questa ricerca è il comportamento di acquisto di capi di moda e di lusso. Ti interessano questi ambiti? Quanto spesso acquisti moda e lusso?

La moda è una delle mie principali passioni. Acquisto frequentemente moda di fascia medio alta (circa 3-4 volte al mese) e qualche volta mi concedo un pezzo di lusso.

Acquisti moda e lusso online? Quanto spesso?

Dipende da quanto tempo ho e da quanto acquisto in un periodo determinato. Se non devo acquistare troppi pezzi ed ho tempo, preferisco andare in negozio per godermi l'esperienza di ricerca.

Cosa intendi per goderti l'esperienza di ricerca?

Girare per la città e guardare cosa offrono i vari negozi.

Ti piace girare per identificare i trend?

Quello lo faccio di più online. Di solito anche quando compro qualcosa in negozio la scelgo prima online.

Quali sono i tuoi brand di moda e lusso preferiti?

Gucci, Raf Simons, Rick Owens, Balenciaga, Vetements, Alexander McQueen.

Hai mai acquistato moda e lusso di vintage o di seconda mano?

Molto spesso. Quando acquisto moda di lusso, spesso preferisco il Vintage.

In che canali li acquisti di solito?

Mercatini Vintage in giro per le capitali europee, pop-up Vintage o wharehouse sales. Qualche volta online tramite Asos marketplace.

Come mai proprio su Asos marketplace?

Perchè acquistavo già su questo sito e mi fido della sua selezione di stili.

Cosa ti piace di acquistare tramite questi canali?

L'esperienza di andare alla ricerca.

Spiegati meglio per favore.

Lo scoprire pezzi nuovi, pregiati, inaspettati. Mi piace molto anche la possibilità di negoziare il prezzo. I venditori lo sanno e lo mettono sempre un po' più alto.

Per quale motivo?

Per la soddisfazione di aver fatto un affare. E questo aspetto rientra proprio negli acquisti vintage per me, in negozio non contratto mai sul prezzo.

Cosa non ti piace?

A volte bisogna girare delle ore per scartare molti prezzi untrendy o troppo usurati. Preferirei avere una selezione di capi in buone condizioni, che siano pezzi di collezioni particolari o cult della moda vintage. E con uno standard di qualità, senza dover andare a scavare.

Inoltre è molto scomodo o impossibile provare la merce. A volte l'organizzazione fisica troppo disordinata.

Qualcos'altro?

Mi piace se trovo un venditore simpatico, che mi racconta la storia dei prodotti.

Sai qual'è la differenza fra prodotti Vintage o seconda mano?

Non sono sicuro. Non associo il termine seconda mano alla moda, oppure lo associo ad abbigliamento non in trend. Gli abiti Vintage per me sono unici perchè riflettono un trend particolare del loro tempo, mentre gli abiti di secondo mano sono solo capi utilizzati.

E per quanto riguarda il periodo storico? Comunemente si indono Vintage i capi prodotti dagli anni 20 agli anni 80 del secolo scorso.

Per me Vintage è anche anni 90 se riflette un trend o un revival di un trend come il Kitch in questo caso.

Se trovasi in un negozio di seconda mano un capo di lusso della collezione appena precedente a quella dei negozi, a prezzi scontati, ti piacerebbe acquistarlo?

Non mi è mai capitato. Mi piacerebbe molto trovarli ad un buon prezzo.

Quali sono gli ultimi brand di lusso di seconda mano che hai acquistato?

Ho acquistato un cappotto Fendi, un papillon e una cintura Saint Laurent, un cappotto Burberry, Timberland, Il giubotto classico di Levis.

Soprattutto per quanto riguarda i brand di lusso, pensi che acquistarli di second mano abbia cambiato la tua relazione con questi brand?

Mi sento più vicino a questi brand anche se loro non fanno nulla per essere lì. Con l'esempio di Fendi, questo acquisto mi ha fatto avvicinare molto a questo brand che prima non amavo particolarmente, perchè ho acquistato un pezzo del suo passato.

Ti piacerebbe che questi brand facessero qualcosa per essere lì? Cioè avessero dei canali interni per la vendita SH e Vintage?

Mi piacerebbe molto acquistarli, però penso che il brand perderebbe in questo modo la sua aurea di lusso e sogno.

Spiegami meglio.

Per esempio i mocassini Princetown di Gucci. Li voglio da morire ma non li vorrei più acquistare così tanto perchè in quel modo potrebbero averli tutti.

Quindi non li acquisteresti SH?

Sì, ma non tramite il brand. Oppure solo se ci fosse un numero molto limitato di pezzi offerti dal brand.

Benissimo, di solito se trovi un brand che ti piace come stile vintage, tendi a riacquistarlo?

Sì, anche se quando penso al vintage penso a costruire un mio stile personale e non al brand come prima cosa. Il brand è fondamentale pechè mi crea emozione trovare un pezzo Fendi o Chanel, un pezzo di storia della moda, e indossarlo – se non è branded non mi crea emozione.

Per quale motivo?

Perchè in quel caso accedo al passato e compro un pezzo di storia, un pezzo di quello che il brand è stato e che ha fatto da base per costruire quello che il brand è oggi.

C'è un altro motivo: in questo mondo della moda che cambia così in fretta, è rassicurante avere dei pezzi iconici, dei classici intramontabili che sopravvivono al tempo.

In più di solito sono pezzi di migliore qualità e anche estetica. Mi piace anche acquistare pezzi vintage di buona qualità perchè hanno fatto parte della vita di una persona che ci teneva, che lo conservava gelosamente.

Cosa vuol dire che il vintage ti aiuta a costruire il tuo stile?

Sono in una fase un po' revival, ma in genrale tendo ad esprimere la mia personalità tramite il vestiario. Il vintage è un modo di rappresentare la mia immagine del mondo e di esprimermi. Dimostra inoltre un interesse per un'epoca passata a livello di valori, gusti musicali, stile.

Mi piace il vintage perchè ogni pezzo che acquisto è unico. Sono certo che non ce l'ha nessuno. Che con tutto questo fast-fashion, è difficile. Questo è il motivo fondamentale perchè scelgo il vintage per costruire la mia identità e per affermare la mia unicità.

Benissimo. Torniamo alla figura del venditore. Se sapessi che si tratta di un VIP, questo ti farebbe volere di più il prodotto?

Non importa che sia VIP ma mi piacerebbe molto conoscere la storia del prodotto e della persona per poi costruirci sopra una nuova storia personale. Se mi identificassi con quel VIP mi piacerebbe.

Tendi ad utilizzare per più stagioni i prodotti vintage o non vintage?

Non trovo molte differenze come intensità e frequenza di utilizzo. Tendo ad acquistare capi vintage in buono stato per poter utilizzarli per più tempo.

Ti piace raccontare a tutti di aver acquistato vintage?

Si, di solito lo dico e pubblico anche foto sui social se si tratta di un pezzo unico.

Tieni di più ai prodotti vintage o a quelli nuovi di solito?

A volte di più al vintage perchè si tratta di pezzi storici, conservo pezzi del passato.

Tornando alla parte di valutazione economica, reputi di acquistare vintage a un prezzo giusto?

Una delle motivazioni di acquisto è certamente acquistare a prezzi giusti, accessibili o anche minori di quello che per me vale un prodotto unico o cult (come la giacca Levis).

Se tu avessi la possibilità di acquistare un prodotto nuovo di lusso, prenderesti in considerazione acquistarlo di seconda mano, per risparmiare e comprare insieme qualcos'altro?

Si. Non mi disturba assolutamente il fatto che il prodotto sia di seconda mano se in buone condizioni, anzi. La qualità conta entro un certo livello. Valuto di più il prodotto nell'insieme.

Ti senti parte di un gruppo particolare di persone acquistando vintage?

Mi sento parte di un gruppo specifico e mi piace condividere il mio interesse con chi se ne intende. Mi piace pensare di appartenere ad una nicchia.

Immaginiamo una piattaforma online per la compravendita di prodotti SH e Vintage che permetta ad una community di interagire e di esprimere giudizi sui prodotti. Ti interesserebbe?

Molto. Sarei condizionato dai giudizi espressi sui pezzi cult da una community di interessati al settore, in modo da capire che il pezzo rispecchi un trend e sia associato ad una determinata comunità.

Per quanto riguarda i vestiti e gli oggetti di lusso che non usi più, come te ne disfai?

Proprio ieri ho messo una felpa di Kenzo in vendita su Depop. Posso disfarmi di un capo che non utilizzo più e con quei soldi acquistarne uno nuovo. Se i vestiti invece hanno un valore basso o sono usurati di solito li dò in beneficienza.

Ti è capitato di associare un vestito ad un'esperienza particolare e di voler disfartene?

No, non associo molto i ricordi ai vestiti.

Hai mai pensato al fattore ecologico nell'acquisto e vendita di vestiti e accessori di seconda mano?

Non in particolare.

Cosa ne pensi in generale di comportamenti di scambio e di compravendita di moda e lusso di seconda mano?

Mi piacerebbe molto che si diffondessero per avere una maggiore disponibilità di acquisto. Soprattutto per i tantissimi capi vintage nascosti negli armadi della gente più grande che non è abituata a questo genere di scambi e che invece spesso ha i pezzi migliori.

Perchè pensi che molta gente non sia ancora disposta ad adottare questo genere di comportamenti?

Per quanto riguarda la vendita, molte persone associano vestiti e accessori a bei ricordi e non vogliono separarsene. Per l'acquisto, non è nella cultura di molta gente più grande, almeno in Italia. Preferiscono comprare Fast fashion piuttosto che lusso di seconda mano.

b. Leonardo

Ciao Leonardo, grazie per aver scelto di partecipare a questa intervista. Premetto che la tua identità rimarrà al 100% confidenziale e che non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate, lo scopo di questa intervista è infatti soltanto per me cercare di capire le tue opinioni e attitudini riguardo i fenomeni presi in considerazione. Psrleremo di Sharing Economy, moda, lusso, Vintage e Second Hand. Ora possiamo iniziare.

Sai cos'è la Sharing Economy e cosa pensi a riguardo?

Non ho un'idea precisa sulla Sharing Economy ma mi interessa come nuovo fenomeno economico.

Quali sono gli ambiti in cui di solito sei convolto in forme di Sharing Economy?

Utilizzo spesso Enjoy ed Airbnb.

Parliamo di piattaforme e-commerce. Quanto spesso acquisti online?

Spessissimo, soprattutto perchè a volte i prodotti che ricerco non sono disponibili vicino a dove vivo, e perchè non mi piace tanto andare in giro per negozi.

Puoi spiegarmi per quale motivo?

Mi piace prendermi il mio tempo per scegliere i prodotti nel dettaglio, leggere le recensioni degli altri utenti, confrontare i prezzi. Non mi piace che un commesso mi "stia addosso" e mi pressi per fare una scelta in tempi brevi. Mi piace fare acquisti ponderati.

Il tema principale di questa ricerca è il comportamento di acquisto di capi di moda e di lusso. Ti interessano questi ambiti? Quanto spesso acquisti moda e lusso?

Mi interessa abbastanza il campo dell'abbigliamento ma preferisco acquistare pezzi classici, che posso utilizzare per diverse stagioni. Acquisto frequentemente moda di fascia medio alta (circa 1 volta al mese), ma raramente abbigliamento di lusso. Invece ho una grande passione per gli orologi e mi piace per questo acquistarne anche di lusso quando posso.

Acquisti moda e lusso online? Quanto spesso?

Acquisto moda e lusso quasi esclusivamente online per fare acquisti più informati e ponderati, per avere più disponibilità di prodotti a prezzi migliori.

Quali sono i tuoi brand di moda e lusso, parlami pure degli orologi, preferiti?

Come abbigliamento mi piace molto Burberry, Acquazzurra, Corneliani. Come orologi: Jager la Couture, Blancpain, Oris, e più accessibili Omega, Longines, Hamilton, Glycine.

Hai mai acquistato moda e lusso di vintage o di seconda mano?

Non ho mai acquistato abbigliamento usato ma ho acquistato moltissimi orlogi vintage.

In che canali li acquisti di solito?

Mercatini Vintage, Ebay o forum online.

Quali di questi canali preferisci?

Ancora l'online.

Cosa ti piace di più del canale online per l'acquisto di pezzi vintage?

Di Ebay mi piace seguire le aste e cercare di abbassare il prezzo, confrontare i prezzi dei prodotti e leggere le recensioni degli altri utenti. Del forum mi piace molto seguirlo giornalmente per aspettare l'eccitazione del trovare il pezzo cult, anche qui poter contrattare sul prezzo e leggerlo spesso per diventare un esperto della categoria di prodotto.

Perchè ti piacciono gli orologi vintage?

Mi piace molto indossare pezzi unici e senza tempo, che appartengono al passato e riflettono il mio stile classico. Inoltre li trovo spesso caratterizzati da una qualità dei meccanismi e anche da un gusto estetico superiore Mi piace informarmi sugli stili dei diversi anni e sulla storia dei modelli più famosi. Poi siccome vesto spesso in maniera molto classica utilizzo spesso gli accessori per contraddistinguere il mio look.

Quali mezzi utilizzi per informarti sulla categoria?

Soprattutto forum online, tramite recensioni di altri esperti, che mi condizionano molto nelle mie scelte.

Di solito participi anche attivamente?

Si, quando compro un pezzo che ritengo particolare mi piace scriverne un post sul forum con una recensione.

Qualcos'altro?

Tendo molto ad acquistare un orologio in base alla storia del prodotto, cioè se è un cult. Mi piace sapere di possedere un pezzo di prestigio, iconico.

Sai qual'è la differenza fra prodotti Vintage o seconda mano?

I prodotti di seconda mano sono più recenti.

Acquisti anche quelli?

Per ora non l'ho mai fatto, ma potrei.

Per quali motivi lo faresti?

Per fare un affare, per poter acquistare più orologi con la stessa cifra, dato che sono un collezionista.

Quali sono gli ultimi brand di lusso di seconda mano che hai acquistato?

Omega ed Hamilton.

Soprattutto per quanto riguarda i brand di lusso, pensi che acquistarli di second mano abbia cambiato la tua relazione con questi brand?

Il fatto di acquistare orologi storici e vintage mi fa entrare in un rapporto di maggiore intimità con il brand, perchè vengo a conoscere la sua storia. Inoltre, di fatto acquisto orologi meno cari dei corrispettivi attuali. In questo modo posso cambiare più velocemente frai diversi brand e utilizzarli per diverse occasioni..o per esprimere un particolare stato d'animo.

Ti piacerebbe che i brand di orologi che acquisti avessero dei canali interni per la vendita SH e Vintage?

Mi piacerebbe molto che offrissero una selezione di Vintage.

Benissimo, di solito se trovi un brand che ti piace come stile vintage, tendi a riacquistarlo?

Sì, soprattutto se l'orologio funziona bene nonostante il tempo che ha.

Benissimo. Torniamo alla figura del venditore nel forum o su Ebay. Se sapessi che si tratta di un VIP, questo ti farebbe volere di più il prodotto?

Non importa che sia VIP ma più che sia un vero esperto, cosa che può dimostrare per esempio tramite la partecipazione elevata nel forum.

Tendi ad utilizzare per più stagioni i prodotti vintage o non vintage?

Non trovo troppe differenze come intensità e frequenza di utilizzo. T

Ti piace raccontare a tutti di aver acquistato vintage?

Si, soprattutto a chi se ne intende.

Tieni di più ai prodotti vintage o a quelli nuovi di solito?

A volte di più al vintage perchè si tratta di pezzi storici. A volte li utilizzo di meno o ci sto molto più attento per paura di non trovare i pezzi di ricambio se qualcosa va storto. Nonostante questo, possedere un pezzo vintage di un brand mi sa sentire molto più vicino al brand…ho un pezzo unico della sua storia!

Tornando alla parte di valutazione economica, reputi di acquistare vintage a un prezzo giusto?

Una delle motivazioni di acquisto è certamente acquistare a prezzi meno elevati.

Se tu avessi la possibilità di acquistare un prodotto nuovo di lusso, prenderesti in considerazione acquistarlo di seconda mano, per risparmiare e comprare insieme qualcos'altro?

Non l'ho ancora mai fatto ma penso di si.

Ti senti parte di un gruppo particolare di persone acquistando vintage?

Mi sento parte di un gruppo specifico, degli appassionati di orologi vintage. Mi piace definirmi nun esperto sull'argomento.

Immaginiamo una piattaforma online per la compravendita di prodotti SH e Vintage che permetta ad una community di interagire e di esprimere giudizi sui prodotti. Ti interesserebbe?

Molto, purchè siano veri esperti del settore.

Per quanto riguarda i vestiti e gli oggetti di lusso che non usi più, come te ne disfai?

Per i vestiti, di solito li do in beneficienza. Mi è capitato di vebndere qualche orologio che non usavo.

Ti è capitato di associare un vestito ad un'esperienza particolare e di voler disfartene?

No, però mi è capitato di volermene disfare perchè non aveva più per me lo stesso valore di prima.

Spiegati meglio.

Tendo a disfarmi di qualcosa se non ne sono più legato effettivamente.

Hai mai pensato al fattore ecologico nell'acquisto e vendita di vestiti e accessori di seconda mano?

No.

Cosa ne pensi in generale di comportamenti di scambio e di compravendita di moda e lusso di seconda mano?

Ci credo molto, soprattutto però per quanto riguarda gli accessori di lusso. Per motivi igienici, non mi entusiasmerebbe comprare vestiti usati.

Perchè pensi che molta gente non sia ancora disposta ad adottare questo genere di comportamenti?

Per la vendita, probabilmente molte persone hanno difficoltà a separarsi dalle loro cose se hanno un legame affettivo con esse. Per l'acquisto, in Italia non c'è ancora la cultura di acquistare second hand

c. Elena

Ciao Elena, grazie per aver scelto di partecipare a questa intervista. Premetto che la tua identità rimarrà al 100% confidenziale e che non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate, lo scopo di questa intervista è infatti soltanto per me cercare di capire le tue opinioni e attitudini riguardo i fenomeni presi in considerazione. Psrleremo di Sharing Economy, moda, lusso, Vintage e Second Hand. Ora possiamo iniziare.

Sai cos'è la Sharing Economy e cosa pensi a riguardo?

Credo tantissimo nella sharing economy, come forma di economia che permette un'ottimale allocazione delle risorse e riduce gli sprechi, sia a livello di liquidità che al livello ambientale

Quali sono gli ambiti in cui di solito sei convolto in forme di Sharing Economy?

Utilizzo spesso Airbnb sia come host che come guest, Uber, BlaBlaCar, Heetch, Zeego.

Parliamo di piattaforme e-commerce. Quanto spesso acquisti online?

Molto spesso, soprattutto se ho poco tempo libero.

Il tema principale di questa ricerca è il comportamento di acquisto di capi di moda e di lusso. Ti interessano questi ambiti? Quanto spesso acquisti moda e lusso?

La moda è una mia grande passione. Acquisto di solito tutto le fascie, da Fast fashion a moda di fascia medio alta, a pezzi di lusso.

Acquisti moda e lusso online? Quanto spesso?

Di solito preferisco acquistare offline per motivi legati all'esperienza di acquisto e perchè valuto molto la consistenza dei tessuti e il fitting perfetto nei capi di abbiglimento che acquisto. Per gli accessori mi è più facile acquistare online.

Ti piace girare per negozi per identificare i trend?

Lo faccio molto spesso.

Quali sono i tuoi brand di moda e lusso preferiti?

Saint Laurent, Valentino, Gucci e Prada. Come più affordable, N°21, Monse Maison, Maje.

Hai mai acquistato moda e lusso di vintage o di seconda mano?

Sì, soprattutto Vintage.

In che canali li acquisti di solito?

Soprattutto mercatini o negozi specializzati.

Cosa ti piace di acquistare tramite questi canali?

L'esperienza di cercare un capo unico.

Spiegati meglio per favore.

Amo indossare pezzi particolari, che nessun altro ha, per mostrare il mio interesse nei confronti della moda e affermare l'unicità del mio stile. Non mi piace troppo il fast Fashion perchè genera migliaia di copie identiche tutte uguali, e impone un rinnovamento stagionale di tutti gli stili, che comporta enormi dispendi di denaro, danneggia l'ambiente e i lavoratori dell'industria della moda. Mi piace seguire i trend qualche volta ma sono contraria a cambiare completamente il mio guardaroba ogni stagione, per la maggior parte vesto pezzi di un'eleganza classica. Mi piace seguire uno stile d'elite.

Cosa non ti piace?

A volte è stressante girare per i mercatini e cercare qualcosa di unico tra migliaia di robe usate ammassate un po' per caso, però ne vale la pena per il piacere della scoperta.

Qualcos'altro?

Mi piace vestire pezzi senza tempo perchè so che non saranno da buttare il prossimo anno e perchè me ne intendo di moda. Qualche volta riesco a trovare pezzi di una collezione che ricordo di aver visto in sfilata o in qualche libro di moda e ne sono molto felice.

Sono anche molto felice di comprare seconda mano perché so che pago esattamente il prodotto per quello che vale, qualche volta anche qualcosa meno! Non sostengo con la mia spesa tanti costi di marketing o amministrativi…compro ad un ottimo rapporto qualità prezzo!

Sai qual'è la differenza fra prodotti Vintage o seconda mano?

Vintage è ciò che è stato prodotto fra gli anni 20 e gli anni 80 del secolo scorso. Second hand vuol dire soltanto usato.

Se trovassi in un negozio di seconda mano un capo di lusso della collezione appena precedente a quella dei negozi, a prezzi scontati, ti piacerebbe acquistarlo?

Certamente molto, se si tratta di un pezzo non troppo seasonal ma che per me ha il potenziale di rimanere a lungo un cult.

Quali sono gli ultimi brand di lusso di seconda mano che hai acquistato?

Una borsa di Salvatore ferragamo, una camicia di Moschino, un tailleur di Byblos.

Soprattutto per quanto riguarda i brand di lusso, pensi che acquistarli di seconda mano abbia cambiato la tua relazione con questi brand?

Per quanto riguarda il vintage, mi sento più vicina ai brand perchè possiedo un pezzo della loro storia e tendo a riacquistarli anche brand new, perchè acquistare vintage è il modo migliore per testare la qualità.

Per quanto riguarda i brand di seconda mano il processo di scelta è più facile, perché so che anche se "me ne pento" o semplicemente mi piace qualcos'altro, posso semplicemente rivendere!

Ti piacerebbe che questi brand avessero dei canali interni per la vendita SH e Vintage?

Penso che vendere second hand potrebbe far perdere ai brand il loro "dream factor", mentre per credo che, soprattutto per i brand con un forte heritage, mi piacerebbe molto acquistare direttamente da loro pezzi vintage per capirne bene l'evoluzione dello stile.

Benissimo, di solito se trovi un brand che ti piace come stile vintage, tendi a riacquistarlo?

Si molto spesso.

Per quale motivo?

Perchè mi rendo conto della qualità.

Benissimo. Torniamo alla figura del venditore. Se sapessi che si tratta di un VIP, questo ti farebbe volere di più il prodotto?

No, tendo a non farmi influenzare dai media nelle mie scelte di moda, almeno non dai VIP. Mi piacerebbe solo perchè sarebbe una conferma del prestigio del pezzo.

Tendi ad utilizzare per più stagioni i prodotti vintage o non vintage?

Non trovo molte differenze come intensità e frequenza di utilizzo.

Ti piace raccontare a tutti di aver acquistato vintage?

Sicuramente si.

Tieni di più ai prodotti vintage o a quelli nuovi di solito?

Molto spesso si, perchè unici.

Tornando alla parte di valutazione economica, reputi di acquistare vintage a un prezzo giusto?

Una delle motivazioni di acquisto è certamente acquistare a prezzi giusti e accessibili.

Se tu avessi la possibilità di acquistare un prodotto nuovo di lusso, prenderesti in considerazione acquistarlo di seconda mano, per risparmiare e comprare insieme qualcos'altro?

Se in buono stato, e se mi garantirebbe un bel risparmio certamente si. Mi interessa il pezzo e la sua unicità, non che sia stato posseduto da altri.

Ti senti parte di un gruppo particolare di persone acquistando vintage?

Sì, mi sento di appartenere ad una nicchia di persone che non si limita a comprare tutto quello che il fast fashion gli propina.

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Molto, per conoscere altri giudizi su brand e pezzi cult.

Per quanto riguarda i vestiti e gli oggetti di lusso che non usi più, come te ne disfai?

Alcuni li do in beneficienza, ma di solito li tengo perchè associo molti ricordi ai miei vestiti.

Ti è capitato di associare un vestito ad un'esperienza particolare e di voler disfartene?

Si, e l'ho donato in beneficienza

Hai mai considerato di vendere i tuoi vestiti?

Non ancora, ma potrei farlo se ci fosse un modo facile e conveniente.

Cosa ne pensi in generale di comportamenti di scambio e di compravendita di moda e lusso di seconda mano?

Mi piacerebbe molto che si diffondessero per avere una maggiore disponibilità di acquisto e soprattutto per limitare gli sprechi di risorse e di pezzi con una ricerca stilistica dietro così importante che vengono dimenticati negli armadi.

Perchè pensi che molta gente non sia ancora disposta ad adottare questo genere di comportamenti?

Per i ricordi associati e perchè non ci sono in Italia delle grandi possibilità per questo tipo di acquisti. Il mercato non è ancora sviluppato.

d. Sara

Ciao Sara, grazie per aver scelto di partecipare a questa intervista. Premetto che la tua identità rimarrà al 100% confidenziale e che non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate, lo scopo di questa intervista è infatti soltanto per me cercare di capire le tue opinioni e attitudini riguardo i fenomeni presi in considerazione. Psrleremo di Sharing Economy, moda, lusso, Vintage e Second Hand. Ora possiamo iniziare.

Sai cos'è la Sharing Economy e cosa pensi a riguardo?

Mi piace e mi interessa la sharing economy perchè permette a noi giovani di vivere esperienze fantastiche e di conoscere persone "like-minded".

Quali sono gli ambiti in cui di solito sei convolto in forme di Sharing Economy?

Utilizzo spesso Airbnb sia come host che come guest e Uber.

Parliamo di piattaforme e-commerce. Quanto spesso acquisti online?

Molto spesso per motivi legati al fatto che ho poco tempo libero, e mi piace confrontare i prezzi.

Il tema principale di questa ricerca è il comportamento di acquisto di capi di moda e di lusso. Ti interessano questi ambiti? Quanto spesso acquisti moda e lusso?

Più che la moda mi interessa il lusso, e i pezzi iconici e timeless delle grande maison di moda.

Acquisti moda e lusso online? Quanto spesso?

Molto spesso per conoscenza già approfondita dei principali brand di moda e lusso e per mancanza di tempo.

Quali sono i tuoi brand di moda e lusso preferiti?

Chanel, Hermes, Dior.

Hai mai acquistato moda e lusso di vintage o di seconda mano?

Molto spesso, soprattutto pezzi cult vintage.

In che canali li acquisti di solito?

Negozi o rivenditori specializzati online come Vestiaire Collective.

Come mai proprio suVestiaire Collective?

Perchè acquistavo già su questo sito e mi fido della sua selezione di stili. Inoltre tutti i prodotti in vendita sul sito sono attentamente controllati e autentificati.

Cosa ti piace di acquistare tramite questi canali?

L'esperienza di trovare pezzi unici, che indosso soltanto io.

Spiegati meglio per favore.

Lo scoprire pezzi nuovi, pregiati e iconici, che trasudano l'heritage di un brand.

Cosa non ti piace?

Nei mercatini vintage si rischia a volte di incorrere in prodotti falsi. Non potrei sopportare di comprare un falso, con quello che spendo! Questo problema però non esiste con siti come Vestiaire che controllano attentamente che i prodotti siano autentici.

Sai qual'è la differenza fra prodotti Vintage o seconda mano?

Gli abiti Vintage per me sono unici e iconici perchè riflettono un trend particolare del loro tempo, mentre gli abiti di seconda mano sono solo capi usati, li associo a povertà e stenti!

E per quanto riguarda il periodo storico? Comunemente si indono Vintage i capi prodotti dagli anni 20 agli anni 80 del secolo scorso.

Vintage è qualsiasi prodotto che rifletta un trend storico, iconico del brand.

Quali sono gli ultimi brand di lusso di seconda mano che hai acquistato?

Chanel, Hermes e Dior.

Soprattutto per quanto riguarda i brand di lusso, pensi che acquistarli di seconda mano abbia cambiato la tua relazione con questi brand?

Mi sento più vicino a questi brand e riesco ad apprezzarne meglio le radici, le origini e la storia.

Benissimo, di solito se trovi un brand che ti piace come stile vintage, tendi a riacquistarlo?

Sì, molto spesso cerco vintage i miei brand preferiti, appunto perchè sono quelli di cui apprezzo maggiormente l'heritage.

Per quale motivo?

Perchè in quel caso compro un pezzo di storia, un pezzo di quello che il brand è stato e che ha fatto da base per costruire quello che il brand è oggi.

Inoltre ho uno stile abbastanza classico, amo i classici intramontabili e i pezzi iconici dei brand di lusso storici.

Ci sono altri motivi per cui scegli il vintage?

I pezzi vintage sono unici, intramontabili, spesso caratterizzati da qualità e artigianalità superiore.

Benissimo. Torniamo alla figura del venditore. Interagisci spesso con i venditori?

Sì, molto spesso. Mi piace informarmi bene sui prodotti, la loro data di fabbricazione e acquisto e la loro storia personale con i venditori.

Tendi ad utilizzare per più stagioni i prodotti vintage o non vintage?

Si, in quanto tendo ad acquistare vintage pezzi classici e iconici.

Ti piace raccontare a tutti di aver acquistato vintage?

Si, lo faccio sempre in quanto ne sono orgogliosa.

Tornando alla parte di valutazione economica, reputi di acquistare vintage a un prezzo giusto?

Acquisto a prezzi anche minori di quello che per me vale un prodotto unico o cult.

Parlami di qualche esperienza di acquisto in particolare

Ho comprato una mini-bag vintage di Chanel da Vestiaire collective, era in perfette condizioni come secondo la descrizione e ad un giusto prezzo…un vero affare!

Sono rimasta molto contenta anche per l'acquisto di una borsa di Hermès di seconda mano…sono riuscita ad acquistarla con un click, senza liste di attesa, e so che mantiene il suo valore, appena non ne sono contenta posso rivenderla!

Se tu avessi la possibilità di acquistare un prodotto nuovo di lusso, prenderesti in considerazione acquistarlo di seconda mano, per risparmiare e comprare insieme qualcos'altro?

Si. Non mi disturba assolutamente il fatto che il prodotto sia di seconda mano se in buone condizioni, specialmente per le borse.

Ti senti parte di un gruppo particolare di persone acquistando vintage?

Mi sento parte di un gruppo a sè e mi piace condividere il mio interesse e tutto quello che so sul vintage con chi se ne intende. Comprare vintage per me è un modo di apprezzare a pieno la storia di un brand.

Hai mai pensato al fattore ecologico nell'acquisto e vendita di vestiti e accessori di seconda mano?

Non in particolare.

Cosa ne pensi in generale di comportamenti di scambio e di compravendita di moda e lusso di seconda mano?

Mi piacerebbe molto che si diffondessero per avere una maggiore disponibilità di acquisto io stessa ma sopratutto per che prodotti dietro cui c'è una ricerca artistica così importante vadano dimenticati negli armadi.

Perchè pensi che molta gente non sia ancora disposta ad adottare questo genere di comportamenti?

Pe questioni culturali. Molta gente associa ancora quello che non è brand new alla povertà.

2. Interview with Vestiaire Collective founder and CEO Sébastien Fabre

Note: this is not a full transcript but only most relevant insights are noted, since the interview was conducted in an informal context.

What was your main inspiration for founding Vestiaire Collective?

To create liquidity from unused designer products: they are characterised by a great amount of research behind, detailed work, craftsmanship, why do they need to be wasted?

To create an Ethical business against consumerism.

To create an online community.

How would you describe your current vision on Vestiaire Collective and by which means you try to communicate it externally?

To create liquidity from sleeping products.

To encourage people to buy luxury, since they can resell.

To create a secondary market and not a parallel one, respecting the code of fashion industry.

To ensure product authenticity.

To find an equilibrium between high volumes of a Marketplace logic and product uniqueness.

To create a business based on mobile channels.

What is the hardest decision you have made so far, regarding Vestiaire?

Organisational structure and trusting people to take care of my company.

What are the key company milestones for the next 6-12 months that need to be achieved?

Vestiaire needs to be strong in US the market to win the global market.

Please describe Vestiaire Collective's ideal customer in three words.

Repeaters both for buyers and sellers, in an optic of lower costs of customer acquisition and consistent supply stream.

Please describe Vestiaire Collective's competitive advantage in three words.

Authenticity, uniqueness, catalogue.

What do you think is the main weakness of Vestiaire Collective's business model and how are you planning to overcome it?

There are frictions related to costs of authentification and transport cost. We are working on efficiency but they are inherent to our business model.

What do you believe is the key ingredient in branding second-hand products as luxury?

To respect codes of the fashion industry/ brands.

To *"own the last mile"*: buyers should be comfortable in all the shopping experience.

Premium packaging: Vestiaire uses personalised and signed boxes.
To focus on second hand products as *unique belongings* and on their capability to transmit heritage as a part of someone's life.

What you believe is Vestiaire Collective's most powerful competitor, and which are the main points of parities and points of difference with Vestiaire?

The RealReal, with similar product catalogue and commission model, but present in the US only and with concergerie service only.

How do you see the second-hand fashion and luxury market in five years?

It is just a matter of time and it will grow until becoming even more important than the primary market, as happened with cars where now the second hand market is the biggest one.

Fashion & Luxury brands should see second hand retailers as allies: they reassure people on value of what they are buying, they enable millennials to access their products and all customers to have the time to buy post-seasonal products in a huge catalogue.