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Investigating the rising trend of vintage fashion: What factors motivate consumers to buy vintage and second-hand clothing?

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1 Plagiarism Scan

Abstract

This paper examines the purchasing behaviour of consumers of vintage and second-hand clothing, as this topic gained relevance through the increased second cycle fashion market. Aim of this work is to identify the socio-cultural, personal, and economic factors influencing the purchase of vintage and second-hand fashion and to distinguish between the two product types and their buyers. Therefore, phenomena identified by sociology are used to understand consumer behaviour patterns. Through the qualitative content analysis of existing studies, the research question “What are the key motivations driving consumers to purchase vintage and second-hand clothing?” is attempted to be answered. The results reveal that there are indeed differences between the two product types and in the consumers profiles. Consequently, there are differences in the attitudes of the consumers and the factors that influence their purchasing decisions. The fashion market needs to distinguish between the different consumer needs to promote the sales of sustainable fashion. Vintage fashion consumers are less influenced by frugality and do not purchase vintage garments just to satisfy their basic needs, while these traits apply to second-hand buyers. Vintage fashion enthusiast experience nostalgia and are involved in fashion, value age and the historical significance of vintage clothing. Consumers of second-hand clothing do not share the same values.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Elucidation and relevance of the topic

The prevalence of fast fashion and its associated ecological and social impact has led to a shift in consumer behavior, where an increasing number of consumers are seeking sustainable alternatives. Vintage and second-hand clothing have come to represent viable solutions, their consumption practices forming an integral part of the larger sustainability movement. Presently, due to global economic changes “upcycled” fashion garments have become a popularity.¹ According to a research report published by Oxfam GB, the global second-hand clothing trade is estimated to be worth \$1 billion yearly.² These market segments not only align with the tenets of a circular economy³, advocating for the reuse and recycling of existing resources, but they also offer opportunities for consumers to express individuality and engage with the past in meaningful ways.

One could observe that “the past decades have witnessed a growing trend of second-hand fashion consumption in both Western and Eastern countries”⁴, showing the rising interest in the global second-hand clothing trade. The increasing prominence and acceptability of vintage and second-hand clothing in everyday dressing reflect evolving consumer tastes and attitudes, further amplifying the relevance of this research. A noticeable shift in the minds of the consumers could be observed, while “it was socially embarrassing to be caught buying or wearing pre-owned goods”⁵ not long ago, the postmodern society has shifted their biased thinking about used clothing. As pointed out by the author Ottessa Moshfegh, “the rise of vintage clothing in everyday dressing seems to be a recent phenomenon, one born out of privilege and nostalgia as much as it is out of necessity, but a different kind of necessity

¹ Cf. McColl et al. 2013: It's Vintage Darling! An exploration of vintage fashion retailing, p. 142

² Cf. Baden/Barber 2005: The Impact of the Second-hand Clothing Trade on Developing Countries. Oxfam Int, p. 5

³ Cf. Persson/Hinton 2023: Second-hand clothing markets and a just circular economy? Exploring the role of business forms and profit, p. 8

⁴ Ryding/Henninger/Blazquez Cano 2018: Introduction to Vintage Luxury Fashion: Exploring the Rise of the Secondhand Clothing Trade, p. 2

⁵ Fox 2018: Understanding the Culture of Consuming Pre-owned Luxury, p. 48

nowadays.”⁶ The term "different kind of necessity" speaks to the shifting paradigms of fashion consumption in the 21st century. As consumers grapple with the ethical implications of their clothing choices, this “necessity” seems to be driven by a collective responsibility towards sustainable consumption rather than mere functional needs.

This thesis, entitled *“Investigating the rising trend of vintage fashion: What factors motivate consumers to buy vintage and second-hand clothing?”*, aims to explore this emergent trend and unearth the key drivers that influence consumers to make these sartorial choices. The purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth examination of consumer motivations in the vintage and second-hand clothing markets. By investigating these motivations, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the allure of vintage and second-hand fashion and the factors that contribute to its rising popularity.

The relevance and urgency of this research lie in its connection to the broader discourse on sustainable consumption practices and the need for a transition towards a more circular economy. In the fashion industry, this involves reducing reliance on new clothing production and encouraging the reuse and recycling of existing clothing items. As such, understanding consumer behavior towards vintage and second-hand clothing is vital.

1.2 Structure and objective of work

This paper will further develop the research question on a theoretical basis. With the help of reports of empirical studies which have been previously carried out, as well as theoretical articles and research papers, the topic will be further explained and discussed to conclude an overview and demonstrate possible findings regarding the main issue of this work.

Before the topic of this thesis was decided, the broad topic of fashion was explored. The central focus was set to the consumption of vintage and second-hand clothing to further narrow down the research topic. The initial question whether vintage fashion can function as a means of personal distinction and whether this would also apply for second-hand clothing inspired the focus of this paper.

⁶ Moshfegh 2022: The Sense Of A Journey: What Vintage Fashion Does For Clothing's Emotional Value

The primary research question that this thesis will address is:

“What are the key motivations driving consumers to purchase vintage and second-hand clothing?”

To elucidate this, the study sets the following objectives:

1. To identify the socio-cultural, economic, and personal factors influencing the purchase of vintage and second-hand clothing.
2. To understand the role of these factors in the overall shift towards the second cycle fashion consumption.
3. To determine the potential implications of these findings for fashion retailers, marketers, and policymakers in fostering sustainable consumer behaviour.

Following questions which remain relevant for the research subject of this thesis are:

1. What are characteristics of vintage clothing and (why) are these more valued by consumers than the properties of second-hand clothing?
2. How does the attitude of consumers buying vintage fashion differ from the attitude of consumers buying used clothing?
3. Can clothing be used as a mean of personal differentiation? What role do vintage, and second-hand clothes play in that case?

This thesis is divided into six parts to enable a theoretical approach in the investigation of the issue. The paper begins with the elucidation of the research topic and the presentation of the objectives of this work.

The sociological framework follows, in which relevant terms and their definitions are discussed based on statements by respected sociologists. Sociology being a fundamental part

of this study, the second part of this paper is dedicated to the explanation of relevant phenomena discovered by the sociological sciences. For this purpose, the sociological foundations in literature were applied to primary conjectures to be able to gain fundamental knowledge about the overall topic, specific societal phenomena and to draw legitimate conclusions.

Chapter three is devoted to the clarification of the terms vintage and second-hand fashion, as these are the main components of the research topic. Important information regarding the origins of the terms is given. The historical development of vintage fashion is explained to show the evolution of the vintage clothing market up to the present day. Since the two product types are difficult to separate, the key differences and similarities will be revealed.

Respecting the issue of this thesis, the next chapter deals with the determinants influencing consumers' purchasing decisions in general. When examining the factors that might affect consumer choices of vintage and second-hand clothing, it is crucial to consider how these factors might play out in contemporary fashion. This short discussion shall help with the understanding of the purchasing motives and behaviour patterns of consumers of modern fashion compared to consumers of previously owned clothing.

The qualitative content analysis in the fifth chapter constitutes the exploratory part of this thesis. Research papers are consulted for this analysis and their findings compared to determine the consumer motives of vintage versus second-hand clothing. The studies shall help with the answering of the research topic.

In the last section of this work, all main findings will be summarized. Possible connections between the findings and the phenomena presented will be made. The discussion of theoretical and practical implications will be made in the concluding part of this paper.

Through the achievement of these objectives, this study hopes to shed light on the complex dynamics of the vintage and second-hand clothing markets, contributing to both academic knowledge and practical understanding in the field of sustainable fashion.

2 Sociological framework

In this section, the primary focus will be the collection of essential information regarding specific terminology and the existing theories in sociology. Only after the clarification of various terms with significant importance the actual issue of this work can be further analysed. Expressions like semiotics, personal distinction and fashion are relevant to later describe how vintage fashion can be a distinguishing feature in a societal habitat.

Among various popular sociologists, different opinions regarding the definition and meaning of sociology are existent. Sociology may not be described through one point of view, but the accumulation of many opinions can elaborate its object and its use. The empirical science of sociology acts as a qualified source to define social principles, social structures, change and phenomena, as well as behavioural patterns of individuals within a certain social context.⁷ In other words, the object of sociology is the observation and the understanding of people's social actions in a social coexistence.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu defines that the peculiarity and object of sociology is it being the science that teaches things that everyone somehow knows but does not want to know or cannot know because it is the law of the system to conceal them.⁸ Societal behaviour patterns can therefore be ascertained through the science of sociology. Sociologist Max Weber emphasizes the importance of understanding the meanings and motivations that individuals and groups give to their social actions, as well as the social structures and systems that shape those actions.

He emphasises the idea that sociology is concerned with interpreting social action to understand its causes and effects, and that social action should be understood as a process of giving meaning to behaviour. This point of view can be drawn from his book "*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*" in the first chapter "*Soziologische Grundbegriffe*", where he states: "Soziologie [...] soll heißen: eine Wissenschaft, welche soziales Handeln deutend verstehen und dadurch in seinem Ablauf und seinen Wirkungen ursächlich erklären will."⁹

⁷ Cf. Giddens 1987: *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, p. 5 ff.

⁸ Cf. Bourdieu 1993: *Haute Couture und Haute Culture*, p. 189

⁹ Weber 2019: *Soziologische Grundbegriffe*, p. 7 f.

Sociology is an important scientific source for this thesis, helping with the understanding of ordinary situations, precisely consumer behaviour patterns. Various statements of established sociologists will be deployed to examine arguments regarding the research question and the matter of the topic in detail. With the help of sociological findings, consumer intentions and internal motivators in connection to the vintage and second-hand clothing consumption will be analysed.

2.1 Semiotics

Originating from the ancient Greek language “*semeion*” meaning *sign*¹⁰, the origin of the word semiotics has evolved and stands for the study of signs and sign systems.¹¹ The study explains how signs are used to communicate and convey meaning.¹² A sign, in the broadest sense, can be any entity or event that signifies something else, serving as a vehicle for communication or expression. Semiotics explores not only the symbolism of language but also a myriad of other sign systems, including body language, fashion, images, and even architectural structures.

The linguist, philosopher and semiotician Saussure lays out the fundamental ideas of structural linguistics and his dyadic model of the sign, consisting of the “signifier” and the “signified”. He uses the term “*semiologie*” to refer to the study of signs within society.¹³ He discusses the concepts fundamental to semiotics, specifically his conceptualization of the sign as being composed of the “signifier” (the form which the sign takes) and the “signified” (the concept it represents).¹⁴ Pursuing the doctrine of signs, three dimensions are relevant in this concept: the relation between a subject and an object, the aesthetic object, and the individual experiencing those.¹⁵ Schulze addresses the semantic paradigm and defines the meaning of signs as followed:

¹⁰ Cf. Saussure 1959: Course in General Linguistics, p. 16

¹¹ Cf. Barthes 1957: Mythologies, (taken from the French original: “*La sémiologie est une science des forms[...]*”), p. 184

¹² Cf. Eco 1976: A Theory Of Semiotics, p. 8

¹³ Cf. Saussure 1959: Course in General Linguistics, p. 68

¹⁴ Cf. Saussure 1959: Course in General Linguistics, p. 65 ff.

¹⁵ Cf. Schulze 1993: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 94

“Das Subjekt interpretiert das Objekt als Zeichen, es ordnet ihm einen Komplex von Bedeutungen zu. Zeichen können beliebige Manifestationen sein [...], sofern sie von Sendern als Zeichen gemeint und/oder von Empfängern als Zeichen interpretiert werden (d.h. mit Bedeutungen verbunden werden, die über die wahrnehmbare Manifestation hinausweisen). Erlebnisangebote [...] sind genau dadurch definiert, dass sie typischerweise als Zeichen für ästhetische Bedeutungen aufgefasst werden.“¹⁶

Thus, stating that the relation between the object and the subject is created by what is experienced. The main thought process Schulze describes as an explanation of behavioural patterns of consumers is that they are tempted to aim for experiences when purchasing any type of goods or services. Modern consumers are experience oriented, and when buying items, the deeper intention behind a purchase is to fulfil their inner desire for a good life. Thus, giving products the ability to create patterns, which can be used by social groups as a means of distinction. In sociology, semiotics plays a crucial role in analyzing how meanings are constructed and understood within social systems.

In sociological terms, clothing can serve as a symbol and a sign within social interactions.¹⁷ Individuals employ clothing as a means of expressing their identity, beliefs, and social status. Consumers are motivated to buy fashion items for a variety of reasons. Attire carries messages pertaining to cultural associations, group memberships, and personal preferences. It acts as a visual indicator of one's gender identity, occupation, or socioeconomic status. All types of clothing can present a form of personal differentiation and allow an expression of personal identity. In sociology the explanation has established, that clothing can be used as a symbol to communicate social identity.

Furthermore, clothing functions as a communicative tool for establishing impressions and conveying social roles and expectations. For example, sociologists may use semiotics to examine how social identities are communicated through clothing choices. A business suit, for instance, may act as a signifier, communicating a message about the wearer's professional status and role, which in turn shapes the observer's perception or interpretant of the

¹⁶ Schulze 1993: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 94 f.

¹⁷ Cf. Bourdieu 1987: Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft, p. 58

wearer. Hence, clothing operates as a symbolic language through which individuals can impart and decipher social meanings. With the introduction of brands, clothes with a certain branding can also be used to express individuality. In summary, semiotics is a multifaceted field of study concerned with understanding the complex ways in which signs and sign systems contribute to communication and meaning-making processes in various social contexts. Its application in sociology allows for an in-depth examination of societal structures, cultural norms, and individual behavior within a framework of signification and interpretation.

2.2 Distinction

In existing literature there might not be one solution for defining the term distinction. In the realm of sociology, the term "distinction" refers to a complex process by which social actors differentiate themselves and others based on various factors including, but not limited to, tastes, lifestyle choices, and cultural preferences. This is often a multidimensional practice through which social hierarchies, identities, and roles are constructed and reinforced.

The concept of distinction was significantly elaborated upon by Pierre Bourdieu in his influential work with the original title "*La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*", first published in 1979. Bourdieu posited that the behaviors, preferences, and attitudes of individuals, which he termed as "habitus", serve as visible markers of their social position. He argued that these markers or distinctions are not simply individual choices or expressions of personal taste, but are instead deeply intertwined with social structures, power dynamics, and forms of capital (economic, cultural, social, symbolic).¹⁸ He used the term distinction to describe the social difference or demarcation created by the habitus.¹⁹

Bourdieu's "theory of distinction" posits that individuals internalize their social position, subsequently manifesting it through their patterns of consumption, aesthetic preferences, and general disposition towards the world. In essence, distinction is the sociological process through which social groups signify and reproduce their social status and class position.²⁰

¹⁸ Cf. Bourdieu 1987: Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft, p. 332 f.

¹⁹ Cf. Bourdieu 1987: Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft, p. 333

²⁰ Cf. Bourdieu 1987: Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft, p. 336 f.

Pierre Bourdieu connects personal taste to the need for personal distinction and individualism, he states that “Geschmacksäußerungen und Neigungen (d.h. die zum Ausdruck gebrachten Vorlieben) sind die praktische Bestätigung einer unabwendbaren Differenz.”²¹ Acknowledging the ability of an individual to express their tendencies or preferences as an expression of their own personal taste as a form of self-distinction.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory elucidates the often-overlooked linkages between the social and the subjective, the material and the symbolic, and the collective and the individual in the dynamics of social differentiation. Therefore, in sociology, “distinction” connotes more than mere difference, it refers to a complex interplay of power, culture, and stratification, encompassing both the individual's self-identification and society's perception and categorization of them.

Gerhard Schulze's work centers around a theory of social action and societal transformation which he calls “*Erlebnisgesellschaft*” often translated as the “Experience Society”.²² Within this framework, the term distinction takes on a specific, nuanced meaning. Schulze conceives of modern society as shifting from a work-centered society, where identity and distinction are primarily established through one's role in a structured, productive economy, to an experience-centered society, where identity and distinction are primarily constructed through the consumption and creation of experiences. He understands distinction, therefore, as a process by which individuals differentiate themselves through their selection, interpretation, and sharing of these experiences.

Schulze's view diverges from Pierre Bourdieu's notion of distinction, which is largely rooted in an analysis of class difference. Schulze sees the process of distinction as more individualized and less bound by structural factors like social class.²³ This “individualistic” approach to distinction contends that personal distinction arises from an individual's ability to craft a unique, coherent narrative of their own experiences. This narrative is then utilized to create a distinctive identity that differentiates the individual from others. The concept of distinction

²¹ Bourdieu 1987: Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft, p. 105

²² Cf. Schulze 2005: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 52

²³ Cf. Schulze 2005: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 166 f.

within Schulze's Experience Society implies a personal and experiential dimension. Distinction is not just the result of external markers or observable behavior, but also internal psychological processes that contribute to the formation of personal identity. These processes include the individual's emotional reactions, their personal interpretations of experiences, and the meaning they assign to those experiences. Schulze considers distinction to be one of the three dimensions of the semantic paradigm, defining it as follows:

“Distinktion ist die Symbolisierung von sozialen Unterschieden. [...] Jeder weiß, dass er mit bestimmten Geschmacksentscheidungen Affinitäten zu sozialen Gruppen erkennen lässt, die ähnliche Präferenzen an den Tag legen.”²⁴

In a world regarding the abundance of diverse experiences and the many different directions of individual preferred tastes, identity owns a central aesthetic component.²⁵ Gerhard Schulze further elucidates: “Üblicherweise wird Distinktion als ein von oben herab geführter kultureller Abgrenzungskampf dargestellt. [...] Im mehrdimensionalen Raum ist oben und unten nicht mehr eindeutig bestimmbar.”²⁶

The described de-verticalization of everyday aesthetic supposedly leads to the de-verticalization of the relationship between large social groupings, resulting in increasing importance of milieu-specific knowledge and the decrease of existential knowledge of a high degree of collectivity.²⁷ Within the sociological framework proposed by Gerhard Schulze, the term distinction refers to the personal differentiation process that individuals undergo in an “Experience Society”. This process involves the crafting of unique personal narratives from the individual's consumption and interpretation of experiences, thus resulting in a unique, distinctive identity.

²⁴ Schulze 1993: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 94

²⁵ Cf. Schulze 1993: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 102

²⁶ Schulze 2005: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 167

²⁷ Cf. Schulze 2005: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 167

2.3 Fashion

The term "fashion" has multifarious connotations and interpretations, contingent on the perspective from which it is explored. In contemporary discourse, fashion primarily signifies a prevailing custom, style, or trend, particularly in the realm of clothing, accessories, and personal appearance. Individuals can use all types of consumer products as a tool to communicate various things²⁸, such as their preferences or personal taste, their personality, and their like-mindedness in certain societal groupings.²⁹ Hence, giving objects the ability to have a deeper meaning and enabling consumers to communicate messages through them.³⁰ Fashion is a category of goods that is particularly suitable for individuals to distinguish themselves from others.³¹ Wearing personally selected clothing, individuals can change their appearance and their appeal. The purchase and use of clothing articles, in this case studying solely previously used and vintage items, can reveal insights about behavioural patterns of the consumers.

Fashion in the sense of clothing has another meaning than *fashion* as a cultural phenomenon.³² These terms need to be differentiated from each other. In the further course of this paper the term "*fashion*" will be written in cursive when referring to the cultural phenomenon which finds its origin in sociological literature. When speaking of fashion in terms of clothing, the word will be written without any signalling markers.

In sociology, the expression *fashion* is found to represent the social categories of art, aesthetics, and fashion (clothing). In sociological terms, *fashion* can be considered as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon that mirrors societal changes, embodies individual and collective identities, and serves as a medium for social communication.³³ Fashion functions not only as a form of aesthetic expression but also as a significant means of social differentiation and cultural signification.³⁴

²⁸ Cf. Tian/Bearden/Hunter 2001: Consumers' Need for Uniqueness: Scale Development and Validation, p. 50

²⁹ Cf. Crane 2000: Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing, p. 1

³⁰ Cf. Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 380

³¹ Cf. Jenß 2007: Sixties dress only: Mode und Konsum in der Retro-Szene der Mods, p. 12

³² Cf. Schiermer 2010: Mode, Bewusstsein und Kommunikation, p. 122

³³ Cf. Crane 2000: Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing, p. 1

³⁴ Cf. Ovsiankina/Kuprii 2021: Fashion as Sign and Symbolic Conditionality: Philosophical and Sociological Aspects, p. 36

Sociologist Georg Simmel explores the role of *fashion* in society and the ways in which *fashion* can both reflect and shape social and cultural norms. In the German original “*Philosophie der Mode*” the author approaches the issue of changes in society, where *fashion* later will be introduced as a cultural phenomenon. In the beginning he introduces the dualism of the human being through unity and multiplicity, two opposing elements.³⁵ The two opposing human desires are the need for social adaptation and the wish for individual differentiation. *Fashion* allows individuals to align with a group and its social norms while also establishing a personal identity within that group.

Another approach to explain this would be as follows: “The specificity of fashion is that it is capable of meeting two opposing needs of a person at the same time: to differ from others and to be like others”³⁶. In this sense, *fashion* is inherently tied to social status, class distinction, and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within society. To provide a concrete example, the use of luxury brand clothing and accessories can be seen as a form of fashion that communicates a particular social identity and status. This could represent Bourdieu's concept of “distinction” where fashion choices become a means of class differentiation, or Veblen's “conspicuous consumption” where expensive fashion items are used to exhibit wealth.

The author Schiermer treats the issue of fashion in the context of a tool for communication and further explains how fashion trends find their beginning. Fashion collections contain forms of fashion which can save information and work as a communication component of the fashion system.³⁷ Trends are defined by different semantics propagated by the mass media, which determine whether something is currently fashionable or not.³⁸ Besides, he states that developments in technologies, new fabrics and manufacturing possibilities continuously help create new trends in the world of fashion.³⁹

³⁵ Cf. Simmel 1905: *Philosophie der Mode: Moderne Zeitfragen*, p. 5

³⁶ Ovsiankina/Kuprii 2021: *Fashion as Sign and Symbolic Conditionality: Philosophical and Sociological Aspects*, p. 36

³⁷ Cf. Schiermer 2010: *Mode, Bewusstsein und Kommunikation*, p. 127

³⁸ Cf. Schiermer 2010: *Mode, Bewusstsein und Kommunikation*, p. 128

³⁹ Cf. Schiermer 2010: *Mode, Bewusstsein und Kommunikation*, p. 128

Fashion, in the sense of apparel, appears to function as a cyclical phenomenon of reoccurring trends. Fashion has been constantly evolving over the centuries and is not a new phenomenon.⁴⁰ Items of clothing, which in the past simply arose from people's basic needs, underwent a process whereby the principle of *fashion* was transferred to clothes. It thus becomes *fashionable* to own certain items of clothing and to present one's identity towards other individuals.⁴¹ *Fashion* has always existed and merely describes the continuous change of fashion, also symbolises an imitation process in social groups and often comes back in similar ways after a period. It is through *fashion* that fashion is comparable to a constant cycle of trends, as "fashion is cyclical"⁴².

According to the theories of Bourdieu and Simmel, clothing can also go out of style as soon as lower groups gain access to the fashion items. With the course of time, cycles emerge that revive some of the outdated items of clothing, making them popular again, sometimes in slightly modified versions. This sociological explanation shows how clothing articles exist for certain periods, then go out of style and can experience a return in form of a trend.

As Kent et al. also explained this phenomenon, "the recycling of fashion trends in this sense is not new but the reappropriation and the reinvention of symbols of past design linked to the term vintage may be"⁴³. Referring to the clothing industry, a continuous transition or change of the fashions and fast-moving trends has become a standard for consumers, inundating them with short-lived desires for the latest items and taking away from stability and continuity.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Cf. Bigg 1893: What is "Fashion"?, p. 236

⁴¹ Cf. Esposito 2004: Die Verbindlichkeit des Vorübergehenden: Paradoxien der Mode, p. 13

⁴² Vestiaire Collective n.d.: What's the Difference Between Vintage and Retro Clothing?

⁴³ Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 214 f.

⁴⁴ Cf. Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 377 f.

2.4 Class theory and status consumption

Pierre Bourdieu, in his seminal work "*Distinction*", elaborates on the relationship between fashion and social class. Theories from the translated German edition of Bourdieu's work will be referred to as interpretations for social constructs related to the topic of this thesis. In his composition Bourdieu introduces the three consumption structures of the ruling class which fall under his categories of expenses for nourishment first, culture second and lastly for self-expression and representation.⁴⁵

In his definition, spendings of an individual in the category of self-expression and representation can for example include the consumption of hygiene articles, cosmetics, service staff and furthermore clothing.⁴⁶ Clothing articles can be a means of presenting one's identity, character traits, preferences, and personal distinction. Since various types of products can be counted as clothing, many subcategories divide this area, with this thesis focusing more precisely on vintage and second-hand clothing articles.

According to Bourdieu, fashion preferences are not just personal choices, but signify one's "taste", which is influenced by one's social and economic capital. Fashion, thus, becomes a powerful symbol of class distinction and a marker of social hierarchy. In contrast, the theorist Thorstein Veblen in "*The Theory of the Leisure Class*" introduces the concept of "conspicuous consumption", where fashion becomes a tool for the upper classes to display their wealth and social superiority. The consumption of fashion serves as a symbolic display of economic power, reinforcing social stratification.⁴⁷

Another explanation of the competitive imitation through fashion regarding the expression of status and wealth made by author A. Bigg is worth mentioning:

"Those who are quite in the fashion are supposed to be people who from their wealth or position have early opportunities of seeing and adopting the modifications of dress and taste displayed by those highest up in the scale of rank and means. Hence, the

⁴⁵ Cf. Bourdieu 1987: Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft, p. 299

⁴⁶ Cf. Bourdieu 1987: Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft, p. 299

⁴⁷ Cf. Veblen 1894: The Economic Theory of Woman's Dress, p. 200

*more rapidly they take on a new fashion, the more likely they are to be classed amongst the wealthy and the 'smart'.*⁴⁸

While in the past there were clearer boundaries between social classes, consumption served as a demonstration of wealth and luxury for higher classes and elites.⁴⁹ As early as the Roman Empire, fabrics and garments as the toga and the tunica represented status and nobility for the powerful⁵⁰ and were symbols of their social standing and status.⁵¹ In comparison, modern day consumerism has seen significant changes in consumption styles. Modern societies have shifted away from hierarchical classes and intangible and tangible forms of consumption have increased.⁵²

Thus, unlike pre-modern societies it has become more difficult for individuals to present their social class through consumption, so to differentiate themselves from others, since the consumption of goods is more than before accessible⁵³ to all classes. Therefore, Hellmann mentions an important theory of sociologist Thorstein Veblen:

*“In Folge dieser Entwicklung hat sich die “conspicuous consumption“ (Veblen) oder “competitive consumption“ (Schor), also der öffentliche Wettbewerb um Prestige und Anerkennung, als ein verbreitetes und allgemein akzeptiertes Konsummotiv nicht nur für jene fest etabliert, die es sich leisten können. Diese Form des Wettbewerbs, bei der es vor allem auf Inszenierung und Image ankommt, bedarf jedoch entsprechender Symbole, die die eigene Stellung in der sozialen Hierarchie, ob erreicht oder prä-tendiert, schnell und zurechnungssicher zum Ausdruck bringen.“*⁵⁴

In contemporary society, interacting exclusively based on one's social class is no longer viable due to functional differentiation.⁵⁵ Additionally, social heterogeneity (the diversity of people) has made it increasingly difficult for different classes to remain isolated from one

⁴⁸ Bigg 1893: What is “Fashion”?, p. 237

⁴⁹ Cf. Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 377

⁵⁰ Cf. Brooks 2019: Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes, p. 79

⁵¹ Cf. Robinson/Dale 2018: Dedicated Follower of Fashion, p. 155

⁵² Cf. Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 377

⁵³ Cf. Crane 2000: Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing, p. 6

⁵⁴ Cf. Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 377

⁵⁵ Cf. Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 402

another in social interactions.⁵⁶ Humans dress certain ways to portray themselves or a version of themselves. The individual wearing garments can pretend to be someone they are not, to represent a version of themselves that does not mirror them accurately. Modern consumers use this to their advantage to fit in certain social groupings and to reach a sense of belonging, or to distinguish themselves from other identities.

Hellmann draws the result that the existence of social classes indicates that the strict boundaries between social strata have become less defined or less relevant, and social mobility is now possible within and between different classes.⁵⁷ In other words, the concept of social classes implies a degree of social fluidity that is absent in a strict social hierarchy with rigidly defined social strata.

Social milieus seem to replace social strata and classes. Schulze explains: “Der Wandel des Subjekts führt zwar nicht zum Verschwinden, aber zu einer tiefgreifenden Transformation sozialer Beziehungen im Alltagsleben.”⁵⁸ In his theory of milieu segmentation Schulze refers to social milieus as “Ähnlichkeitsgruppen”, also mentioning other synonyms of social milieus such as “Lebensstilgruppen, Subkulturen, ständische Gemeinschaften, soziokulturelle Segmente, erlebbare gesellschaftliche Großgruppen”⁵⁹.

Individuals in the world of fashion can also be segmented in lifestyle groupings because clothing can function as their form of expressing their belonging to different subcultures. In summary, the term “fashion” in sociology extends beyond mere sartorial choices or trends. It operates as a significant signifier of social structures, individual identities, and cultural dynamics.

⁵⁶ Cf. Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 402

⁵⁷ Cf. Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 403

⁵⁸ Schulze 2005: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 87

⁵⁹ Schulze 2005: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 174

3 Buying used or buying vintage

This chapter is concerned with defining the term vintage clothing along with the term second-hand clothing, to distinguish the fashion styles that are related to the research question. This section also provides background information on the emergence of vintage fashion and its history over the decades. Also, the product characteristics which must be met to label a fashion piece as authentic vintage are clarified. Eventually, second-hand clothing is directly compared to vintage clothing to show differences and the similarities between the two fashion products. For both products, the key differentiators are highlighted, for instance their place of sale.

3.1 Vintage clothing

3.1.1 Term origin

The origin of the English word “vintage” comes from the medieval French term “*vendange*”, which across history was used by winemakers’ to “designate a branded wine’s year of birth and production locale”.⁶⁰ This terminology denoted the age of the wine harvest and originally represented relevant product information. Throughout time, marketers decided in the strategic utilization of the vintage of wines to enable consumers to create a connection between their past and their present-day consumption experiences.⁶¹ Labelled on wine bottles is the concrete year of the harvest and the identifier vintage, for instance “1990 vintage”. In the manufacturing process of wine, the term vintage is typically a symbol for a better-quality product.⁶² Typically, wines of higher qualities are made from fruits which are picked from harvest of that given year, so from a single vintage. Wine connoisseurs therefore prefer these wines. As a result, the label vintage is associated with quality. In the early 20th century, the term was used to describe old objects that were considered classic or of a historical significance. Generally, vintage is used as a synonym for “old” or “from a previous era”. For

⁶⁰ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1830

⁶¹ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1830

⁶² Cf. DeLong/Heinemann/Reiley 2005: Hooked on Vintage!, p. 23

example, someone might refer to a vintage car when speaking of a car from the 1960s or earlier. The usage of this term was gradually extended to describe clothing items and accessories that were at least 20 years old. In the world of fashion, the term “vintage” has become widely used to describe specific vintage pieces and is now a blanket term to describe old garments.

3.1.2 Time frame

While there is not a universally agreed-upon definition of the specific time frame for clothing articles to be considered authentic vintage, there are general guidelines and understandings within the fashion industry. These guidelines can vary and are subject to interpretation.

Clothing articles can be classified with the label vintage when they are originally designed and fabricated during the 1920s to the 1980s.⁶³ Then, the piece can be designated rare and authentic vintage. Even older garments are not vintage but antiques.⁶⁴ The term vintage indicates the year of production and acts as a label for fashion enthusiasts. Therefore, according to most definitions, vintage clothing can represent the styles of the couturiers and eras between 1920 and 1980.⁶⁵ Thus, a piece of clothing can nowadays be categorized as vintage if it is at least 40 years old.

In a broader sense, vintage can refer to a specific period or era which is particularly seen as nostalgic or desirable.⁶⁶ The expression might also just refer to an object’s age, as vintage clothing reflects the manufacturing date. Fashion enthusiasts might often use sayings like “1950s vintage” when speaking of styles of that specific era. Although vintage implies the objects to be old, in recent years the classification of vintage clothing items has become more flexible, as garments that do not fit the usual age specifications can now also be labelled as vintage.⁶⁷ As Carey et al. mention these changes, “the fashion forward vintage

⁶³ Cf. Cassidy/Bennett 2012: The rise of vintage fashion and the vintage consumer, p. 259

⁶⁴ Cf. McColl et al. 2013: It's Vintage Darling! An exploration of vintage fashion retailing, p. 145

⁶⁵ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 957

⁶⁶ Cf. Carey et al. 2018: Vintage Fashion: A Cross-Cultural Perspective, p. 193

⁶⁷ Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 208

consumer is now looking to the later 1990s and even the early 2000s for their vintage inspiration⁶⁸. DeLong, Heinemann, and Reiley contend that “in clothing, vintage usually involves the recognition of a special type or model and knowing and appreciating such specifics as year or period when produced and worn.”⁶⁹

3.1.3 Characteristics of vintage clothing

Vintage clothing consists of various items, some common examples of vintage fashion pieces include dresses, pants, suits, coats, and accessories like hats, shoes, and purses. When used to describe clothing, “vintage” generally describes garments from a previous era⁷⁰ that are particularly stylish or of high quality. Vintage clothing is often characterized by its unique style, high quality construction and historical significance.⁷¹ Vintage styles gain the label “vintage” when the designs are timeless and stay relevant for long cycles.

While regular fashion trends tend to have shorter lifespans and clothing can quickly go out style, authentic vintage clothing proves to stay fashionable over time. With fast moving trends becoming the standard in modern times, vintage clothing has established itself as a lasting trend for fashion enthusiasts. Due to these rapid trends and the ever-scarcer availability of older garments, newer fashion from the past decade has already begun to be marketed as vintage.⁷² Important to note when defining the meaning of vintage clothing is that vintage pieces are original pieces, not imitations of those, as these imitations are considered retro.⁷³

There seems to be a complex relation between the concept of vintage clothing and value. A seller of vintage items can advertise the distinctive feature of those to be some sort of value that a consumer is looking for. Producers are targeting consumers through a new approach of mimicking vintage pieces to increase sales. New clothing is being designed and manu-

⁶⁸ Carey et al. 2018: *Vintage Fashion: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, p. 188

⁶⁹ DeLong/Heinemann/Reiley 2005: *Hooked on Vintage!*, p. 23

⁷⁰ Cf. McColl et al. 2013: *It's Vintage Darling! An exploration of vintage fashion retailing*, p. 148

⁷¹ Cf. DeLong/Heinemann/Reiley 2005: *Hooked on Vintage!*, p. 23

⁷² Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: *Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion*, p. 208

⁷³ Cf. Vestiaire Collective n.d.: *What's the Difference Between Vintage and Retro Clothing?*

fabricated in a way to duplicate the look and feel of clothing articles that would be truly vintage.⁷⁴ Reasons why the fashion industry is doing this are that consumers are increasingly interested in buying used and buying vintage. This marketing strategy can directly target those consumers and help maximize revenues. When looking at the sociological effect of why producers can influence consumers with vintage imitations and duplicates, the explanation of Gerhard Schulze might be of use. Regarding to him, signs with previously secured meanings can be re-coded, which is why the same or similar works of art (in this case fashion) can be experienced in various ways.⁷⁵ A consumer is not strictly aware of the definition of vintage clothing and might see clothing as vintage even if it is inauthentic vintage, since “reproductions may still be classified as vintage if consumers perceive them as such”⁷⁶.

3.1.4 Historical background of vintage clothing

Vintage fashion, characterized by the resurgence and reinterpretation of clothing designs from past decades, embodies an expression of nostalgia and a celebration of timeless style. Its historical development is an intricate interplay between cultural, socio-political, and economic factors that have shaped sartorial trends across the decades. The popularity of vintage fashion has increased in recent years, although the trade of second-hand clothing has been a part of fashion for centuries⁷⁷, as garments from previous eras have been repurposed and worn again throughout history.⁷⁸ Initially, people belonging to poorer social classes would wear used clothing to save limited resources⁷⁹, this began with servants wearing the worn-out garments of their masters. For immigrants in the early twentieth century, the trade of used clothing became a form of survival and income.⁸⁰ The concept of “vintage” as a distinct category of clothing with its own cultural significance emerged in the 20th century.

⁷⁴ Cf. Ryding/Henninger/Blazquez Cano 2018: Introduction to Vintage Luxury Fashion: Exploring the Rise of the Secondhand Clothing Trade, p. 3

⁷⁵ Cf. Schulze 1993: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, p. 95

⁷⁶ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1834

⁷⁷ Cf. Brooks 2019: Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes, p. 67 ff.

⁷⁸ Cf. Robinson/Dale 2018: Dedicated Follower of Fashion, p. 153

⁷⁹ Cf. Brooks 2019: Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes, p. 68

⁸⁰ Cf. Robinson/Dale 2018: Dedicated Follower of Fashion, p. 155

In the early 1900s, clothing was generally seen as disposable and not worth saving beyond its immediate use, used clothing even “marked one as being of low social status”⁸¹. But with the rise of Hollywood and celebrity culture in the 1920s and 1930s⁸², people began to see clothing as a form of self-expression and personal style. During World War II, clothing was rationed, and new garments were difficult to obtain. As a result, many people began to utilize what was available for them and started repurposing older garments.⁸³ This practice continued after the war, with many people finding creative ways to use and wear vintage clothing. Consumerism was increasing and purchasing the latest fashion garments became a luxury for those, who were able to afford it.

Clothing from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s was especially popular, as it represented a departure from the mainstream fashion of the time. Vintage clothing from the 1920s and 1930s started to be collected and worn as a way of expressing individuality⁸⁴ as younger generations discovered a technique for rebelling against their parents and their conservative fashion beliefs.⁸⁵ Vintage clothing was also associated with the hippie movement, with people wearing natural fibres and loose, flowing garments as a way of expressing their anti-establishment views. The younger and fashion-forward generation wanted to stand out from the acceptable way of dressing.



Figure 1: Handmade fashion of the 1960s and 1970s counterculture or "hippie" movement, Photo by Jenna Bascom, Courtesy of the Museum of Arts and Design

⁸¹ Fischer 2015: *Vintage, the First 40 Years: The Emergence and Persistence of Vintage Style in the United States*, p. 52

⁸² Cf. Stevenson 2011: *Die Geschichte der Mode: Stile, Trends und Stars*, p. 8

⁸³ Cf. Schulman 2001: *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American culture, Society, and Politics*, p. 135

⁸⁴ Cf. Carey et al. 2018: *Vintage Fashion: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, p. 200

⁸⁵ Cf. Robinson/Dale 2018: *Dedicated Follower of Fashion*, p. 153 f.

The genesis of vintage fashion can be traced back to the 1960s⁸⁶, an era of social change. Vintage fashion retailing “antecedents can be found in the 1960s youth culture and its engagement with unusual clothes sold through emporia and boutiques that satisfied consumer needs for an alternative style”⁸⁷, to an extent marking the starting point of the rising trend in the mass consumption of vintage fashion. These retail businesses offered fashion which was out of the ordinary and attracted consumers which intentions it was to find styles that allowed them personal differentiation.⁸⁸

Also in the 1970s, vintage clothing experienced a resurgence in popularity as part of the counterculture movement.⁸⁹ With the youth rebelling against mass consumer culture and the fashion industry's homogeneity, they turned to past eras, particularly the Victorian and Edwardian periods, as sources of inspiration.⁹⁰ Clothing from these periods, previously discarded as outmoded, was appropriated as a symbol of non-conformity and individuality (unpopular choice counter conformity)⁹¹. The 1970s saw the consolidation of vintage fashion as part of mainstream culture.⁹² The decade was also marked by a growing environmental consciousness, which made second-hand clothing an ethical alternative to “fast fashion”. Some examples are the 1960s counterculture⁹³ or the punk movement of the 1970s⁹⁴, where designers such as Vivienne Westwood became well-known influencing figures.

The 1980s represented a major turning point for vintage fashion, largely facilitated by the economic boom of the time. The proliferation of thrift stores and the emergence of retro styles in haute couture collections exemplified the increasing commodification of the past. This decade marked the transformation of vintage items from alternative fashion statements to highly coveted commodities, simultaneously increasing their economic and cultural

⁸⁶ Cf. Fischer 2015: *Vintage, the First 40 Years: The Emergence and Persistence of Vintage Style in the United States*, p. 47

⁸⁷ Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: *Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion*, p. 205

⁸⁸ Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: *Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion*, p. 205 f.

⁸⁹ Cf. Samuel 1994: *Theatres of Memory*, p. 100

⁹⁰ Cf. Fischer 2015: *Vintage, the First 40 Years: The Emergence and Persistence of Vintage Style in the United States*, p. 54

⁹¹ Cf. Tian/Bearden/Hunter 2001: *Consumers' Need for Uniqueness: Scale Development and Validation*, p. 52

⁹² Cf. Carey et al. 2018: *Vintage Fashion: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, p. 187

⁹³ Cf. Jenß 2007: *Sixties dress only: Mode und Konsum in der Retro-Szene der Mods*, p. 9 f.

⁹⁴ Cf. Jenß 2007: *Sixties dress only: Mode und Konsum in der Retro-Szene der Mods*, p. 17

value.⁹⁵ Consumers began to aspire the authentic period look⁹⁶, aiming to mimic the appearance of people from those past eras by dressing in similar styles.⁹⁷ In the 1980s and 1990s, vintage clothing increased in popularity, with designers incorporating vintage styles into their collections and stores specializing in vintage clothing opening. “Awareness and interest for vintage clothing has increased dramatically since the early 1990s due to celebrity endorsement.”⁹⁸ Popular members of the upper class such as Michelle Obama surprise the public by endorsing in the vintage fashion trend.

The rise of the internet in the 1990s and early 2000s revolutionized the vintage clothing market by increasing its accessibility and visibility.⁹⁹ Online platforms such as eBay made it possible for individuals to buy and sell vintage items across geographic boundaries, resulting in a globalized vintage marketplace. Additionally, the democratization of fashion via digital media led to a greater dissemination and acceptance of vintage styles. Defining moments in pop culture influenced street styles and the rising demand for vintage clothing. With the 2000s coming to an end, internationally known movies, popular series, and television shows started to play in past eras, which had a great influence on fashion.¹⁰⁰

Fashion-conscious individuals in certain cities and locations have a strong demand for vintage apparel, the impact of time, place, and fashion on society is significant, as specific time periods in the twentieth century serve as vivid reminders of luxurious, elegant, and innovative design.¹⁰¹ Notable decades like the 1930s in Berlin, the 1950s in Paris, the 1960s in London, and the 1970s/80s in New York perfectly exemplify this phenomenon.¹⁰²

The cultural shifts of the 2010s brought vintage fashion to the forefront of social consciousness. The escalation of concerns about sustainability and the impact of fast fashion on the

⁹⁵ Cf. McColl et al. 2013: It's Vintage Darling! An exploration of vintage fashion retailing, p. 140

⁹⁶ Cf. Gregson/Brooks/Crewe 2001: Bjorn Again? Rethinking 70s Revivalism through the Reappropriation of 70s Clothing, p. 8

⁹⁷ Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 208

⁹⁸ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 958

⁹⁹ Cf. Fischer 2015: Vintage, the First 40 Years: The Emergence and Persistence of Vintage Style in the United States, p. 49

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 958

¹⁰¹ Cf. Robinson/Dale 2018: Dedicated Follower of Fashion, p. 154

¹⁰² Cf. Maberry n.d.: The Zeitgeist Guide to Vintage Clothing

environment rendered vintage clothing a responsible and stylish choice. Concurrently, a renewed appreciation for craftsmanship and quality ensured that vintage items were no longer viewed as mere second-hand clothes, but as pieces of wearable history. Luxury fashion houses for instance Yves Saint Laurent (2009) or Louis Vuitton (2010-2011) began recreating and converting vintage styles to produce new interpretations and re-used old fabrics for their collections.¹⁰³

The 2020s witnessed an intensification of these trends, with the pandemic accelerating the shift towards more conscious consumption. Vintage fashion offered a way to maintain individuality and style while promoting sustainability and ethical practices. Furthermore, the proliferation of digital platforms, such as Depop, facilitated the buying and selling of vintage items, making them more accessible than ever.

Now, contemporary culture praises fashion icons for publicly expressing their individuality and their distinguishing personalities by dressing vintage without shame.¹⁰⁴ Trying to emulate the famous “devotees of the fashion genre”¹⁰⁵, consumers have caused the rising interests in the market of previously owned clothing. “Changing fashion tastes are bound by popular trends, political changes and cultural shifts in society, and these have all influenced the growth of the vintage fashion market”¹⁰⁶, as Robinson and Dale explain the origin for the booming vintage fashion market in recent times. Economic benefits of second cycle fashion are one, but not the main reasons for the increased vintage demands. The glorification of the past initiated the desire in pop culture to re-live those eras and historical moments, which resulted in vintage clothing becoming increasingly relevant in the world of fashion.

In sum, the historical trajectory of vintage fashion from the 1960s to the present embodies the continual negotiation between past and present, individual and society, consumption, and sustainability. It serves as a testament to the enduring allure of the past and the potential of fashion as a tool for cultural expression and social change.

¹⁰³ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 958

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Robinson/Dale 2018: Dedicated Follower of Fashion, p. 154

¹⁰⁵ Robinson/Dale 2018: Dedicated Follower of Fashion, p. 154

¹⁰⁶ Robinson/Dale 2018: Dedicated Follower of Fashion, p. 155

3.2 Second-hand clothing

The term “second-hand” can be translated to the French word “*d’occasion*”, which has evolved from the Latin “*occasio*” and is used to denote a fortunate moment.¹⁰⁷ Roux and Guiot further define the term as “a transaction that is advantageous to the buyer, as well as the object of this transaction, whose price is attractive due to the depreciation associated with its use or previous ownership”¹⁰⁸.

The expression second-hand is generally used to describe any type of product which has been in the possession of a previous owner and has been passed on to another owner. The object in question can be passed on as a donation, as a trade in exchange of an equivalent object or simply for a stipulated fee. The umbrella term second-hand covers every type of product on the market, some examples are cars, furniture, decorations and antiques, jewellery, books, and clothing. For a product to be classified as second-hand it is required that it has been a previously owned and used good.

Another synonym for the term second-hand can be “second cycle goods”¹⁰⁹, which explains the condition an item needs to possess to be viewed as second-hand. The first consumer buys a newly produced object from a seller and becomes the first owner and user of said product. This new product is now in its first product lifecycle and has the possibility to be re-sold. In its second lifecycle, that product is sold to a new owner, making it a “second cycle” piece. The key indicator these clothing items have in common is that they have been previously purchased and worn by a former consumer and thereafter are viewed as second-hand when undergoing the process of re-selling. As Xu et al. mention, the “low prices have been a major reason for consumers to shop for second-hand clothing”¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Roux/Guiot 2008: Measuring second-hand shopping motives, antecedents and consequences, p. 65

¹⁰⁸ Roux/Guiot 2008: Measuring second-hand shopping motives, antecedents and consequences, p. 65

¹⁰⁹ Turunen/Leipämaa-Leskinen/Sihvonen 2018: Restructuring Secondhand Fashion from the Consumption Perspective, p. 14

¹¹⁰ Xu et al. 2014: Second-hand clothing consumption: a cross-cultural comparison between American and Chinese young consumers, p. 670

3.3 Differences and similarities

Vintage and second-hand clothing both fall within the broader category of used clothing, but they are distinctive in their characteristics and consumer perception. They share commonalities but also possess unique attributes that differentiate them. In everyday language, both terms are often used in a confusingly similar way that one might think they could have the same meaning.¹¹¹ It is not widely known that these designations are in fact not synonyms of each other. These expressions do not describe the same product, neither the same state of a product, even though the lines of how these terms are being used in the fashion marketplace seem to become increasingly blurred.¹¹²

First, one key difference between second-hand and vintage articles is set to be that second-hand clothing does not have any “age/ era restrictions”¹¹³. The authors Turunen et al. specified “second-hand to include goods that have been used before, notwithstanding the age of the product, while vintage refers to previously owned, but not necessarily used, goods from a specific era”¹¹⁴. Due to the prior mentioned time frame, a clothing item will only earn the label vintage after meeting the criteria of being produced within the defined period. A vintage piece possesses a value of age and history, which increases its overall value. In contrast, second-hand is used to express any used clothing item regardless of its age.

Furthermore, the ownership history and the state of the product can indicate other differences of vintage and second-hand clothing. A clothing item can be immediately tagged as second-hand as soon as it has been in possession of a previous owner. On the contrary, a clothing item cannot be labelled as vintage just because it might have had a previous owner. Solely because a fashion item is second-hand does not mean it fulfils the criteria of vintage fashion. Several variations of ownership history and product conditions can occur.

¹¹¹ Cf. Carey et al. 2018: *Vintage Fashion: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, p. 186

¹¹² Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: *Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion*, p. 958

¹¹³ Ryding/Henninger/Blazquez Cano 2018: *Introduction to Vintage Luxury Fashion: Exploring the Rise of the Secondhand Clothing Trade*, p. 2

¹¹⁴ Turunen/Leipämaa-Leskinen/Sihvonen 2018: *Restructuring Secondhand Fashion from the Consumption Perspective*, p. 14

One case might be the following: vintage pieces can also be second-hand, meaning they were used by a previous owner at some time, which is not unlikely considering their age. Since vintage clothing articles can be many decades old, the piece most likely had a previous owner. Thus, vintage clothing articles can also be second-hand (used fashion), but this does not mean that it is automatically required for vintage items to be previously owned and used.¹¹⁵

It should be differentiated whether the vintage article has only been previously owned or also previously used, because not every vintage piece has to necessarily be previously *used* even if it still might be previously *owned*. While the vintage item can be previously owned, it may have never actually been in use.¹¹⁶ Meaning, that the item can be either previously owned and used, or also previously owned but new. Therefore, clothing considered vintage may be brand-new and never used, but still old. This case is often referred to as “new vintage”. The fashion item that might have not been used before, leads to the vintage piece being considered new. If the case occurs that the vintage product holds an age value but is not previously used but new, the value once again can increase due to it being in new condition. One example are luxurious garments, haute couture, where the expensive pieces may have never been worn or have been worn only once by models on international catwalks of haute couture fashion shows.¹¹⁷

In the paper of Cervellon et al. the authors use the alternative phrases “something *old*” to replace the word vintage and “something *used*” to describe second-hand clothing. This approach clearly signals the characteristics of the terminology, the old age which is required for clothing to be considered vintage and the aspect of items being previously used when they are second-hand. Another way to paraphrase the word vintage may be the saying “value-added second-hand”. By this it could be described how many pieces of clothing which are previously owned and used can only be considered truly vintage once there has been some sort of value added to them. The focus will be the understanding of those added values

¹¹⁵ Cf. Ryding/Henninger/Blazquez Cano 2018: Introduction to Vintage Luxury Fashion: Exploring the Rise of the Secondhand Clothing Trade, p. 2

¹¹⁶ Cf. Henninger/Tong/Vazquez 2018: Perceived Brand Image of Luxury Fashion and Vintage Fashion: An Insight into Chinese Millennials’ Attitudes and Motivations, p. 108

¹¹⁷ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 958

and how these influence the consumption of vintage fashion and behavioural patterns of vintage fashion customers on a sociological level.

Therefore, continuing with the similarities, it can be stated that both vintage and second-hand clothing align with sustainable fashion practices. By reusing clothing that has already been produced, consumers help to reduce the environmental impact associated with the production of new clothing items. Besides, the element of "unique style," intrinsic to both vintage and second-hand clothing, can be explicated by delving into the domains of consumer individualism, identity expression, and the dynamics of fashion cyclicality.

In the face of globalized mass-produced fashion, both vintage and second-hand clothing offer a treasure trove of unique pieces that deviate from current mainstream trends. This heterogeneity allows consumers to curate a wardrobe that is less likely to be replicated by others, thereby satisfying the innate human need for individualism and distinctiveness. This phenomenon resonates with the concept of optimal distinctiveness theory, which posits a fundamental human motivation to achieve a balance between assimilation and differentiation within social groups. Vintage and second-hand clothing, offering a vast range of styles and periods, serve as powerful tools for self-expression. They enable consumers to dynamically construct and perform their identities, reflecting their individual beliefs and tastes through these unique sartorial choices.

Concluding the discussion between the similarities and the deciding differences between vintage and second-hand fashion, it could be stated that the two terms "are related, yet distinct in their own right".¹¹⁸ While vintage and second-hand clothing both operate within the used clothing market and contribute to sustainability, they differ in their age, value, fashion statement, and consumer perception.

¹¹⁸ Ryding/Henninger/Blazquez Cano 2018: Introduction to Vintage Luxury Fashion: Exploring the Rise of the Secondhand Clothing Trade, p. 3

3.4 Place of purchase

The consumer journey for vintage and second-hand clothing differs significantly, contingent upon the nature of the items and the intended buyer demographics. Both categories of clothing can be found in a variety of retail environments, each offering a distinctive shopping experience. Due to the trend of labelling second cycle goods as “vintage” there has been an increased demand for clothing tagged as vintage rather than second-hand.

This makes a crucial reason why vendors take advantage of renaming their businesses from “second-hand stores” to “vintage stores” to capitalize from the vintage-driven desire of consumers.¹¹⁹ Regardless of the age and the origin of their merchandise the label vintage is being misapplied, resulting in “confusion in the mind of the uninformed consumer”.¹²⁰ “But the places of exchange for second-hand clothes and authentic vintage are sometimes similar, through the internet marketplace for instance, which only adds to the confusion”¹²¹, the authors Cervellon, Carey and Harms state in their research paper.

Vintage fashion can be purchased from a variety of places, including vintage clothing boutiques, online marketplaces, auction websites, and vintage fairs and flea markets.¹²² Before digitalization, the further developed e-commerce market, and the availability of those sources to the general consumer, vintage pieces, especially luxurious garments, could only be bought at specialized boutiques, exhibitions and at auctions.¹²³

In vintage boutiques, the focus typically lies on higher-end items from notable fashion periods or pieces from luxury designers. The items are often carefully selected for their quality, condition, and relevance to current fashion trends. Buying quality vintage garments has become more accessible to the public, their consumption not as exclusive and the accessibility not limited to consumers of higher classes. At present times, vintage pieces are purchased

¹¹⁹ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 958

¹²⁰ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 958

¹²¹ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 958

¹²² Cf. Weil 1999: Secondhand Chic: Finding Fabulous Fashion at Consignment, Vintage, and Thrift Stores, p. 16 f.

¹²³ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 958

by consumers preferably on popular online trading platforms and similar applications or vintage stores.¹²⁴ Especially social media platforms “had the most profound effect in popularising vintage due to the ease and accessibility of sites ranging from vintage retailers to vintage forums and vintage communities such as Pinterest and Facebook”¹²⁵.

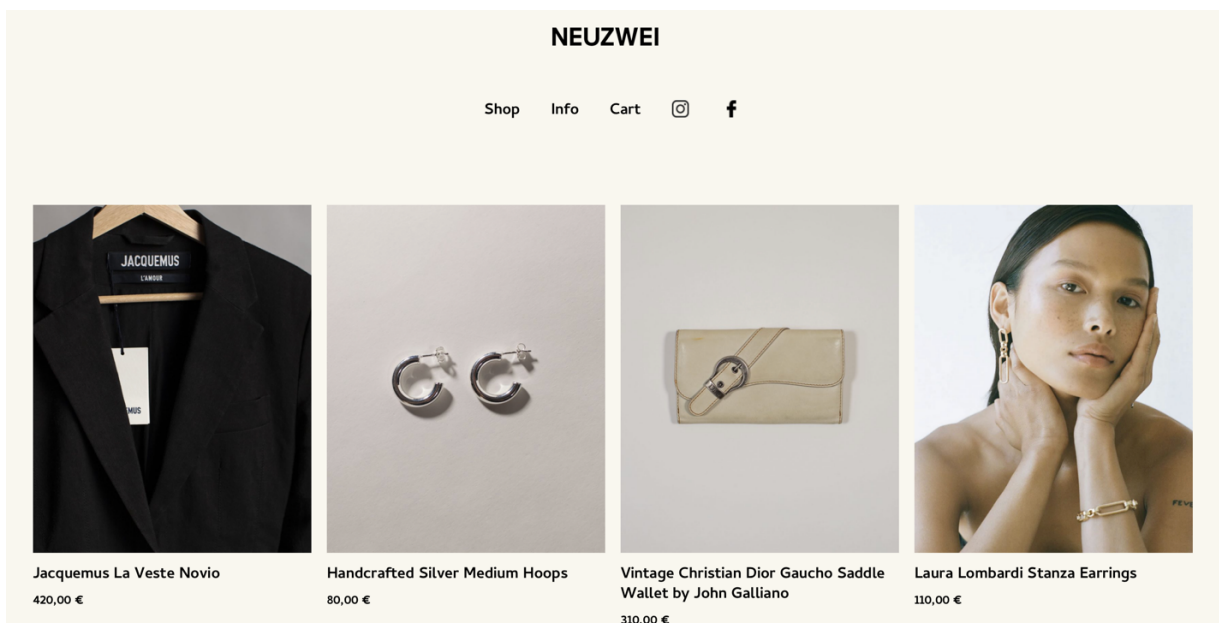


Figure 2: Screenshot of the online shop of “NEUZWEI”, a vintage store that offers a curated selection of vintage designer pieces¹²⁶

With the expansion of vintage retailing from small and independently owned stores to greater businesses¹²⁷, vintage facilities have faced increasing pressure to adopt more commercial and competitive practices.¹²⁸ Therefore, small vintage boutiques evolved and started to expand to larger stores. On the global fashion marketplace, a variety of vintage stores have gained popularity. The availability and selection of vintage fashion may vary depending on the location and the specific market.

¹²⁴ Cf. Cassidy/Bennett 2012: The rise of vintage fashion and the vintage consumer, p. 259

¹²⁵ Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 214

¹²⁶ NEUZWEI n.d.: NEUZWEI

¹²⁷ Cf. Brooks 2019: Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes, p. 137

¹²⁸ Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 207



Figure 3: Screenshot of “yummyvintageofficial” on Instagram; profit-oriented vintage boutique¹²⁹

There are numerous of retail businesses selling as well as renting vintage clothing. With the introduction of vintage rentals, designer vintage clothing can be rented to experience the luxurious garments.¹³⁰ Some fashion designers, retailers and luxury brands may incorporate vintage pieces into their collections by offering resale programs for their previously owned pieces, one example being “Gucci Vault” or “Rolex” (since December 2022). By verifying their merchandise as rare and by presenting them as a complete ensemble, high-end vintage stores can provide a more refined experience for customers.¹³¹ This approach helps to eliminate the stigma attached to used clothing, as authentic vintage is often associated with exclusivity and luxury. To further reinforce the authenticity of their products, new vintage boutiques may choose to locate themselves near traditional second-hand markets.¹³²

Either thrift stores or the usual second-hand retailers are typical places for distributing previously owned and used goods.¹³³ These places often sell donated items, and the proceeds typically go to charitable causes. The selection is generally wide and varied, with items ranging from basic garments to occasional high-quality or designer pieces. Thrift stores and

¹²⁹ yummyvintageofficial 2023

¹³⁰ Cf. Condé Nast 2023: A Global Guide to the Best Vintage Stores and Resale Platforms

¹³¹ Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 210

¹³² Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 210

¹³³ Cf. Xu et al. 2014: Second-hand clothing consumption: a cross-cultural comparison between American and Chinese young consumers, p. 675

charity shops are typically targeted towards the lower income demographic.¹³⁴ In these stores not only clothing but also any other sort of previously owned product may be found, such as kitchen ware, furniture, books, and other types of entertainment media.¹³⁵ These second-hand products are cheaper¹³⁶ and not necessarily in good conditions.



Figure 4: Humana Second-Hand Clothing Store, charity organization¹³⁷

Other places of purchase for second-hand clothing can be online resale platforms which allow individuals to sell their used fashion items, consignment stores which sell second-hand pieces on behalf of the original owner or swap meets and garage sales.¹³⁸ In a nutshell, by the organisation, location and visual merchandising vintage retailers can be distinguished on the market from formal branded retailers and lower cost charity shops.¹³⁹ In both vintage and second-hand shopping, consumers need to be prepared for a hunting experience due to the unique, non-reproducible nature of the inventory. These distinct retail environments cater to different consumer preferences in terms of price, shopping experience, item quality, and brand assortment, highlighting the varied landscape of used clothing commerce.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Cf. Xu et al. 2014: Second-hand clothing consumption: a cross-cultural comparison between American and Chinese young consumers, p. 671

¹³⁵ Cf. Weil 1999: Secondhand Chic: Finding Fabulous Fashion at Consignment, Vintage, and Thrift Stores, p. 18

¹³⁶ Cf. Xu et al. 2014: Second-hand clothing consumption: a cross-cultural comparison between American and Chinese young consumers, p. 676

¹³⁷ Nielsen/Christensen n.d.: HUMANA Shops

¹³⁸ Cf. Xu et al. 2014: Second-hand clothing consumption: a cross-cultural comparison between American and Chinese young consumers, p. 675

¹³⁹ Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 209

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 966

4 Fashion triangle: Modern clothing, second-hand fashion, and vintage fashion

Since this paper is trying to elaborate the different motivators when it comes to buying used or buying vintage, it is equally of significance to observe the motivators which can influence a customer in their decision when it comes to buying something previously owned rather than something new. For this case, the following three product types are differentiated:

1. Modern fashion,
2. Second-hand fashion, and
3. Vintage fashion.

Taking previously elaborated definitions of second-hand and vintage fashion into account, contemporary clothing pieces have been produced in recent times. The main and most important difference between modern clothing and the other two categories is that the new items have not been used. Contemporary fashion embodies styles and trends that are current and relevant in the present sociocultural context. Also, the sense of history is missing for contemporary fashion. Contemporary clothing should be understood as not just items of apparel that are worn for protection, modesty, or adornment, but also as coded, culturally specific signifiers of the present zeitgeist. This chapter provides a general investigation upon the purchasing drivers of fashion consumers.

4.1 Determinants influencing consumers' acquisition decisions for contemporary clothing

Prior to the investigation of determinants influencing the purchase of previously owned and used clothing it can be of use to elaborate determinants which motivate individuals to buy all types clothing in a more general context. Contemporary clothing purchases are influenced by a multitude of factors that interweave consumer psychology, social dynamics, and cultural and economic influences.

Firstly, consumers may purchase clothing to reflect their personal aesthetic towards others and to be able to express themselves, as discussed before. Clothing functions as a tool of

non-verbal communication, enabling consumers to articulate their personal identity, tastes, and social affiliations. Contemporary clothing, reflecting current fashion trends, provides a platform for individuals to engage in this self-referential dialogue, aligning their physical appearance with their perceived identities.

Next, the individuals need for social conformity and group membership can motivate consumers to acquire modern clothing. The desire to fit into specific social groups often shapes clothing choices. Consumers frequently purchase contemporary clothing to conform to societal norms and expectations, adhere to group standards, or gain acceptance and recognition within their social milieu. This facet of clothing consumption can be elucidated through the lens of social identity theory.

Furthermore, a consumer can find the possibility to signal their status when consuming clothing, consumption symbolism being the fitting term for this motive. Contemporary clothing, particularly branded or designer items, can serve as conspicuous symbols of social status and wealth. Consumers may purchase these items to signal their socioeconomic position, a phenomenon underscored by Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption.

When a consumer is seeking for novelty, they might be motivated to purchase modern clothing. The dynamism inherent in fashion underscores an inherent human inclination toward novelty. Constantly changing trends feed this desire for newness, making contemporary clothing attractive for those seeking freshness and variety in their wardrobe. On a practical level, consumers purchase contemporary clothing to meet functional needs such as comfort, durability, and suitability for specific activities or weather conditions. Undoubtedly, the mass media and fashion industry play a crucial role in shaping consumer desires and preferences. Advertisements, fashion shows, celebrity endorsements, and social media trends significantly influence the perceived attractiveness of contemporary clothing.

Finally, the affordability of contemporary clothing, particularly in the “fast fashion” segment, makes it an accessible choice for many consumers. However, it should be noted that the implications of fast fashion on sustainability and ethical labour practices are increasingly influencing consumers' buying decisions. In comparison to authentic vintage fashion, mod-

ern clothing articles are often more affordable. This multi-layered understanding of why consumers purchase contemporary clothing underscores the importance of fashion as a socio-cultural phenomenon, extending beyond mere functionality.

4.2 The influence of brands

Brands constitute an essential element in the fashion consumption milieu, shaping consumers' perceptions and choices across vintage, second-hand, and contemporary fashion categories. The brand's role is multifarious, with its influence extending beyond mere identification to quality assurance, stylistic delineation, status signalling, and value congruence. Brands in the fashion industry encapsulate more than mere symbols or logos, they represent a complex amalgamation of tangible and intangible attributes¹⁴¹ that confer distinct identities. A brand is perceived as a multidimensional construct encompassing aspects such as brand loyalty, awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations.

Consequently, brands in general foster a sense of familiarity and trust, offer assurances of quality, and help simplify consumer decision-making processes. Moreover, brands, through their symbolic and expressive attributes, provide a means for consumers to construct and communicate their self-identities, thereby influencing their purchasing behaviour in various fashion domains. Sociology could give an understanding of the subconscious decision making when choosing one fashion item over the other. In his book “*Soziologie der Marke*” the author Kai-Uwe Hellmann explains why brands can help to understand consumer behaviour patterns:

“Denn wenn es das Ziel ist, den Verbraucher als ganzen Menschen zu verstehen, erfordert dies nicht nur Markt-, sondern Gesellschaftsforschung, mithin Soziologie. Es scheint demnach eine der Markenforschung inhärente Dynamik zu geben, die zur Soziologie überleitet, und zwar in der Frage des möglichst vollständigen Verstehens

¹⁴¹ Cf. Rageh Ismail/Spinelli 2012: Effects of brand love, personality and image on word of mouth: The case of fashion brands among young consumers, p. 389

des Verbrauchers. Die Soziologie könnte der Markenforschung demzufolge dort weiterhelfen, wo die Marktforschung überfordert ist, [...]“¹⁴²

As Hellmann further elaborates the development brands have gone through, he introduces how brands started to represent personalities during the fifties.¹⁴³ This change made brands gain more success since consumers experienced a connection to brands. As brands turned into a communication tool, businesses learned to understand their consumers.

Furthermore, brands in the fashion industry serve as critical vehicles for personal distinction. This phenomenon can be explicated through the lens of the theory of conspicuous consumption, where brands are leveraged as symbolic tools to signal status and taste.¹⁴⁴ As Veblen has expressed, not the accumulation of wealth but the evidence of wealth communicates societal status.¹⁴⁵ Thorstein Veblen also defines why the ingrained association of expensiveness is so deeply embedded in our cognitive schemas that any apparel considered “cheap” is intuitively repulsive to consumers.¹⁴⁶ Based on Veblen’s theories, expensive clothing pieces will always be preferred:

“Cheap and nasty is recognized to hold true in dress with even less mitigation than in other lines of consumption. On the ground of both of taste and of serviceability, an inexpensive article of apparel is held to be inferior, under the maxim cheap and nasty. We find things beautiful, as well as serviceable, somewhat in proportion as they are costly.”¹⁴⁷

As brands seem to be a way to trade vintage clothing at a higher pricing level, the sociology behind it could explain this phenomenon through the credibility that brands can have on consumers and therefore influence their perception of quality.¹⁴⁸ Considering the need for uniqueness individuals may feel, brands can be influential. “Für beide Problemstellungen, den

¹⁴² Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 163

¹⁴³ Cf. Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 163

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Veblen 2014: Theory of the Leisure Class, p. 48

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Veblen 2014: Theory of the Leisure Class, p. 48

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Veblen 2014: Theory of the Leisure Class, p. 117

¹⁴⁷ Veblen 2014: Theory of the Leisure Class, p. 117

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Hellmann 2003: Soziologie der Marke, p. 272

Wunsch nach Distinktion und das *Bedürfnis nach Identität*, bieten Marken maßgeschneiderte Lösungen an¹⁴⁹, argues Hellman.

In Henninger et al.'s research on the perceived brand image of new luxury and authentic vintage fashion, participants emphasised their personal interest in brand names as brands influenced their purchasing decisions either positively or negatively.¹⁵⁰ Branded clothing can offer consumers the promise of a consistent and high level of quality, a connection to a specific grouping in society, prestige and through publicly recognised symbols a sense of belonging.¹⁵¹

Also, brands carry historical weight and prestige. Renowned labels such as Chanel, Dior, or Yves Saint Laurent encapsulate not only sartorial preferences but also a form of investment behaviour. These iconic brands often sustain or augment their value over time, testament to their superior craftsmanship, relative scarcity, and the enduring allure of the brand heritage. As such, brands in the vintage context function as quality and authenticity guarantors, with their historical resonance adding a unique narrative dimension.

The impact of brands in the second-hand market is nuanced. On one level, branded second-hand items, particularly those associated with desirable labels, are viewed as superior and more covetable. Consumers gain access to high-end brands at a diminished cost, enabling them to enjoy the perceived quality and prestige without the commensurate financial outlay. Conversely, a segment of second-hand consumers may exhibit brand indifference, prioritizing factors such as distinctive style, cost-effectiveness, or sustainability. For these consumers, an item's value may not be contingent upon its brand provenance but rather its aesthetic, functional, or ethical qualities.

In the contemporary fashion sector, brands wield considerable influence. They not only dictate fashion trends but also shape perceptions of style and status, often commanding a premium in the marketplace. Brands engender expectations of quality, reliability, and image, all underpinned by the brand reputation. Purchasing decisions often extend beyond the

¹⁴⁹ Hellmann 2003: *Soziologie der Marke*, p. 378

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Henninger/Tong/Vazquez 2018: *Perceived Brand Image of Luxury Fashion and Vintage Fashion: An Insight into Chinese Millennials' Attitudes and Motivations*, p. 106

¹⁵¹ Cf. Hellmann 2003: *Soziologie der Marke*, p. 378

product itself to the symbolic capital of the brand, where consumers seek alignment with their personal identity or aspirational self-image. Furthermore, brand loyalty often factors into consumers' decisions, manifesting as a consistent preference for brands perceived to be reliable, congruent with personal style, or reflective of individual values.

In conclusion, the role of brands, albeit varying across vintage, second-hand, and contemporary fashion, remains a significant influencer in consumers' purchase decisions. Brands act as an influential heuristic guiding consumers through the decision-making process, informing judgments on product quality, style, and status representation. With the growing emphasis on conscious consumption, brand philosophies, particularly those centered around sustainability and ethics, are likely to assume greater importance across all these fashion categories.



Figure 5: The iconic Chanel „tweed dress“ and the leather „flap bag“ (since 1955) gained cult character and are highly prized vintage fashion items, Photo: Benjamin Bruno¹⁵²

¹⁵² Lorenzo 2023: Antes & Ahora, p. 197

5 Analysis of consumer's purchase intentions when buying vintage or second-hand clothing

5.1 Methodical approach

The research methodology employed in this literature thesis was the review and the comparison of existing theories and studies. Due to the scope of this work, a qualitative content analysis of the used research papers was used to interpret the findings. For the qualitative content analysis, the entire material of the applied studies was evaluated. To better understand the theoretical results, categories were formed, and similar approaches were compared. Further explication material was used to elucidate knowledge gaps or research results.

With the help of the scientific results, explanations for consumers' purchase motives are aimed to be delivered respecting the research question. Herby, it is necessary to make a distinction between the purchase intentions which are influential in the very specific case of vintage versus second-hand fashion items.

The qualitative content analysis has been conducted for the research paper "*Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion*", written by the authors Marie-Cécile Cervellon, Lindsey Carey, and Trine Harms (2012) and the research paper titled "*What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between 'consumer pastness', scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products*" by the writers Aaron Schibik, David Strutton and Kenneth Neil Thompson (2022). Supporting viewpoints from the collective work published by the editors Daniella Ryding, Claudia E. Henninger and Marta Blazquez Cano named "*Vintage luxury fashion: Exploring the rise of the second-hand clothing trade*" (2018) were also included.

When deciding on which scientific research papers should be consulted for this thesis, several criteria had to be considered. First, the relevance of the paper regarding the research topic had to be fulfilled. The before mentioned studies all investigated the possible motives

and purchasing incentives of consumers in the market of used goods, with a focus on vintage and second-hand products in general, vintage clothing or vintage and second-hand clothing in comparison.

Next, the methodology used in the research papers is appropriate and rigorous. The papers clearly describe their research design, the method of their data collection and their analysis methods used. Additionally, it was important to only select valid and reliable studies. For instance, the studies carried out by Schibik et al. were precisely executed under valid and reliable conditions as they conducted pre-tests and followed standardised scientific procedures. The researchers transparently elaborated their procedure in the paper and proved “acceptable levels of internal consistency and convergent validity”¹⁵³ for their scales. Further, the authors themselves critically acknowledge their studies limitations and recommend the repetition of their research “in several countries, as there might be cross-cultural differences in the profile of vintage and second-hand clients”¹⁵⁴, pointing out the importance of replicability.

Finally, the research papers had the required level of originality and topical relevance, as the consumption of previously owned fashion items is becoming increasingly interesting for the fashion industry.

The analysis in each subchapter of this section will begin with the summary of the theoretical findings drawn from the previously mentioned sources, followed by the discussion of relevant questions and causes regarding the issue and the critical engagement with approaches from the studies. Various aspects of the texts and their broader context were considered, and the critical engagement has been implemented through the comparative analysis.

In the study of Cervellon et al. the writers examined the research subject of vintage and used clothing, whereas the two studies conducted by Schibik et al. used a broader approach to gain findings for the topic of vintage products in general, discussing consumer patterns for all products applied to the vintage category. These studies have in common that they

¹⁵³ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1840

¹⁵⁴ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 971

both focus on products which can be coded as vintage or second-hand. Cervellon et al. divided the internal drivers based off several assumptions into different categories. Motivators which might influence the purchase decisions of fashion enthusiast are parted to firstly motivational drivers and secondly psychological traits.¹⁵⁵

In this thesis, all results of consumer purchase intentions were categorised and divided into psychological factors and product-related factors.¹⁵⁶ The literature helps answering the research question by providing a theoretical framework that explains consumer behavioural phenomena.

5.2 Psychological factors

5.2.1 Consumer pastness and age value

The research paper of Schibik et al. introduces emotional values when elaborating consumer purchase intentions toward vintage products. The authors define the constructs of consumer pastness as well as nostalgia, pointing out the clear differences between those two concepts, since “pastness differs from nostalgia”¹⁵⁷. The purchaser may sense a product being “from the past”, hence experience pastness, when their cognitive associations align with the sensible characteristics of products that create a connection to the past.¹⁵⁸ Products being tangible goods possess physical characteristics, like their actual and perceived age, signs of wear, and the different materials used for their production, as well as their design that influences the characteristic of the product.¹⁵⁹ Pastness can be viewed as a point of convergence where the before mentioned physical traits and product design intersect with

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 957

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Turunen/Leipämaa-Leskinen/Sihvonen 2018: Restructuring Secondhand Fashion from the Consumption Perspective, p. 14

¹⁵⁷ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1833

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1832

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1832

consumers' product-related personal and cultural experiences which may have occurred in past times.¹⁶⁰ When objects embody the past, their associations with "traits of pastness"¹⁶¹ can add important value, motivating consumers to purchase them.

These findings of pastness may explain why consumers purchase used goods, especially vintage fashion, since they "contain perceptible traces of the past that add age-based or historical-based value to the product"¹⁶². Old clothing articles gift the wearer a piece of history, the owner of vintage shoes might emotionally relate to the 1950s because these shoes have been produced in that year and therefore are themselves, a historical piece. For regular second-hand clothing, age is not a factor which would influence consumers to purchase certain items, hence making consumer pastness not a relevant trait.

Schibik et al. discuss the subjectivity of pastness since perceptions may differ based on different people. Paradoxically, the pastness of objects can not only be pointed out through material cues, but the expectations of consumers also matter.¹⁶³ Consumer pastness can occur for any type of product and "is not exclusive to vintage products"¹⁶⁴.

Here, the statements of the two compared research papers show an overlap. In the paper of Schibik et al. the writers study how the consumer might have expectations toward vintage objects if they either have themselves lived through the time in which the product was produced, or their expectations have formed through various external influences. Notably, "the more closely that products align with consumers' expectations of pastness, the more likely that those same consumers will deem them vintage".¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1832

¹⁶¹ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1851

¹⁶² Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1832

¹⁶³ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1834

¹⁶⁴ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1850

¹⁶⁵ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1834

At this point, the authors connect pastness to the concept of age-value, unfolding on how humans in certain situations highly value age, regardless of the trait being of actual value. People might connect age to quality, which in the original usage of the term vintage was legitimate, but age does not necessarily relate to a better quality. Age value in objects, as they define, is the connection of age with the benefits the object had in earlier eras, even though said object might not be valuable in the present.¹⁶⁶ Implying that “old” becomes a value that consumers perceive as “better”.

In the case of vintage fashion, it can be explained that older garments can give the purchaser a value due to its age based worth. Perceptible product cues can be observable like traces of decay and the indicated year of production, while other cues might be less obvious like patina or wear and tear.¹⁶⁷ These cues are of need for the purchaser to identify product characteristics and to make a connection to the past with the help of that vintage object. If the product cues cannot be recognized, the consumer will not be able to connect the item with its value of age, thus forcing them to “rely on other forms of value related to objects’ histories”¹⁶⁸.

Here, the writers continue with vintage products possessing historic-based value, which is another emotional value for the buyer. Particularly, the histories of vintage clothing prove to have significant relevance for fashion enthusiast, as it seems that historic-based value is one of the main emotional drivers when further researching purchase intentions. Emphasized by Schibik et al. is that items will increase in their meaningfulness when their histories are of personal importance to the owner.¹⁶⁹ Among those historically valued items might be garments which were inherited over generations¹⁷⁰, garments worn by important personalities and garments which were produced during significant historical moments. This finding

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1832

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1832

¹⁶⁸ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1833

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1833

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Mortara/Ironico 2011: Ethical fashion shoppers: beyond the hedonic/utilitarian motivations dichotomy? An explorative research, p. 11

explains how vintage garments can be of emotional value for fashion enthusiasts. However, based on the situation, the historical value might differ for each consumer, one might perceive a vintage dress as more valuable than someone else, since the garment needs to be of individual value.

In summary, the pastness of clothing and the value of age can be emotional driven motivators that influence the purchase intentions of consumers of vintage fashion. The consumer is driven by the need to acquire a product that possesses a higher value than the price which they are paying. Therefore, when the object reminds them of the past and is valuable because of its age, the consumer will feel satisfied, as Schibik et al. explain.¹⁷¹



Figure 6: Kim Kardashian (Met Gala 2022) wearing the original Marilyn Monroe “Happy Birthday, Mr. President”¹⁷² dress.¹⁷³ It holds the record for being the most expensive dress to date sold at an auction, due to its historical value. Photos: Gotham / Getty Images

¹⁷¹ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1851

¹⁷² Cf. Nnadi 2022: Kim Kardashian trägt bei der Met Gala 2022 das wohl berühmteste Kleid der Welt

¹⁷³ Cf. Burger 2022: Kim Kardashian bei der Met Gala: Dieses besondere Accessoire von Marilyn Monroe ergänzte ihr Kleid

Schibik et al. proved that the consumers have different perceptions of pastness depending on the two product types (vintage or second-hand) with the help of both of their studies. Once more this assumption (H1) could be verified by their second study, because participants did sense a greater level of pastness towards products of the vintage condition ($M_{vintage} = 4.66$) than towards products of the second-hand condition ($M_{second-hand} = 3.96$), again confirming their results of the first study with study number two.¹⁷⁴ With the following study they were additionally able to validate the hypothesis (H4b) which stated that the historical lineage of products can make it possible to attenuate the perception of pastness. The data showed that “the effect of product type on pastness perceptions was attenuated when the historical lineage information was introduced ($M_{vintage} = 4.44$ vs $M_{second-hand} = 4.59$).¹⁷⁵

Therefore, giving the consumer brief information about the history of the product can manipulate their perception of pastness and second-hand products can gain a greater perception pastness than before. The authors argue that background narratives can “stimulate perceptions of consumer pastness”¹⁷⁶, enabling products to embody the past to greater extents. Providing some information regarding the origin, the production place, the previous owner, and the overall importance of the product can make second-hand articles more desirable to the consumer.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1848

¹⁷⁵ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1848

¹⁷⁶ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1849

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1851

5.2.2 Nostalgia

In existing literature, the most frequently mentioned motivational driver for buying authentic vintage clothing is the element of nostalgia.¹⁷⁸ Nostalgia is a complex psychological and emotional phenomenon that has been defined and studied by various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The author Fred Davis who has done extensive research on nostalgia defines the term as:

“A positively toned evocation of a lived past in the context of some negative feeling toward present [...], ‘simple nostalgia’ is that subjective state which harbours the largely unexamined belief that things were better (more beautiful, healthier, happier, more civilized, more exciting) than than now.”¹⁷⁹

This definition emphasizes the longing and yearning for a past time or place that is perceived as happier, more meaningful, or more satisfying than the present and expresses itself within people as an emotion. Davis argued that the nostalgia script often appears in times of social, economic, or political change, and serves as a means of coping with the uncertainties of the present. As Cervellon et al. have explained Davis definition, “the negative feelings are derived from the belief that things were better in the past”.¹⁸⁰ The writers continue elaborating on why consumers seem to have a preference towards objects:

“This view suggests that nostalgia most commonly attaches to experiences that are object related, either due to the fact that these have become difficult to obtain, or because changes in the pattern of consumption has excluded these object related experiences.”¹⁸¹

Comparable to that point of view, the authors Schibik et al. expressed another way of defining the sensation of nostalgia. Nostalgia, even when experienced vicariously, is linked to a

¹⁷⁸ Cf. McColl et al. 2013: It's Vintage Darling! An exploration of vintage fashion retailing, p. 145

¹⁷⁹ Davis 1979: Yearning for yesterday: A sociology of nostalgia, p. 17 f.

¹⁸⁰ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 958

¹⁸¹ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 959

longing to return to one's past or to idealized versions of the past.¹⁸² As a result, the phenomenon nostalgia is primarily influenced by consumers' emotional connections to products, objects, places, or events.¹⁸³ A consumer experiences that certain nostalgic feeling, which can especially be triggered through objects like clothing. For instance, a type of dress from a specific moment in history can make the owner reminisce about that era, either because they have lived through that historical time or because they have heard narratives from others. Nostalgia applied to consumer behaviour patterns suggest their preferences towards various things, but precisely for objects from an earlier time in one's life.¹⁸⁴

Briefly explained, nostalgia seems to be a general preference for the past and is commonly experienced as an emotion by individuals, describing terms such as "bittersweet" are repeatedly used in literature and the sensation can be triggered through objects, for instance articles of clothing. Overall, nostalgia is a multidimensional and multifaceted phenomenon that involves cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural factors. It can be seen as a form of coping mechanism, a source of meaning and identity, or a way of expressing personal or collective values and aspirations.

In the paper of Cervellon et al. the authors summarise findings in literature regarding personal nostalgia and historical nostalgia, while the authors Schibik et al. interpret the differences between pastness and nostalgia.

The main difference between pastness and nostalgia is the emotional connection to objects. While nostalgia is linked to affective associations with products and the desire to return to an idealized version of one's past, pastness is not driven by emotions but solely by product-based cognitions.¹⁸⁵ Perceptions of pastness are derived from specific product characteristics that create a connection between the past and the product. Hence, it is important to acknowledge that "nostalgia can be associated with products, other objects, events, etc.

¹⁸² Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1833

¹⁸³ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1833

¹⁸⁴ Cf. McColl et al. 2013: It's Vintage Darling! An exploration of vintage fashion retailing, p. 145

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1833

Pastness is strictly product-based. Notably, nostalgic affective associations can be derived from cognitive-based perceptions of pastness.”¹⁸⁶

Following the approach of the authors Cervellon et al., the differentiation of two similar but distinct situations when sensing nostalgia should be taken into consideration. Based on the age of the consumer, original vintage pieces can stimulate certain feelings related to nostalgia within a customer. In the first scenario the person buying the vintage item has witnessed the era in which that garment has been produced. Therefore, they are likely to experience positive memories from the purchase of that original piece.¹⁸⁷ Those vintage articles of clothing are representations of their past life and become wearable memorabilia. Another scenario can be that the person buying the garments is in fact not as old where they would have been able to recall positive memories from the vintage piece, since they were not born during the production time. Nevertheless, they can also experience nostalgia proneness.

Cervellon et al. hypothesise that consumers nostalgia proneness increases their will of purchasing vintage clothing but does not apply for second-hand pieces (H1a). This statement could be proven correctly, as nostalgia is one of the most important drivers for consumers of vintage clothing, influencing their intentions to purchase “directly and indirectly through treasure hunting”¹⁸⁸. Aim of the first study of Schibik et al. is the identification of the dimensions of consumer pastness which influence vintage product purchase intentions. The results of said study revealed that the theoretical differentiation of the constructs nostalgia and pastness is valid.¹⁸⁹

In summary, consumers may experience nostalgia with vintage clothing for a variety of reasons. Vintage clothing items are often associated with a time, fashion trend, or cultural movement, as it has been elaborated earlier in this thesis. Thus, wearing vintage clothing

¹⁸⁶ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1833

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 958

¹⁸⁸ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 970

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1842

may evoke feelings of nostalgia for a bygone era, and allow the wearer to connect with a historical or cultural movement that they find compelling.

Consumers may also feel nostalgic towards vintage clothing items that have personal significance, such as pieces that were worn by a family member or that they themselves wore in the past. Wearing these items may recall memories and emotions associated with specific times or events in their lives.

The exclusivity of vintage clothing may contribute to feelings of nostalgia or sentimentality because of the value of the garments. Finally, fashion enthusiasts may appreciate the craftsmanship, design, or quality of vintage pieces, and feel drawn to the nostalgia of clothing from a bygone era.

5.2.3 Product scarcity

The acquisition of vintage garments often requires a level of expertise. Most fashion consumers are lacking knowledge in that field, thus having difficulties “determining the value of vintage products”¹⁹⁰. This results in their judgements regarding the products being inaccurate or incomplete. Limited information related to authentic and original vintage clothing overall subjectifies the value of vintage clothing.¹⁹¹ But, most consumers generally assume that vintage clothing must be scarcer than contemporary pieces. When comparing the research papers regarding the investigated purchase intentions, product scarcity seems to be included as a further influencing factor for buying vintage clothing in most existing literature.

The difficulty for garments to be labelled as original vintage pieces is a consequence of the condition which requires the clothing to be held onto for many decades.¹⁹² Also, the handling of used clothing by previous owners might negatively influence the condition of the product

¹⁹⁰ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1835

¹⁹¹ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1835

¹⁹² Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1835

and eliminate its chances of becoming vintage fashion.¹⁹³ Especially with the decreasing qualities of fast fashion and new clothing not being as durable and long-lasting as in the past, modern fashion is naturally disposed faster than before. “These factors make vintage products difficult to acquire in acceptable or working condition at prices that most consumers are willing and able to pay”¹⁹⁴, as Schibik et al. explain the challenge for products gaining the vintage status. The so-called “throwaway-society” is not used to preserve clothing for many years, one reason being that modern clothing will mostly not last but also because clothing is not passed on over generations anymore. These societal changes make vintage clothing appear even more scarce and special.

Additionally, scarcity can create a sense of urgency among consumers because they “often desire products that are perceived as scarce”¹⁹⁵. The designers and marketers nowadays take advantage of the consumers’ desire for scarce products through artificial scarcity, and advertising with the label vintage further influences consumers. Limited quantities target potential buyers, especially collectors or enthusiasts who are seeking to add to their collections.

In the first study of Schibik et al. the authors assumed that consumers perceived vintage products to be scarcer than new or second-hand products (H2).¹⁹⁶ The researchers tested this and examined if nostalgia might affect scarcity.¹⁹⁷ From the gathered data it became clear that participants did perceive the product of the vintage condition ($M_{vintage} = 4.62$) as scarcer as participants assigned to the product types second-hand ($M_{second-hand} = 3.67$) and new ($M_{new} = 3.42$).¹⁹⁸ The expectations of the researchers could be confirmed.

¹⁹³ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1836

¹⁹⁴ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1835

¹⁹⁵ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1835

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1836

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1844

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1844

As the first study could not explain why there is a difference in the minds of the consumers when differentiating between vintage or second-hand items, the researchers completed a second study. They assumed that the perceptions of products of the second-hand category could be manipulated for an increased perception of product scarcity similar to products of the vintage category when the participants would receive some background information regarding the history of the item (H4a).¹⁹⁹ Again, the researchers were able to verify (H2) that vintage products ($M_{vintage} = 4.03$) are perceived as more scarce than second-hand products ($M_{second-hand} = 3.20$) and additionally (H4a) that the product type affects scarcity perceptions which can be attenuated when the consumer gains information regarding product lineage ($M_{second-hand} = 3.70$ and $M_{vintage} = 3.46$).²⁰⁰

Furthermore, the before mentioned phenomenon of consumer pastness appears to be directly influencing the perception of product scarcity. Because vintage pieces indicate pastness, they simultaneously could be perceived as scarcer than new or second-hand fashion, as Schibik et al. hypothesise (H2).²⁰¹ “Consumers should perceive that vintage products contain deep-seated elements of pastness not possessed to the same degree by second-hand products”²⁰², but not excluding the possibility that pastness might also be found in second-hand items to certain degrees. They were able to verify this assumption (H2) as the data showed that participants perceived a higher level of pastness for products of the category vintage ($M_{vintage} = 5.00$) compared to the categories second-hand ($M_{second-hand} = 3.83$) or new ($M_{new} = 3.72$).²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1848

²⁰⁰ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1848

²⁰¹ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1836

²⁰² Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1836

²⁰³ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1844

Within their study the researchers were also interested to investigate the indirect influences of consumer pastness and the perceived product scarcity on the willingness to purchase.²⁰⁴ Their statement that the three different product types (new, vintage, and second-hand) would indirectly impact consumers' willingness to purchase through perceived consumer pastness product scarcity (H3) could be validated. Data showed that the study participants were less willing to purchase goods which belonged to the categories new or second-hand than vintage goods.²⁰⁵

Vintage clothing is often prized for authenticity and uniqueness²⁰⁶, as it is not mass produced and readily available like contemporary clothing. As the researchers Wu et al. state, "scarce products are perceived to be unique by consumers"²⁰⁷, which may explain how scarce vintage pieces are perceived as unique solely because they are scarce. The limited quantity of clothing considered vintage adds to the product scarcity. When vintage clothing is scarce, it becomes more desirable to consumers who are seeking something rare.

These rare authentic vintage pieces can be used by an individual to distinguish themselves from other social groups. In summary, the product scarcity has a sociological explanation on why consumers are driven to buy clothing with the vintage status. Scarcity can increase the value of vintage clothing items. When a vintage item is scarce, it becomes more exclusive, its exclusivity increasing its perceived value in the eyes of consumers. This can be especially true for high-end or designer vintage clothing items, which can become even more valuable and collectible when they are scarce.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1844

²⁰⁵ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1844

²⁰⁶ Cf. McColl et al. 2013: It's Vintage Darling! An exploration of vintage fashion retailing, p. 145

²⁰⁷ Wu et al. 2012: The effects of product scarcity and consumers' need for uniqueness on purchase intention, p. 264

²⁰⁸ Cf. Wu et al. 2012: The effects of product scarcity and consumers' need for uniqueness on purchase intention, p. 263

5.2.4 Fashion motives

With the attempt to further structure and summarise the psychological motivations it proved to be reasonable separating the consumers enthusiasm for fashion from the previously discussed traits. In the about to be elaborated subcategory “fashion motivation”, the following traits are aimed to be reviewed theoretically:

1. Fashion involvement,
2. Need for uniqueness, and
3. Need for status.

Fashion involvement

Cervellon et al. address the trait of fashion involvement in their paper. They begin by elaborating how the involvement of fashion generally influences the purchasing power of consumers, regardless of the type of clothing.

The concept of fashion clothing involvement can be described as the level at which clothing has personal meaning for consumers, as it is linked to possible variations in the receptiveness of social milieu where individuals need to have certain knowledge regarding fashion cues of groups they desire to be involved in and other groups they try to distinguish themselves from.²⁰⁹ In other words, fashion involvement defines the extent of consumers interest in clothing.²¹⁰ Fashion involvement is of significance for fashion enthusiast since clothing can present tools of personal distinction for individuals, as sociological theories have stated.

As Cervellon et al. present, the main demographics related to fashion involvement are age, gender, and some personality traits of consumers.²¹¹ These aspects are a way to measure the involvement of individuals with fashion clothing. This concept is therefore of importance because it allows to investigate the purchase behaviour of consumers such as the desire to acquire vintage or second-hand clothing.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Auty/Elliott 1998: Fashion involvement, self-monitoring and the meaning of brands, p. 109 f.

²¹⁰ Cf. McColl et al. 2013: It's Vintage Darling! An exploration of vintage fashion retailing, p. 145

²¹¹ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 960

The researchers assume that the level of fashion involvement is linked to consumers' intention to acquire vintage clothing but not to the motivation to buy second-hand fashion (H2a).²¹² As they predict, results should prove that consumers with greater interest, knowledge and desire for fashion have a higher incentive to buy vintage clothing.

The authors presume that as long as vintage fashion remains relevant as a fashion trend, the involvement with fashion can continuously impact the desire to buy vintage clothing.²¹³ H2a was validated by the results of the study, proving that the involvement with fashion is a direct and positive principal driver for vintage consumption.²¹⁴

Need for uniqueness

Consumers should be able to satisfy their need for uniqueness by the purchase and utilization of products, such as clothing items.²¹⁵ Literature indicates that the expression of uniqueness is possible through vintage fashion, as “vintage consumption is associated with shopping for identities and constructing identities that include presenting status in public and revealing our private selves”²¹⁶. This need for uniqueness may be triggered through a perceived lack of uniqueness. Individuals could gain social status and recognition when they are seen as distinct and unique. Cervellon et al. mention three dimensions of the need for uniqueness construct, the first being “the creation of a personal style via the acquisition of unique or original consumer goods”²¹⁷.

²¹² Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 960

²¹³ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 960

²¹⁴ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 970

²¹⁵ Cf. Tian/Bearden/Hunter 2001: Consumers' Need for Uniqueness: Scale Development and Validation, p. 52

²¹⁶ Blazquez Cano/Doyle/Zhang 2018: Do Fashion Blogs Influence Vintage Fashion Consumption? An Analysis from the Perspective of the Chinese Market, p. 170

²¹⁷ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 960

Secondly, the choice to purchase and use goods which are not typically popular to counteract conformity and thirdly the avoidance of similarity²¹⁸ and the consumption of commonly used products.²¹⁹ Accordingly, an individual can express their unique identity by having a recognisable style, by not selecting trendy clothing²²⁰, and by intentionally preventing to wear similar styles as others. Although consumers might choose clothing to oppose conformity and norms, the items often are accepted within consumers' social circles.²²¹

At this point, the definition of the need of uniqueness concept by Cervellon et al. shows coherence with the product scarcity effect which was previously discussed by Schibik et al., since "consumers value the exclusivity of possessing rare pieces which will enhance their sense of differentiation (snob effect)"²²². Hence, a consumer with a strong need for individuality and uniqueness is likely to be on a consistent search for exclusive and scarce fashion pieces.

Due to the rarity and the limited quantity of vintage fashion, Cervellon et al. hypothesise that consumers with a high need for uniqueness have an increased tendency to purchase vintage clothing, while this uniqueness trait simultaneously should not apply to consumers purchasing second-hand (H3a).²²³ As the resulting factor loadings of Cervellon et al.'s study disproved the researchers assumption, the consumers need for uniqueness (-0.194 NS) does not directly influence the consumers' willingness to purchase vintage clothing, leading to the rejection of H3a.²²⁴

²¹⁸ Cf. Tian/Bearden/Hunter 2001: Consumers' Need for Uniqueness: Scale Development and Validation, p. 53

²¹⁹ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 961

²²⁰ Cf. Roux/Guiot 2008: Measuring second-hand shopping motives, antecedents and consequences, p. 71

²²¹ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 961

²²² Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 961

²²³ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 961

²²⁴ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 969

Need for status

When it comes to vintage fashion, a certain level of awareness and connoisseurship regarding the originality is required to truly recognize pieces of rarity and quality.²²⁵ The need for status can be experienced by anyone yet does the level of wealth determine if someone possesses genuine vintage items or just replicas of those prestigious garments.²²⁶

The authors therefore conclude that the increased attractiveness in vintage fashion influences the manufacture of vintage inspired clothing and counterfeit originals.²²⁷ As a result, consumers face even more difficulties when trying to identify authentic vintage items, especially since higher prices nowadays do not necessarily indicate authenticity or high quality. Cervellon et al. presume a link between the need for status and the consumers intention of purchasing vintage clothing rather than second-hand clothing.

In their opinion, consumers with higher needs for status are less likely to aspire the consumption of second-hand fashion since these items are outdated and unattractive, while their intention to buy vintage fashion should not be influenced by their increased need for status (H4a).²²⁸ With a negative factor loading of -0.06 NS the assumption H4a was dismissed, it proved that the need for status does not directly impact the consumers' willingness to purchase second-hand clothing.²²⁹

²²⁵ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 961 f.

²²⁶ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 962

²²⁷ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 962

²²⁸ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 962

²²⁹ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 969

5.2.5 Negativity bias

One phenomenon found in literature which might be an impeding factor for consumers when purchasing used clothing was the so-called negativity bias.²³⁰ The negativity bias in the context of second-hand clothing consumption refers to the tendency of potential consumers to focus more heavily on the potential negative aspects of these items, rather than their positive attributes.²³¹ This bias is predominantly influenced by sociocultural factors, psychological perceptions, and consumer conditioning.

One of the most prominent negative perceptions associated with second-hand clothing revolves around hygiene. Consumers often harbour apprehensions about the cleanliness of clothing that has been previously worn, regardless of the sanitation measures taken by second-hand retailers. This is often linked to a perceived “contagion” from the previous owner, a bias amplified in situations of uncertainty, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consumers often perceive second-hand clothing as being of lower quality due to its used status. They might associate wear and tear with inferiority, even though many second-hand items are of high quality and may even include barely worn or unworn brand-name and designer pieces. From a sociocultural perspective, second-hand clothing is often seen as indicative of lower socioeconomic status. This perception can make consumers reticent to purchase second-hand items due to fear of stigma or judgment.²³² However, it's important to note that attitudes are shifting, especially among younger, more environmentally conscious consumers. Second-hand shopping often requires more effort than buying new. Items are unique, and finding the right size, style, or brand can take time and patience. Some consumers might associate this increased effort with a negative shopping experience.

The thought of wearing something previously owned by a stranger can cause psychological discomfort. Consumers might imagine the previous owner's habits, lifestyle, and personal history, leading to negative emotions or feelings of disgust. Seemingly the negativity bias clarifies why buyers could potentially sense negative feelings towards all types of previously

²³⁰ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1837

²³¹ Cf. Belk 1988: Possessions and the Extended Self, p. 140

²³² Cf. Fox 2018: Understanding the Culture of Consuming Pre-owned Luxury, p. 47

owned and used products. In theory, therefore this phenomenon should be applicable to all used goods, but looking at consumer behaviour patterns the negativity bias appears to be a problem for second-hand fashion. Hence, the question arises why consumers have negative associations towards second-hand, but not towards vintage items.

With the help of the second study Schibik et al. approached to “attenuate the differences between vintage and second-hand products (H4) by manipulating subjects’ perceptions of the historical lineage associated with a second-hand item”.²³³ The researchers presumed that consumers belonging to the second-hand product condition would associate the product more with the fact that it has been previously owned than the participants belonging to the vintage product condition. They believed that providing the consumer with information about the products’ historical lineage, differences between the two product types and their perception of scarcity, pastness and contagion could be manipulated.²³⁴ Based on the results it is correct that the knowledge about lineage can influence consumers’ perception of previous use.²³⁵

In the frame of hypothesis number four the authors also presumed (H4c) that gaining knowledge about the past of the product can reduce negative perceptions of consumer contagion (the negativity bias). First, they were able to validate that the negativity bias and consumer contagion were more influential on consumers which were assigned to second-hand product conditions ($M_{second-hand} = 3.42$) than consumers assigned to vintage product conditions ($M_{vintage} = 2.52$).²³⁶ These data prove that a negative perception is attached to a greater extend to products labelled second-hand. Furthermore, the results explained that historical lineage would not statistically influence the perception of consumer contagion for products of the vintage condition.²³⁷ In contrast, participants of the second-hand product

²³³ Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1845

²³⁴ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1845 f.

²³⁵ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1848

²³⁶ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1849

²³⁷ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between “consumer pastness,” scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1849

category who received information about the products' historical lineage would perceive the product as less contaminated as participants who were not given those background information (H4c).²³⁸ In general, the researchers could argue that consumers become more likely to purchase second-hand products (and therefore overcome the negativity bias) when they receive historical lineage information. To conclude the scientific findings, the results proved that historical lineage could increase the willingness to purchase making second-hand products ($M_{second-hand} = 3.91$) similarly likely to be purchased as vintage products ($M_{vintage} = 3.41$).²³⁹

It can be said that the negativity bias or consumer contagion only applies to products of the category second-hand, and the phenomenon does not apply for products labelled vintage. Only when consumers know about the past of the second-hand product, feelings of disgust toward that product can be eliminated. Negative connotations with second-hand products can be eliminated by providing information about the products' past which results in a higher desirability for second-hand items.

In summary, one reason for why the negativity bias occurs only for second-hand fashion could be the labelling.²⁴⁰ The purchase decision of the consumer can be influenced through the labelling of the clothing article, meaning that the same two items can be perceived differently depending on whether the item is marketed with the label "second-hand" or "vintage".²⁴¹ For sellers of vintage fashion, it is easier to hide the fact that the items have been owned by someone else in the past, whereas it is more difficult to do so when it comes to second-hand clothing. Marketers can change the narratives for used fashion to manipulate the consumer by highlighting the historical lineages of second cycle clothing to avoid the negativity bias.²⁴²

²³⁸ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1849

²³⁹ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1849

²⁴⁰ Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 210

²⁴¹ Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1837

²⁴² Cf. Schibik/Strutton/Thompson 2022: What makes a product vintage? Investigating relationships between "consumer pastness," scarcity and purchase intentions toward vintage products, p. 1837

5.2.6 Consumer propensity

Other psychological factors that influence consumer behaviour based on pleasure, enjoyment, and emotional gratification associated with purchasing a product could be summarised as hedonic motives. When it comes to vintage and second-hand clothing, the propensity of consumers may drive their purchasing behaviour.

The activity of second-hand and vintage shopping itself might be an own purchasing motivator for consumers that view treasure and bargain hunting as their hobby. The experience might evoke the sense of belonging to a group when consumers are surrounded by like-minded people in those purchasing settings. The exchange with other shoppers or salespeople can further contribute to the reason why fashion enthusiasts consider purchasing clothing as their hobby.²⁴³

Consumers experience a sense of achievement during the “process of sifting through, hunting around”²⁴⁴ and the attempt to find special and genuine items of high quality. Because of the slim chances of finding unique pieces and the unpredictability of the hunt for vintage and second-hand fashion, consumers sense an excitement when buying previously owned clothing.²⁴⁵ As the authors Kent et al. describe, the features of hunting for vintage can fulfil “customers’ curiosity and desire for novelty, platforms to discover unique pieces and to reinterpret past trends and styles in a contemporary way”²⁴⁶.

The authors Cervellon et al. differentiate between the terms treasure and bargain hunting when talking about hedonic motives. They believe, bargain hunting is applicable to second-hand shopping because the main goal for consumers’ is the search and the hunt for low prices, good value for their money and well-preserved fashion items.²⁴⁷ On the other hand, the consumption of vintage fashion resembles the hunt for treasures, as vintage items are less of a necessity but more unique and sentimental treasures.²⁴⁸ The economic motives

²⁴³ Cf. Roux/Guiot 2008: Measuring second-hand shopping motives, antecedents and consequences, p. 77

²⁴⁴ Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 211

²⁴⁵ Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 211

²⁴⁶ Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 211

²⁴⁷ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 964

²⁴⁸ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 964

align with their definitions for those concepts, also reflecting how the hunt for second-hand clothing is driven by the goal to save money²⁴⁹ while this should not be a driver for vintage clothing. Based on these two concepts, the authors first presume that treasure hunting is a concept linked to vintage shopping, caused by the psychological traits' uniqueness and nostalgia (H1-2-3b).²⁵⁰ Simultaneously, the authors link bargain hunting to the purchase of second-hand clothing caused by financial arguments such as frugality, need for status and eco-consciousness (H4-5-6b).²⁵¹

Indeed, H1-2-3b was accepted as the need for uniqueness, consumers' involvement with fashion and their sense of nostalgia influences consumers propensity for treasure hunting.²⁵² The study results also accept H4-5-6b, as frugality, the need for status, and consumers' eco-consciousness influence bargain hunting, which is the main motivation to buy second-hand clothing.²⁵³

Vintage clothing consumers like the hunt for treasures and are, in the case of a good find, more willing to pay higher prices. The need for status is an indirect driver for buying second-hand and related to bargain hunting. At the same time, consumers with higher fashion involvement are less driven by the hunt for treasures, but often engage in the consumption of vintage through different shopping channels than vintage treasure hunters.²⁵⁴ Consumers intention to purchase vintage is only indirectly influenced by their need for uniqueness when they actively participate in the hunt for treasures.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁹ Cf. Weil 1999: *Secondhand Chic: Finding Fabulous Fashion at Consignment, Vintage, and Thrift Stores*, p. 1

²⁵⁰ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: *Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion*, p. 964

²⁵¹ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: *Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion*, p. 964

²⁵² Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: *Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion*, p. 969

²⁵³ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: *Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion*, p. 969

²⁵⁴ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: *Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion*, p. 970

²⁵⁵ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: *Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion*, p. 969

5.3 Product-related factors

5.3.1 Sustainability drivers

One critical ethical driver for consumers can be their eco-friendliness, therefore the environmental factor. The sustainability driver can be triggered within consumers due to pollution and climate change.²⁵⁶ Criticism is targeted towards producers of the fast fashion industry as well as the consumers of fast fashion goods as their waste, consumerism, and throw-away behaviour is causing these severe environmental problems.²⁵⁷ Over the past couple of years, a noticeable shift occurred in the minds of the consumers. By recycling garments and extending the life spans of clothing through re-selling, an attempt to reduce waste is made. Sustainability nowadays has even become a competitive argument for clothing retailers and the textile industry as the customers have become more aware of the waste produced by the fashion market.²⁵⁸ Second cycle clothing gained popularity and its consumption has increased, sustainability therefore can be seen as an important product-related motivator.²⁵⁹

Especially for eco-conscious consumers, the purchase of second-hand clothing can act as a tool to express their socially conscious selves.²⁶⁰ The researchers assume that the higher the eco-consciousness of consumers, the higher their willingness to buy second-hand and vintage clothing to the same extend (H6a). Yet, it needs to be clarified whether the consumption of vintage clothing is at all influenced by environmental arguments and whether the effect might be higher or lower for either second-hand or vintage fashion.

While there has been a direct relation between the eco-consciousness and the consumption of second-hand fashion in general, this shows to not be a direct motivator for vintage fashion.²⁶¹ H6a was rejected since the intention to buy neither of the two product types is directly

²⁵⁶ Cf. Brooksworth/Mogaji/Bosah 2023: Fashion Marketing in Emerging Economies: An Introduction, p. 9

²⁵⁷ Cf. Mackie/Campbell 2023: Sustainability and the Supply Chain, p. 165

²⁵⁸ Cf. Kent/Winfield/Shi 2018: Commercialisation and the Authenticity of Vintage Fashion, p. 213

²⁵⁹ Cf. McColl et al. 2013: It's Vintage Darling! An exploration of vintage fashion retailing, p. 145

²⁶⁰ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 963

²⁶¹ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 969

driven by the ecological consciousness of the consumer.²⁶² The motive of eco-consciousness is only a relevant driver for purchasing second-hand clothing due to the “mediating effect of bargain hunting”²⁶³. The authors interpret a striking discrepancy in consumers behaviour, because although the environmental argument may be important, consumers’ actions show that they do not behave in an environmentally friendly way when consuming fashion.²⁶⁴ As Veblen also noticed, consumers of fashion might be aware of the waste produced by the fashions industry and its negative impact on the environment, but still desire these wasteful goods.²⁶⁵

5.3.2 Financial motives

Besides the “environmental factors, it appears that the current economic and social climate has contributed towards a new consumer trend for acquiring and reusing second-hand clothing”.²⁶⁶ This can be traced back to the recession, as the financial crisis made consumers more aware of their spendings. Over the last decade the rise of consumer demand for second-hand fashion and a de-stigmatisation of previously owned clothing could be observed.²⁶⁷

In general, second-hand objects are less expensive than related new goods.²⁶⁸ However, prices for previously owned clothing are not necessarily lower than prices of new fashion items, since especially vintage clothing is of higher value.²⁶⁹ “Most consumers, including vintage experts, do not have a reference price for second-hand and vintage pieces, as it

²⁶² Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 969

²⁶³ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 970

²⁶⁴ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 970

²⁶⁵ Cf. Veblen 1894: The Economic Theory of Woman’s Dress, p. 201

²⁶⁶ Ryding/Henninger/Blazquez Cano 2018: Introduction to Vintage Luxury Fashion: Exploring the Rise of the Secondhand Clothing Trade, p. 2

²⁶⁷ Cf. Battle/Ryding/Henninger 2018: Access-Based Consumption: A New Business Model for Luxury and Secondhand Fashion Business?, p. 31

²⁶⁸ Cf. Weil 1999: Secondhand Chic: Finding Fabulous Fashion at Consignment, Vintage, and Thrift Stores, p. 1

²⁶⁹ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 962

depends on the birth period and rarity of the piece”²⁷⁰, the authors explain. Those who are specifically seeking out vintage clothing may be more willing to pay a higher price for the rarity and uniqueness of the item. They may also be more likely to purchase vintage clothing as an investment piece, as some vintage items can increase their value over time.

On the other hand, more frugal consumers may be more inclined to buy second-hand clothing, to “make smart choices, re-use their resources and spend their money carefully”²⁷¹. The writers approach explains how the consumer trait of frugality is directly linked to value and price consciousness, but not to environmental consciousness or ethical drivers.²⁷² The contradiction existing in the concept of fashion with short seasonal trends and the opposing trait consumers with financial arguments and sustainable drivers made the authors assume that solely the purchase of second-hand clothing is influenced by frugality, but not the purchase of vintage clothing (H5a).²⁷³ This should be caused by the different product types, as old vintage is more valuable than new pieces, but second-hand clothing does not possess age value. The hypothesis H5a was accepted by the results of the study of Cervellon et al., as it has proven correctly that consumers of vintage fashion are not driven by frugality.²⁷⁴ On the other hand, consumers of second-hand clothing show to have frugality as their main driver. Therefore, second-hand shoppers are value-conscious, whereas vintage fashion enthusiasts are not price sensitive. Because vintage fashion pieces are not necessarily cheaper, but sometimes even more expensive than modern pieces and new luxury fashion, the income of the consumers affects the intention to purchase vintage.²⁷⁵ Second-hand clothing may be more appealing to consumers who are primarily motivated by cost savings, as it can be less expensive than new clothing.

²⁷⁰ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 962

²⁷¹ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 962

²⁷² Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 962 f.

²⁷³ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 963

²⁷⁴ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 969

²⁷⁵ Cf. Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women’s purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 969

6 Conclusion

This thesis, entitled "*Investigating the rising trend of vintage fashion: What factors motivate consumers to buy vintage and second-hand clothing?*", has embarked on an exploration of the multifaceted motivations that compel consumers towards vintage and second-hand clothing markets. The research has identified psychological and product-related factors that are pivotal in influencing consumer behavior in these sectors.

The analysis of this thesis confirmed the question whether there are any differences at all between the types of products. Indeed, not only the product types differ from each other, but there are profound differences in the consumer profiles. The results prove that the motivating factors of consumers of vintage fashion must also be different from the motivating factors of consumers of second-hand clothing. Some results, such as the findings of the paper of Cervellon et al. prove, that "the profile and motives of the consumer of vintage fashion are unique and very different from that of second-hand fashion"²⁷⁶, validating that the differentiation of vintage and second-hand clothing in this thesis was necessary.

Acknowledging the limitations of this research topic, it is difficult to say "how the motivational basis varies between second-hand items and vintage items"²⁷⁷ due to the complexity of the intrinsic motivators' consumers can experience when shopping for these fashion items. An overlap of those motivating factors is inevitable, some can be applied solely for second-hand clothing, others mostly for vintage pieces but in practice, a consumer might experience some purchase motivators for both products.

Main internal drivers of vintage fashion consumers have shown to be factors such as "the personal elements of style, quality, and individuality"²⁷⁸. Therefore, an individual likes to use vintage fashion to express their authentic self-identity to the public. Vintage fashion consumers might try to distinguish themselves from the different groups surrounding them. Simultaneously, they generate inclusivity with their like-minded peers by using vintage fashion.

²⁷⁶ Cervellon/Carey/Harms 2012: Something old, something used: Determinants of women's purchase of vintage fashion vs second-hand fashion, p. 969

²⁷⁷ Turunen/Leipämaa-Leskinen/Sihvonen 2018: Restructuring Secondhand Fashion from the Consumption Perspective, p. 14

²⁷⁸ Cassidy/Bennett 2012: The rise of vintage fashion and the vintage consumer, p. 258 f.

On the psychological front, the research findings reveal that consumers are drawn towards vintage clothing due to their perceived value associated with the past (consumer pastness), the age of the item (age value), feelings of nostalgia and the rarity of the item (product scarcity). The results indicate that these characteristics do not apply to second-hand clothing. Many are drawn to vintage clothing for its quality, as well as its connection to history and nostalgia. Some individuals collect vintage clothing as a hobby, while others may incorporate it into their personal style. Vintage clothing can also have cultural significance, as it may be associated with movements or subcultures.

Although vintage fashion consumers use vintage clothing to satisfy their need for individuality, the results of the study showed that a consumer with a high need for uniqueness is not more likely to buy vintage clothing than second-hand clothing. This could mean that second-hand clothing can be used just as well as vintage fashion to express one's individuality. The same applies to consumers' high need for status. The results showed no significant differences for vintage or second-hand clothing. This might present an opportunity for second-hand retailers to meet the needs of consumers with their second-hand pieces, even if the buyers have a high need for status.

Product-related factors such as frugality and value consciousness showed that only second-hand clothing consumers are driven by these traits, while vintage fashion consumers are not sensitive to higher prices. Contrary to popular belief, a consumer with a greater awareness of sustainable purchasing does not necessarily act sustainably in practice. Therefore, a consumer with a higher propensity for environmental friendliness is not more likely to buy vintage or second-hand clothing.

The hunt for treasures can be associated with the purchase of vintage clothing because consumer attitudes such as uniqueness and nostalgia only occur in the case of buying vintage garments. Hence, vintage clothing is perceived as a treasure, while second-hand clothing is perceived as a bargain. Conversely, the hunt for bargains (so second-hand clothing) can be linked with consumer attitudes such as frugality and sustainability. The consumers involvement of fashion can be supported by these findings. Second-hand consumers acquire the clothing articles out of a necessity, while vintage fashion consumers show a greater involvement with fashion and therefore enjoy the purchase of vintage clothing.

The theoretical implications of these findings add nuance to our understanding of consumer behavior in the context of fashion. Existing theories on consumer behavior emphasize the role of personal and societal factors in shaping consumer preferences. The findings corroborate these theories but extend them by highlighting specific psychological and product-related factors that influence consumers' decisions in the vintage and second-hand clothing markets.

From a practical standpoint, these findings provide valuable insights for fashion retailers, marketers, and policymakers. Retailers and marketers can leverage this understanding to better cater to vintage and second-hand consumers by providing unique, nostalgic, and scarce items at a reasonable price. Moreover, the importance of sustainability drivers suggests that promoting the eco-friendly aspects of vintage and second-hand clothing can appeal to ethically conscious consumers, even if eco-conscious consumers do not always act in alignment with their values. For policymakers, understanding these motivations can help design policies to foster sustainable consumer behavior and further the goals of a circular economy.

The phenomenon of the negativity bias has shown to only be true for second-hand clothing and does not apply to vintage fashion. Developments have shown how a fade of the stigma around second-hand shopping turned perspectives for many consumers, making it increasingly desirable and socially accepted to openly buy previously used clothing.

Addressing these biases is essential for promoting a more sustainable fashion industry. Strategies to overcome the negativity bias can include improving the presentation and curation of second-hand items, providing transparent information about sanitation practices, marketing strategies focusing on the unique and sustainable aspects of second cycle fashion, and the integration of second-hand sections into traditional retail stores to normalize the practice.

Further, fashion retailers and marketers can reduce the feeling of consumer contagion by providing the consumer with information of the historical lineage of the used garment. As societal values continue to shift towards more sustainable and conscious consumption, it is likely that these negative biases will further diminish.

In conclusion, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of consumer motivations in the vintage and second-hand clothing markets, contributing to both academic and practical understanding of sustainable fashion. The importance of “understanding the consumers’ behaviors is essential for several fashion business activities, ranging from product development and branding strategies to communications management”²⁷⁹, which substantiates the relevance of the investigation of the different consumer motives regarding such similar yet distinct product types such as vintage and second-hand clothing.

By elucidating the various psychological and product-related factors that drive consumers towards these markets, it adds valuable insight to the broader discourse on sustainable consumption practices. This research underscores the rising relevance of vintage and second-hand clothing in the current fashion landscape, reinforcing their critical role in shaping a more sustainable future for the fashion industry.

Only when understanding consumers and their needs, drivers, and habits, marketers can make use of the detailed insights gained, which justifies the relevance of this thesis and its contribution to future research.

²⁷⁹ Brooksworth/Mogaji/Bosah 2023: Brand, Consumer and Sustainability Perspectives in Fashion Marketing: Conclusion and Research Agenda, p. 270 f.

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Declaration of Independence

Hereby I, Atena Aghighi, declare that the thesis presented herein, titled "*Investigating the rising trend of vintage fashion: What factors motivate consumers to buy vintage and second-hand clothing?*", is the result of my independent research and scholarly work.

I confirm that all the sources, references, and materials used in the preparation of this thesis have been appropriately cited and acknowledged according to the established academic conventions and guidelines.

I attest that this thesis represents my original work and that I have not submitted it elsewhere for examination purposes. I acknowledge that this thesis will be subject to evaluation by the academic community, and I am prepared to defend my work and respond to any questions or critiques that may arise. I accept the use of an external plagiarism software to check my work.

Landsberg am Lech, 03.08.2023

Place, Date


Signature