Haute Ecole
« ICHEC – ECAM – ISFSC »

Enseignement supérieur de type long de niveau universitaire

Unlocking the second-hand market opportunity

Strategic imperatives for luxury brands in Belgium

Mémoire présenté par :
Oona SABBE

Pour l'obtention du diplôme de :
Master's degree in Management Science
Année académique 2023-2024

Promoteur :
Natacha GHESQUIERE

Boulevard Brand Whitlock 6 - 1150 Bruxelles

1 Summary of the thesis

The fashion industry is coming under increasing scrutiny for its negative environmental and social impacts. Consumers demand transparency and responsibility from fashion brands, while fast fashion and seasonal changes further increase the pressure on brands. In addition, there is a large amount of unused luxury second-hand items. This study explores how luxury brands can strategically use marketing and sustainability initiatives to capture the emerging second-hand fashion market, particularly targeting Generation Z consumers in Belgium. The research aims to understand the dynamics of consumer behavior, preferences and, attitudes toward luxury brands in the context of second-hand fashion consumption. It examines the challenges and opportunities for luxury brands in the context of changing consumer expectations and highlights the importance of transparency, responsibility, and environmental awareness in brand perception. Through a comprehensive analysis of the second-hand luxury fashion landscape, marketing strategies, and sustainability initiatives, this study seeks to provide actionable insights for luxury brands seeking to navigate and thrive in this changing marketplace.

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Thanks page

2 Thanks page

After obtaining my bachelor's degree in International Entrepreneurship at the Arteveldehogeschool in Ghent, I took on a new challenge by starting a gap year at the Ichec Brussels Management School, where I completely immersed myself in a French-speaking environment. This experience turned out to be immensely rewarding. Pursuing a master's degree in management science at Ichec was undoubtedly the highlight of my academic journey, culminating in the completion of this thesis.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor, Natacha Ghesquiere, for her invaluable time and guidance throughout this complex and challenging process. Her expertise in marketing played a pivotal role in shaping my research and crafting this thesis.

I extend heartfelt appreciation to my parents for their unwavering support throughout my studies. Their encouragement and understanding were instrumental during difficult moments. Additionally, I am grateful for their assistance in proofreading this thesis and for leveraging their network, which significantly enriched my research. Special thanks go to Hilde Baekeland for proofreading my thesis.

Writing this thesis has been an important undertaking that has deepened my passion for fashion and sustainability. As a member of Generation Z, I am keenly aware of the impact our choices as consumers have on the environment and society.

This thesis represents not only an academic achievement but also a personal milestone. It has allowed me to further cultivate my interests and skills, reinforcing my commitment to fostering a sustainable future in the fashion industry.

I hope that the insights and recommendations presented in this thesis will prove valuable to luxury brands striving to adopt a more sustainable and ethical approach to their operations.

With sincere gratitude and best wishes for the future,

Oona Sabbe

Brussels, June 2024

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Sabbe Oona, 221404

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4 Contextualisation

4.1 Introduction

My journey into the world of premium fashion began as a teenager when, at the age of 15, I started working in a boutique specializing in Belgian fashion and clothing from international luxury brands. This hands-on experience sparked my passion for the industry and shaped my perception of quality, craftsmanship, and innovation. Then, studying International Entrepreneurship led to an inspiring six-month internship at Chanel in Brussels, where I was further immersed in the world of luxury, fashion, design, and aesthetics. This experience served as a source of lasting inspiration that continues to drive my efforts.

These hands-on experiences fueled my intense interest in fashion and led to a heightened awareness of my consumer behavior. In particular, I have observed a shift in my purchasing choices, opting for smaller stores that offer high-quality clothing and avoiding larger chains such as Zara and H&M. Additionally, my involvement in platforms such as "Vinted" and "Vestiaire Collective" reflects my commitment to sustainable practices, both in selling and finding luxury items. The allure of second-hand clothing, with its unique stories and charm, has become an integral part of my fashion journey.

Understanding the changing preferences of Gen Z is essential to my research on luxury brands and sustainability. As Gen Z becomes a driving force in shaping consumer behavior, examining their values and preferences will provide valuable insights for luxury brands seeking to thrive in today's marketplace. By recognizing the pivotal role of Gen Z in shaping consumer behavior, this study aims to delve into their evolving preferences, offering invaluable insights for luxury brands aiming to navigate the intersection of sustainability and marketing in today's dynamic marketplace.

Belgian fashion is widely recognized for its unique blend of realism and creativity, with designers known for their dedication to quality and innovation. The emergence of the Antwerp Six in the 1980s - Ann Demeulemeester, Marina Yee, Dries Van Noten, Dirk Bikkembergs, Dirk Van Saene, and Walter Van Beirendonck - marked a pivotal moment in the history of the industry, as their bold innovation and distinctive designs reshaped the global fashion story. Today, the legacy of the Antwerp Six continues to inspire new generations of designers, underscoring Belgium's enduring influence in the fashion world (S. Cheema, 2023).

In Belgium, the clothing and textile industry is dynamic: it employs about 13,000 people in more than 250 companies, 95% of which are SMEs[1], and its turnover is constantly growing. Valued at €9.4 billion, the industry is ranked 7th in Europe (out of a total of 27 EU countries) in 2024 (IBIS World, 2023). By 2024, the Luxury Goods market is projected to hit US$368.90 billion, growing annually at a rate of 3.22%. Personal luxury goods, including apparel, accessories, watches, jewelry, and eyewear, represent the second-largest segment in the industry (Statista, n.d.).

"The second-hand market is currently growing three times faster than the overall fashion industry. In fact, it is expected that by 2030, the second-hand trade will be twice the size of fast fashion (Schramme, 2022)."

[1] Small and Medium Enterprises

The significance of luxury goods is on the rise, particularly as younger generations prioritize Environmental and Social Responsibility (ESR). They seek brands aligned with their values, emphasizing sustainability. Despite being among the most polluting sectors, the fashion and luxury industries are witnessing a growing second-hand market. This shift, driven by economic and ecological concerns, prompts luxury brands to gain deeper insights. Generation Z, shaped by technology and marked by pragmatism, environmental crises, and global movements like "Me Too" and "Black Lives Matter," emerges as a pivotal demographic for luxury companies. Adapting to their needs, interests, and mindset becomes crucial, amplified by the increasing importance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in corporate strategies (« Global Powers of Luxury Goods | Deloitte | Global Economy, Luxury Consumer », 2022; Schneider & Lee, 2022).

4.2 Economic insights

The luxury sector has proven resilient and dynamic despite external challenges such as geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainties. Strong post-crisis results, including those of leading luxury brands such as LVMH, Prada, Hermès, Moncler, Richemont, and Kering, underscore the sector's ability to thrive in adversity. Renewed investor confidence, evidenced by a $70 billion increase in market value, especially after LVMH's robust sales figures, highlights the sector's resilience in the face of economic headwinds, especially in China (The Brussels Times, 2022; Reuters, 2024). As explained in Danziger's article (2024), the fashion market experienced a remarkable increase from 2019 to 2023, with an impressive growth rate of nearly 30% over the four years. Starting at $301 billion in 2019, the market experienced significant fluctuations attributed to the pandemic, with a sharp decline in 2020. However, the market rebounded strongly, surpassing pre-pandemic levels and reaching $373 billion in 2022, as reported by Bain & Company (2024). Dr. Som explains that HNWIs (High-Net-Worth Individuals) have seen their disposable income increase significantly over the past decade, which has contributed to a larger consumer base for luxury goods. The luxury industry is divided into sectors such as hard luxury (watches and jewelry) and soft luxury (fashion and accessories), with intense competition between conglomerates such as LVMH, Kering, Richemont and independent luxury companies such as Hermes and Chanel. Despite economic recessions, the luxury industry is often seen as "recession-proof" because of the resilience of HNWIs and the industry's rapid recovery from financial crises, including the 2001, 2009, and 2020 recessions (Som, 2022).

4.3 Adaptation to digital transformation

The fashion industry is in the midst of a profound digital transformation, marked by increased investment in technology. McKinsey & Company (2022) reports that fashion companies are spending a growing percentage of their revenues, projected to increase from 1.6-1.8% in 2021 to 3.0-3.5% in 2030, on technology improvements. This predicted increase in investment reflects the widespread belief that technology can provide a competitive advantage not only in customer-facing interactions but also in operational efficiency (McKinsey & Company, 2022). Luxury brands are increasingly using technology to reduce uncertainty and enrich the experience throughout the customer journey. As consumers become more conscious about their purchasing decisions, the demand for transparency has increased in importance (Dubois, 2023). More than 50 percent of fashion decision-makers say traceability is becoming a top-five option for reducing emissions in their supply chains, but many brands currently only have visibility into direct supplier relationships (McKinsey & Company, 2022). Bain (2022) highlights the considerable influence of digital touch points on luxury goods sales, with about 80% of purchases influenced by online interactions. Even renowned brands such as Chanel have embraced digital platforms to connect with customers. In addition, Bain & Company (2023a) highlights the ongoing modernization efforts within the luxury industry, characterized by investments in robust information technology infrastructure and reconfigurations of store networks, where increases in prices such as energy and labor costs are not a barrier. Looking ahead, Bain & Company (2023a) forecasts the growth of new revenue streams in the luxury sector, driven by technology, including activities such as metaverses and NFTs[2], community monetization, branded media content, second-hand luxury goods and innovative "3.0 experiences" such as virtual stores and digital shopping assistants. The expected result of these investments; an additional €60 billion to €120 billion in luxury industry sales.

4.4 Sustainability and ethical practices in fashion

The environmental impact of the fashion sector is significant, contributing to global carbon dioxide emissions and plastic production. The use of fossil fuels predominates in production, while circular business models are still emerging. Projections show that the consumption of clothing and footwear will increase by more than 60% by 2023. The fashion industry alone accounts for 10% of global CO2 emissions and one-fifth of global plastic production each year (Team & Company, 2024**;** Bringé, 2024). Moreover, consumers, particularly millennials and Gen-Z, have an increasingly strong preference for sustainability: 64% are influenced by it when making purchasing decisions (Devic, 2023). However, luxury brands face unique challenges due to the perception of luxury goods as harmful to the environment. Traditional sustainability efforts may clash with luxury brand strategies, with the risk of greenwashing or negative consumer perceptions (De Kerviler et al., 2021). Initiatives like the luxury sustainability pact[3] advocated by Antoine Arnault, LVMH's (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton) head of image and environment, underscore the importance of collaboration within the luxury sector (Kent, 2023). Dr. Federica Carlotto, Program Director at Sotheby's Institute of Art, notes that luxury brands are hesitant because of the need for a dedicated circular infrastructure. Nevertheless, such infrastructure is a vital point of engagement for luxury brands with their customers (Carlotto, 2024).

4.5 Problem statement

- The negative environmental and social impact of fashion.
- Consumers become more conscious of the environmental and social impacts of their purchases, they are seeking greater transparency and accountability from fashion brands.
- Pressure to adapt to fast-changing consumer preferences.
- The presence of unused luxury second-hand items.

4.6 Objective

To provide actionable insights and recommendations for luxury fashion brands to enhance their presence and value proposition in the second-hand fashion market targeting Generation Z consumers in Belgium.

[2] Non-Fungible Token
[3] Pact focuses on fostering collaboration among luxury brands to drive meaningful environmental change.

4.7 Scope

This study explores how luxury brands can effectively use marketing and sustainability initiatives to capitalize on the second-hand fashion market among Generation Z consumers in Belgium. Specifically, the study will examine the current landscape of the second-hand fashion market in Belgium, consumer behaviors and preferences, marketing strategies of luxury brands, sustainability initiatives, challenges, and opportunities for brands in this market The study will also explore the role of both brand-controlled second-hand sales, such as those organized directly by the brand, and independent stakeholders, such as multi-brand platforms like Vestiaire Collective[4]

4.8 Research question

How can luxury fashion brands use marketing and sustainability initiatives to add and extract value from the second-hand fashion market, as perceived by Gen Z consumers in Belgium?

Hypothesis 1: Luxury brands that effectively integrate marketing strategies tailored to sustainability initiatives will experience a significant increase in brand perception and consumer engagement within the second-hand fashion market among Generation Z consumers in Belgium.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant relationship between the integration of sustainability-oriented marketing strategies by luxury brands and their brand perception and consumer engagement within the second-hand fashion market among Generation Z consumers in Belgium.

Hypothesis 2: The collaborative integration of corporate-controlled second-hand sales channels and partnerships with non-corporate-controlled stakeholders increases market share and promotes greater brand loyalty for luxury fashion brands seeking to capture Generation Z consumers in the Belgian second-hand fashion market.

Null hypothesis (H_0): There is no statistically significant association between the joint use of corporate-controlled second-hand sales channels and partnerships with non-corporate-controlled stakeholders such as Vestiaire Collective and the market share and brand loyalty of luxury fashion brands targeting Generation Z consumers in the Belgian second-hand fashion market.

4.9 Justification

In this paper, the term Gen Z will also encompass the word "post-millennial", while the term luxury good(s) englobes "upmarket good(s)".

[4] Online platform that specializes in buying and selling pre-owned luxury fashion items (Vestiaire Collective, z.d.).

5 Literature study

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Luxury goods

Across multiple studies, luxury goods are defined by a combination of factors. According to Kapferer & Michaut (2016), the top three items defining luxury across all respondents are "high quality," "expensiveness," and "prestige." According to Ko et al. (2019) A luxury brand is a branded product or service that consumers perceive to (1) be high quality; (2) offer authentic value via desired benefits, whether functional or emotional; (3) have a prestigious image within the market built on qualities such as artisanship, craftmanship, or service quality; (4) be worthy of commanding a premium price; (5) and be capable of inspiring a deep connection, or resonance, with the consumer. Bloomfield et al. (2022) suggest that the allure of luxury goods is transformative, impacting individuals' lives and perceptions by fostering a sense of connection to something valuable. Kapferer (2015) highlights how luxury producers emphasize exquisite craftsmanship and cultural significance, transforming items like bags into symbols of sophistication and intrinsic worth. Luxury goods, according to Kapferer & Bastien (2009), prompt feelings of elevation in terms of social status, cultural superiority, and self-concept for those who consume or possess them. Kenton (2020) underscores that although not essential for survival, luxury items are highly coveted within their respective cultural contexts.

5.1.2 Strategic marketing and sustainability in luxury fashion evolution

The study of strategic marketing refers to the firm's market positioning based on its vision and long-term objectives as well as its comprehensive analyses of multivariate environmental factors designed to deliver the required value-offerings to its stakeholders through policy formulation and effective deployment of its resources to maintain competitive advantage (Iyamabo & Otubanjo, 2013). Simultaneously, the marketing function is essential to overall management tasks in companies (Varadarajan, 2009). Luxury brands are carefully constructed through meticulous marketing and brand-building strategies, which leave their mark on consumers' subconscious and have the following key characteristics: brand strength, differentiation, exclusivity, innovation, product craftsmanship and precision, premium price, and high quality (Som & Blanckaert, 2015).

Sustainability, on the other hand, is deeply rooted in the well-being of future generations and the responsible use of irreplaceable natural resources, diverging from the immediate gratification of present needs (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). In the context of luxury fashion, the consumer's choice to engage with prestigious brands reflects a form of materialistic behavior. Materialism, linked to possessions and prestige, often influences individuals' perceptions of status. While materialism helps clarify consumer behavior, understanding the unique qualities and level of quality associated with prestigious brands requires a more nuanced exploration (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). After discussing sustainability in luxury fashion and its significance, the focus shifts to exploring how this sustainability imperative is reshaping the landscape of luxury fashion (Bouvard, 2023). This transition underscores the strategic implications of marketing in driving sustainability efforts within the fashion industry, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive analysis of how luxury brands strategically adapt to this transformative shift, as emphasized by Di Lodovico and Manzi (2023).

In the face of accelerating climate change, fashion executives are increasingly directing their attention toward constructing more sustainable businesses (McKinsey & Company & Global Fashion Agenda, 2020). This imperative has led brands and manufacturers to reevaluate their business models to align with the impending changes (Balchandani et al., 2023). Simultaneously, as the luxury fashion landscape undergoes a profound transformation, consumers are transcending their roles as passive participants chasing fantasy, evolving into engaged individuals deeply rooted in ecological and comprehensive closing-the-loop concepts. This transformative shift, marked by a prioritization of community and social values, compels luxury brands to embrace the concept of "Sustainable Luxury" (Shilpa & Madhavaiah, 2017). According to Shilpa and Madhavaiah (2017), this adaptation involves the implementation of innovative business solutions and the redefinition of processes, not only to meet evolving consumer expectations but also to secure a sustainable competitive advantage.

Concurrently, the dynamics of fashion marketing are experiencing a paradigm shift, which is shifting from the Total (TCE) to Global (GCE) and Smart Consumer Experience (SCE) concepts (Kim et al., 2014). In the article by Kim et al. (2014), the evolving concepts of Total Consumer Experience (TCE), Global Consumer Experience (GCE), and Smart Consumer Experience (SCE) are explained. Total Consumer Experience (TCE) is defined as a sensation that occurs within an individual when a business intentionally and successfully uses services as a stage and goods as props to connect at a physical, emotional, intellectual, and/or spiritual level (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Global Consumer Experience (GCE) describes global experience as the core purpose of transactions, providing a theoretical understanding of how businesses, consumers, and other market actors co-create value through their interactions on a global scale (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Smart Consumer Experience (SCE) involves consumers engaging in digital environments not only for information seeking and sharing but also for receiving a sense of belonging, finding connections, and building social networks (Andrews, 2002; Zhang & Hiltz, 2003).

Constraints on discretionary spending and an increased focus on captivating brand narratives that transcend traditional product promotion are influencing consumer preferences. This evolution is further fueled by rising expenses associated with performance marketing and the imposition of emerging data privacy regulations, compelling marketers to explore innovative avenues for connecting with shoppers (Balchandani et al., 2023). Kemper & Ballantine, (2019) argue that the transformative power of sustainability not only addresses ethical concerns but also serves as a strategic marketing tool, enabling businesses to create competitive advantages in today's environmentally conscious marketplace. Franco et al. (2019) assert that a sustainable image can differentiate one brand from another, providing a coveted competitive advantage. In this dynamic landscape, where strategic marketing, ethical consumption, sustainability, and consumer engagement intersect, luxury fashion brands must adopt innovative strategies, using insights from the Theory of Fashion Adoption[5] and the influential role of influencers on social media, to thrive in a changing market (Rathore, 2018).

5.1.3 Generation Z's impact on luxury brand sustainability

A key player in this changing landscape is Generation Z, which consists of people born between 1996 and 2010 (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Moreover, in alignment with evolving consumer preferences, it is noteworthy that Generation Z values quality more than previous generations. They tend to be 'informed consumers' and will often research and weigh up options before making a buying decision (Bewicke, 2024). Most of the time, this group of consumers makes purchases based on their own

[5] Theory delves into how and why specific target groups adopt a particular fashion trend over others, contemplating the influential dynamics of group conformity, distinctiveness, and innovation.

beliefs, and marketers start to earn their trust and loyalty as early as possible (Dragolea et al., 2023). According to (Morgan, 2016; Wood, 2013) This generation seems to be the biggest future marketing challenge since it is the driver of innovation and change (Priporas et al., 2017).

5.2 Trends and challenges in the luxury fashion industry

5.2.1 Environmental sustainability

Luxury goods companies play an important role in moving the broader fashion industry toward an environmentally responsible, circular economy (Faccioli et al., 2023). Addressing climate change and global warming stands as one of the paramount challenges confronting the present generation. The intricate relationship between sustainable development and climate change underscores the pivotal role that businesses play in grappling with and devising solutions for these pressing challenges. Remarkably, even luxury businesses find themselves unable to evade the far-reaching environmental concerns (Bae, 2019). In recent years, luxury brands such as Stella McCartney, Balenciaga, and Hermès have embraced innovative mushroom-based materials, indicating a possible shift toward more sustainable fabrics (Kent, 2023).
Among them, Stella McCartney has emerged as a leader in championing sustainability in the fashion industry. Recognizing the complex impact of consumer choices on society and the environment, McCartney strives to make sustainable living accessible and fashionable. In collaboration with companies such as Bolt Threads, McCartney is pioneering eco-friendly solutions such as Mylo "un-leather" made from mushroom roots, and exploring materials such as "wine leather" made from grape waste (Chan, 2023). Through initiatives such as the Collab SOS Fund[6], Stella McCartney not only invests in innovative sustainable solutions but also supports the development of eco-friendly alternatives to traditional luxury materials, thus making Stella McCartney's commitment to positive change and a more sustainable future for luxury fashion (Chan, 2023).

5.2.2 Technological evolution

Generation Z is a challenge, it is the first generation that grew up with rapid digital changes. Gen Z ers experienced the boom of smartphones, wearables, and virtual assistants, among other disruptive technologies. This integration opens them up to incorporating new technology into their lives (Feger & Feger, 2024). Technology can help accelerate the green transition and improve the relationship between companies and their customers. Several recent developments in digital technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT), may change the luxury market forever. In the next three to five years, generative AI could add $150 billion, conservatively, and up to $275 billion to the apparel, fashion, and luxury sector operating profits, according to McKinsey analysis (Harreis et al., 2023). As the Luxury industry embraces the digital age, users face challenges requiring thoughtful consideration. Key areas include data privacy and security, balancing the human element with Generative AI[7], addressing ethical considerations and bias, and adapting to technological change—success and relevance hinge on effectively navigating these challenges (Faccioli et al., 2023). Generative AI systems can also support luxury brands, particularly in the context of "clienteling," in which sales associates build lasting relationships with a brand's highest-spending

[6] invests in Series A and Series B companies fueling a more sustainable economy across materials, ingredients, energy, and supply chains (Bakalar, 2022).
[7] refers to deep-learning models that can generate high-quality text, images, and other content based on the data they were trained on (Martineau, 2024).

customers to boost sales and reinforce brand loyalty. High-end brands, for example, can achieve impressive sales conversions of 60 to 70 percent in exclusive boutiques, such as appointment-only boutiques (Harreis et al., 2023).

Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have a significant impact on the fashion industry, especially among millennials and Generation Z. This is emphasized in "The New Fashion Paradigm" (2023). The fashion industry has shifted towards digital promotion and consumption, making it essential for brands to navigate this landscape to remain relevant and connected to their target audience. Despite their digital presence, luxury brands often struggle with authenticity in online interactions, as noted by Langer (2023). Generation Z values genuine connections with brands and is not hesitant to voice their concerns. Over 30 percent of them shared their opinions on social or political issues through social media platforms in 2022 (Roberts, 2023). Scott Malkin, founder and chairman of Value Retail, highlights the continued significance of physical store experiences. Malkin stresses that regardless of the location, whether it's an airport or a mono-brand boutique, the flagship experience remains essential for showcasing the brand's essence. He suggests that brands find online customer acquisition financially challenging, indicating that the direct-to-consumer model has not proven profitable (Malkin, 2024).

5.2.3 Future outlook

In 2023, several extreme weather events[8] affected the fashion industry. As a result, in 2024, leading fashion companies are expected to enhance their resilience to climate impacts. This is urgent because extreme climate events could endanger the lives and livelihoods of fashion workers and endanger an estimated $65 billion of apparel exports by 2030 (Balchandani et al., 2023). Looking ahead to 2030, the luxury market is expected to keep growing. Chinese consumers will dominate at 35-40%, while Europeans and Americans together represent 40% (Bain & Company, 2023). This means brands must focus on innovation and creativity to remain relevant to consumers. In a competitive environment, expanding customer bases and fostering brand loyalty will be crucial. Brands need to monitor profit margins carefully and manage costs throughout the value chain, using Artificial Intelligence to plan their business precisely, optimize inventory management, and mitigate cost fluctuations. To address future challenges, industry players may turn to mergers and acquisitions to facilitate category growth, expand geographically, or secure vital resources. Embracing sustainability and integrating technology will be pivotal in reshaping supply chain structures to be transparent, adaptable, and environmentally sustainable (Bain & Company et al., 2024). Belgium's luxury goods market is expected to generate a revenue of US$2.16 billion in 2024, with an annual growth rate of 3.09% (CAGR 2024-2028) (Statista, z.d.). This thriving market is being driven by a rising demand for high-end fashion and renowned Belgian brands (Statista, z.d.). The retailer of the future will prioritize offering consumers ultimate choice and flexibility, whether they prefer to purchase new items, buy second-hand, rent items individually, or use them as part of a rental subscription, as articulated by Hyman (Chen, 2023).

5.2.4 Rental fashion

The global shared apparel market is expected to reach £7.5 billion by 2026, with rental fashion gaining prominence as a key component of the circular fashion economy, catering to the preferences of

[8] In the summer of 2023, Europe suffered the worst drought in 500 years, forcing ships on the Rhine to reduce their loads. Also, rising temperatures in Dhaka, Bangladesh, caused exhaustion and dehydration among factory workers, with each degree above 25°C causing a 1.5% loss in productivity (Balchandani et al., 2023).

millennials and Generation Z for aspirational brands and unique pieces (Statista, 2023; Lou et al., 2022). Rental fashion allows a person to borrow clothes for a fixed amount of time, returning the items to the company once they have finished wearing them. Historically, consumers used early fashion rental companies to rent high-end garments for special occasions, such as bridal dress hire or luxury designer clothes. Contemporary trends have looked to make the segment a larger part of the wider circular fashion economy, promoting sustainability and reducing fashion waste (« The New Fashion Paradigm »,2023). Renting fashion offers consumers a low-risk option to experiment, develop, and release their style identity at best, allowing them to create an active and dynamic self-concept without consequences for mistakes (Manchester Metropolitan University & Khan, 2022). Chi et al. (2023) highlight the significant impact of fashion rental incentives on consumer perceptions, emphasizing the role of sustainability and enjoyment in shaping attitudes toward clothing rental subscriptions. Building on the insights from Chi et al., 2023 research, fashion rental companies can further capitalize on this growing market trend by focusing on key incentives such as product variety, information quality, style conformity, and service quality to increase consumer engagement, encourage positive behavior and promote the growth and success of the fashion rental industry, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and circular fashion economy.

5.3 The rise of luxury goods among Generation Z

5.3.1 Consumer perceptions of luxury goods

In economics, an upmarket good is a good for which demand increases more than what is proportional as income rises so that expenditures on the good become a greater proportion of overall spending. Luxury goods contrast with necessity goods, where demand increases proportionally less than income (R Varian, 1992). This economic phenomenon is further nuanced by contemporary consumer perspectives, as individuals increasingly perceive luxury goods not only as items of personal allure but also as long-term financial investments, particularly during times of crisis when certain luxury items, such as jewelry, can serve as valuable investments or hedges against inflation (Hassan et al., 2015). The allure of sustainable shopping practices, particularly through high-end resale markets, adds a new layer to the evolving consumer landscape (Alderman et al., 2022). The sensitivity of customers towards waste and recycling, as the throw-away society is increasing. Consumers are conscious of consuming more with sustainability in mind. The use and purchase of luxury goods can be a solution to this (Stolz, 2022).

5.3.2 Generation Z characteristics and preferences

Shaped by the digital age, climate issues, financial shifts, and the impact of COVID-19, Generation Z is manifesting a unique identity. Their penchant for expressive clothing, a desire to stand out rather than conform, and a preference for ever-changing styles underscore their distinctive approach to consumerism (McKinsey & Company, 2023). The spending of the Z generation and the even younger Alpha generation will outpace the other generations, with growth expected to triple by 2030, accounting for one-third of the market. This accelerated pace reflects a precocious attitude toward luxury, as the Z generation begins luxury purchases some three to five years earlier than their millennials. They enter luxury at the age of 15, as opposed to the age of 18-20 for millennials (Bain & Company, 2023). The challenge for luxury brands is that Gen Z has increasingly divergent value systems from previous generations of consumers. To attract and keep them engaged, luxury brands are rapidly having to move beyond the traditional notions of luxury–such as status, legacy, prestige, and heritage–towards a new set of values: inclusivity, sustainability, transparency, technology, and circular innovation (Maxwell, 2023). Several factors come into play in understanding Generation Z's purchasing intentions, including a preference for lower prices, a desire for individuality, a nostalgic tendency, the importance of trust, and a motivation driven by a desire to use the goods and a concern for forensic goods (Kawulur et al., 2022). Digitally immersed Gen Z individuals are not only well-informed and skeptical but also inclined to research companies and brands before making purchases, having come of age during a period marked by a crisis of trust and showing a preference for brands that radiate honesty (Rijs, 2019). Generation Z is seen as dynamic, transparent, creative, innovative, involved, tolerant, socially responsible, emotional, knowledgeable, and individualistic (Racolța-Paina & Irini, 2021). Educationally, post-millennials are enrolling in college at a significantly higher rate than Millennials at a comparable age (Mitchell et al., 2018).

5.4 Luxury fashion brands and second-hand market

Luxury brands have the idea that their products are inherently more durable than cheaper brands because they make smaller quantities and are designed for longevity. But the reality is that they have always produced too much. This excess is a feature of fashion's dominant business model, designed to maximize production efficiency and sales prospects in a trend-driven industry where accurately matching supply and demand is a perpetual challenge (Kent, 2024).

5.4.1 Luxury second-hand motivations

Due to the high product quality, luxury can be considered as sustainable products. They are suitable for second or third-hand customers and can be seen as a strategy against overconsumption (Stolz, 2022). According to the definition of (Schibik et al., 2022), second-hand products, as explained by (Padmavathy et al., 2019; Roux and Guiot, 2008), refer to consumer goods previously owned by another consumer. As described by Schibik et al. (2022), a thorough examination of the distinction between vintage and second-hand products is important to confirm their historical nature. Vintage products, as defined by (Sarial-Abi et al., 2017), are inherently categorized as second-hand items. It is noteworthy that consumers cannot buy brand-new vintage pieces at local retail shops. Instead, vintage products are exclusively obtained directly from individuals who previously owned them or indirectly through nontraditional retail outlets, as indicated by Cervellon et al. (2012). Within the realm of luxury fashion, the acquisition of vintage fashion is driven by motives such as nostalgia, fashion involvement, and, indirectly, Consumers' Need for Uniqueness (CNFU) (Kessous & Valette-Florence, 2019). Referencing Kessous & Valette-Florence (2019), Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015) identified several motivations for purchasing second-hand luxury items, including a sustainable choice, finding a real deal, acquiring a pre-loved treasure, considering it a risk investment, and discovering a unique find. Additionally, Amatulli et al. (2018) revealed the instrumental value of social acceptance and the terminal values of self-identification, self-confidence, and self-fulfillment associated with purchasing luxury vintage products.

5.4.2 Psychological motivations in luxury resale

According to findings from Granskog et al. (2020), as reported in the article 'Exploring the Perceptions and Motivations of Gen Z and Millennials Toward Sustainable Clothing,' 57% of survey respondents adjusted their lifestyles during the COVID-19 crisis to reduce environmental impact. Additionally, more than 60% indicated active participation in recycling and the purchase of environmentally friendly products (Manley et al., 2023). When examining second-hand luxury products, the act of purchasing is associated with the fulfillment of psychological motivations, including bolstering self-esteem, fostering a sense of belonging, and fulfilling a need for love. Simultaneously, it satisfies self-fulfillment motivations, such as gratification and social climbing. Conversely, the acquisition of first-hand luxury items is linked to obtaining almighty power, addressing a need for uniqueness, being exclusive to an aristocratic elite, and symbolizing professional success. For some, luxury goods represent a familial apprenticeship, forming part of a family legacy and involving hereditary or monarchical power (Kessous & Valette-Florence, 2019).

5.4.3 Gen Z’s sustainable influence on luxury resale

Gen Z's impact on luxury fashion is marked by a nuanced perspective that values ownership experience over brand association (Kovács & Zsóka, 2020; Nógrádi-Szabó & Neulinger, 2017). Kawulur et al. (2022) reveal that owing to the similarity between second-hand clothing and fast fashion, opting for second-hand purchases emerges as a favorable alternative, offering both environmental friendliness and cost-effectiveness (Strähle & Klatt, 2016; Sorensen & Jorgensen, 2019). Their advocacy for circular fashion practices aligns with thrifting and vintage styles, earning them recognition as "green customers" (McKinsey & Company, 2023; Dragolea et al., 2023b). This trend, led by Gen Z resellers and influencers, reshapes luxury fashion, integrating affordable fast fashion with cherished vintage pieces (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Moreover, the adoption of second-hand luxury products enhances the luxury industry's appeal, emphasizing timelessness, durability, and well-defined resale values (Lou et al., 2022). The shift in consumer behavior, particularly evident in online procurement, underscores Gen Z's commitment to sustainability and circular fashion ideals. The second-hand luxury market, distinguished by different consumer perceptions and purchase intentions, reflects a broader trend towards sustainable consumption (Turunen et al., 2020). Vestiaire Collective's B-Corp certification in 2021 underscores the growing significance of fashion resale platforms in fostering sustainable consumption practices (Vestiaire Collective, n.d.). Notably, 82% of purchases on Vestiaire in 2022 replaced first-hand purchases, highlighting the platform's role in promoting circularity (Vestiaire Collective, n.d.). Pricing strategies in thrift stores, ranging from fixed pricing to discounts, aim to strike a balance between affordability and profitability (ThriftCart, 2023). Furthermore, the second-hand market offers brands the opportunity to enhance their recognition and market share by maintaining a presence in resale markets, reinforcing the importance of brand strength and popularity (Ondra, 2020).

5.5 Fashion transparency

The garment industry has undergone rapid evolution, adapting to people's diverse needs and preferences, influenced by factors such as geographical location, climate and traditions. Amid this continued growth, the April 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh marked a pivotal moment in the industry. This incident, considered the second most catastrophic industrial tragedy since Bhopal, resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and many more injured and some permanently disabled (Rodrigues & Khan, 2015). Particularly in the fashion industry, transparency is essential for attaining accountability, reducing environmental impact, and ensuring that employees’ rights are respected (Centobelli et al., 2022).

5.5.1 Fashion impact

Instead of prioritizing the integration of consumer desires and sustainability into the design and production phases, the primary focus is on making clothing for quick trend changes. This is achieved by deliberately planning for product obsolescence and early disposal, which can generate quick profits at the expense of producing significant waste (Kozlowski et al., 2018). This business approach accentuates environmental impact, making European textile consumption the fourth largest contributor to environmental and climate change concerns, after food, housing, and mobility (European Commission, 2024). In addition, the fashion industry is estimated to account for 10% of global carbon emissions, more than the combined emissions of international flights and ocean shipping. (The Impact Of Textile Production And Waste On The Environment (Infographics) | Topics | European Parliament, z.d.). Notably, the fashion industry consumes 1.5 trillion liters of water annually, contributing to 20% of global clean water pollution. The use of toxic chemicals in handling fabrics and pesticides in growing raw materials further exacerbates environmental concerns. Plastics made from synthetic fibers contribute to ocean pollution. In addition, 87% of clothing ends up as waste, and 30% is overproduced and thrown away without being worn. The fashion industry contributes 10% of global carbon emissions and plays a major role in deforestation and land degradation (What If Fashion Were Good For The Planet? | Think Tank | European Parliament, z.d.). Furthermore, the use of tiered supply chains has proven beneficial for major brands and consumers seeking variety but has also led to significant social and environmental damage (Pucker, 2024). The complexity and fragmentation of these supply chains, which are often based on a literal paper trail with each step taking place in different countries, facilitate mislabeling. Despite the challenges in tracing such complex chains, brands can address issues of provenance, as illustrated by the fraudulent actions taken by manufacturer Welspun India in 2016 (Oakes, 2023).

5.5.2 Regulatory impact

Persistent regulatory pressure from the government is forcing companies to make sweeping transformations in technological, material, organizational, economic, and socio-cultural areas (Kivimaa et al., 2019). Textiles weave through every facet of daily life, from clothing and furniture to medical equipment, protective clothing, buildings, and vehicles. The European Parliament recently adopted the EU 'Textile Strategy' – a policy plan to bring down the environmental and social impact of Europe's textile consumption, with a focus on fashion and clothing (European Commission - Have Your Say, z.d.). The initiative is aligned with the European Green Deal, the Circular Economy Action Plan, and the European Industrial Strategy and seeks to implement specific measures (Textiles Strategy, 2024). McKinsey's State of Fashion Report highlights a critical facet of the fashion industry: up to 80 percent of a product's environmental impact is determined during the design phase, closely intertwined with the choice of materials and dyes. Shockingly, the recycling rate for fashion textiles is less than 1 percent, contributing to the alarming fact that a truckload of products is dumped or incinerated every second somewhere in the world (Balchandani et al., 2023).

5.5.3 Transparency imperative

Particularly in the fashion industry, transparency is essential for attaining accountability, reducing environmental impact, and ensuring that employees' rights are respected (Centobelli et al., 2022).

Transparency provides a window into the places and conditions in which our clothes are being made. Transparency is not to be confused with sustainability, but without transparency, achieving and fair fashion industry will be impossible (Fashion Revolution CIC, 2023, P.28). Many brands currently have limited visibility into their suppliers at best and therefore lack reliable and standardized data to make meaningful progress (Balchandani et al., 2023). That is why transparency is a hard-won achievement that has finally been achieved: more than half (52 percent) of the world's largest brands and retailers disclose the names of their front-line manufacturers, and 51 percent disclose their addresses (Fashion

Revolution CIC, 2023, P.69). Consumers are now more conscious about how and where their items are made, and the types of materials used. This is especially prevalent in the millennial and Gen Z consumer market (“The New Fashion Paradigm”, 2023). It should be commonplace for brands to openly share information about the types of fibers they use. This transparency serves as the foundation for building trust and fostering responsible consumption (Fashion Transparency Index 2023, 2023).

5.5.4 Gen Z’s transparency demand

Gen Z, known for their high level of education, values transparency. They grow up with unlimited online access and use information to guide their shopping decisions (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Vilas (2016) mentions that this generation's demand for transparency stems from their upbringing in a world that is more transparent than ever (Racolța-Paina & Irini, 2021b). The survey from Warc the consultancy group for marketeers, showed that 40% of younger consumers find it hard to know if a brand is behaving ethically; more than a third want fashion brands to be more transparent (Rijs, 2019). Brands that are honest and open are more likely to win the trust and loyalty of Gen Z consumers (Britton, 2023). Generation Z demands transparency from luxury brands in terms of production, operations, and supply chain processes (Luxury And Generation Z - Luxury Integrated, n.d.).

5.6 Ethical fashion and Gen Z’s influence

5.6.1 Gen Z’s ethical priorities

Over the past few decades, consumer decision-making processes have been more influenced by ethical concerns, prompting organizations to incorporate ethics and morals into their strategies via Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Toti & Moulins, 2016). According to McKinsey, 73% of Gen Z prioritize buying from socially responsible companies, highlighting the need to address environmental and social concerns. Furthermore, Generation Z actively prioritizes ethical consumption and sustainability, demonstrating a proactive commitment to aligning their buying choices with their moral values (Luxury And Generation Z – Luxury Integrated, n.d.). Nevertheless, the fashion industry confronts ethical dilemmas concerning fair working conditions, human rights, and gender equality. This industry plays a significant role in the alarming global problem of modern slavery, with 50 million people affected (Fashion Revolution CIC, 2023). Gen Z consumers demand that brands align with their ethical values and swiftly abandon those that fall short (Rijs, 2019). Unlike boomers, only 37% of Gen Z display brand loyalty, preferring brands that align with their values (Brooks, 2022). Brands, such as Puma, recognize the importance of ethical values to Gen Z and have adapted their sustainability efforts accordingly (Greiner, 2023). Furthermore, consumer-brand partnerships that prioritize sustainability and relationship-building are crucial for winning Gen Z's favor (Tanveer et al., 2021). Building strong brand loyalty among Gen Z requires a combination of a compelling brand image, an ESG[9] proposition, a rewarding loyalty program, and community engagement (Hilton Siegel & Hatami, 2023). Lastly, garments, as the second most valuable product at risk of forced labor, highlight the need for supply chain transparency and ethical sourcing practices (Global Slavery Index | Walk Free, n.d.).

5.6.2 The fast fashion dilemma

By 2030, the global apparel and footwear industry is expected to reach 102 million tons in volume and $3.3 trillion in value (Global Fashion Agenda et al., 2019). Characterized by rapid trend changes and

[9] Environmental, Social, and Governance

intentional obsolescence, fast fashion prioritizes profit over sustainability and consumer welfare (Kozlowski et al., 2018; Niinimäki and Hassi, 2011). Sheridan et al. (2006) define "fast fashion" as the tactics retailers use to quickly and efficiently incorporate current and emerging trends into their assortment, as described in the work of Fernie et al. (2004). The European Commission's call for an end to fast fashion by 2030 reflects growing concerns about its environmental and social impacts, leading to stricter eco-design regulations and requirements (Rankin, 2022; "The New Fashion Paradigm," 2023). Consumers, especially Gen Z are becoming increasingly aware of the ethical issues associated with fast fashion, they remain trend followers because of the accessibility and affordability offered by fast fashion retailers (Gupta & Gentry, 2018; Ertekin & Atik, 2014). Surprisingly, many Gen Z consumers are concerned about sustainability, but their buying behavior often contradicts these values, indicating a gap between intention and action (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023; McKinsey & Company, 2023). Nevertheless, there is evidence that Gen Z is willing to prioritize eco-friendly options, indicating a possible shift in consumer behavior (Rijs, 2019). The harmful environmental impacts of fast fashion, including its significant contribution to water consumption and carbon emissions, underscore the urgency of addressing this issue (UN Alliance For Sustainable Fashion Addresses Damage Of 'Fast Fashion,' n.d.). Although fast fashion is still widespread, initiatives such as the Waste Framework Directive[10] and EU legislation on textiles aim to reduce the carbon footprint and promote sustainable practices throughout the textile supply chain (Šajn & European Parliamentary Research Service, 2022).

5.6.3 Shifting perceptions of luxury

The perception of luxury among Generation Z is multifaceted and shaped by different values and emotional drivers. Financial considerations, such as the balance between price and quality, play an important role, along with functional values that emphasize the uniqueness and quality of luxury products. Social values, such as society's perception of luxury brands and their ability to exude status, further influence attitudes. Personal preferences for design and brands that reflect individual identity also contribute to perceptions of luxury brands (Wijaya & Primadini, 2023). Luxury itself is often equated with beauty and indulgence, seen as a symbol of the elite, and imbued with the intangible value that comes from the authenticity of the brand (Leong et al., 2022; Batat, 2020). Moreover, purchasing luxury fashion is often an emotional journey that evokes feelings of happiness, pride, and indulgence (Journal, 2024). Ipsos research shows that for affluent consumers, luxury is primarily about experience, with emotional responses being the main drivers of luxury consumption (Ipsos, 2019). Luxury is seen as something that makes people feel special, prestigious, pampered, and exclusive, setting it apart from mere premium offerings (Ipsos, 2019).

[10] sets the basic concepts and definitions related to waste management, including definitions of waste, recycling and recovery (European Commission, z.d.).

6 Methodology

This research aims to answer the question of how luxury brands can use marketing and sustainability initiatives to increase their presence and value in the second-hand fashion market, as perceived by Generation Z consumers in Belgium. To achieve this, a combination of literature review and surveys were conducted to understand consumer perceptions, preferences, and behaviors.

6.1 Data collection

The data collection process included consulting scientific articles and reports on Generation Z, luxury fashion and second-hand markets to inform the literature review. The impetus for this research was provided by participation in Fashion Talks in Antwerp on Nov. 30, 2023, which included presentations such as McKinsey & Company's "The State of Fashion Report" and discussions with emerging designers, which provided valuable insights.

The survey was designed based on existing literature on second-hand fashion and consumer behavior. The survey targeted two distinct respondent groups: individuals who have purchased second-hand items and those who have not. Various question formats were employed to ensure comprehensive data collection:

- Closed-ended questions: the survey offered respondents a structured response format with predetermined answer choices. For example, respondents could choose binary options such as “Yes” or “No” to indicate their experience with second-hand purchases. In addition, Likert scale options such as “Likely,” “Neutral,” “Very Likely,” “Unlikely,” and “Very Unlikely” were used to measure attitudes or likelihood. In addition, respondents used scale options such as “Extremely important,” “Very important,” “Moderately important,” “Somewhat important,” and “Not at all important” to indicate the importance of various factors related to second-hand purchases. This approach facilitated clear and concise data collection, allowing respondents to accurately state their opinions and preferences within a defined framework of response choices.
- **Open-ended questions:** the survey allowed respondents to freely express their opinions and experiences in their own words, encouraging detailed and personalized responses. For instance, respondents were asked to share their favorite luxury brand and provide additional insights in the closing question: "Is there anything else you would like to share about your perceptions, experiences, or preferences regarding luxury fashion and their use of second-hand platforms?" These open-ended questions aimed to capture nuanced perspectives and gather qualitative data on individual attitudes and behaviors towards luxury fashion and second-hand platforms.
- **Semi-open questions:** These questions presented predefined response options along with an "Other (specify)" choice.

For respondents who had never purchased second-hand, a series of five targeted questions were included to gain insight into the underlying reasons for their abstention from such purchases. These questions examined factors such as hygiene, quality perception of items, trust in sellers, availability of desired items and concerns about authenticity. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of one to five the extent to which these barriers prevented them from purchasing second-hand luxury fashion items.

For respondents who were familiar with buying used luxury items, the survey questions were structured into several categories to comprehensively explore their purchasing behavior and perceptions. These categories included:

- **Part 1: Shopping habits (3 questions):** Respondents were asked where they typically buy used luxury fashion items and their attitudes toward luxury fashion, including ethical considerations and personal style expression.
- **Part 2: Perceptions of used luxury platforms (3 questions):** Likert-scale questions were used to assess the influence of various factors such as environmental considerations, affordability, and unique styles on their decision to buy second-hand.
- **Part 3: Brand loyalty and engagement (5 questions):** Questions in this section examined respondents' loyalty to luxury brands and their likelihood of purchasing from a dedicated second-hand platform of their favorite luxury brand.
- **Closing Part: Communication and marketing (5 questions):** Respondents were presented with initiatives that would encourage them to shop on a luxury brand's second-hand platform, aiming to gather insights into effective communication and marketing strategies.

6.2 Data analysis

After the data collection phase using Qualtrics, the collected survey data were imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for analysis, which served as a crucial first step in preparing the data for in-depth research and interpretation. Analysis included generating frequency tables to summarize categorical data, t-tests to compare averages between respondent groups, and correlation analyses to examine relationships between variables. These statistical techniques allowed for a comprehensive exploration of consumer behavior, attitudes and preferences within the luxury second-hand fashion market, which ultimately provided valuable insights for the interpretation and conclusions of the study

6.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

In this study on consumer preferences for purchasing second-hand luxury items among Generation Z in Belgium, only fully completed surveys were included in the analysis. Surveys were exclusively conducted with individuals aged 13 to 27 residing in Belgium. Responses that were unclear or incorrectly filled out were excluded from the analysis to ensure data accuracy and reliability.

6.4 Research procedure

The survey was conducted between April 9 and April 22, 2024, using social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn as primary distribution channels. The initial response rate was promising, with 28 responses within the first day. The survey targeted individuals ages 20 to 27, which matched the researcher's demographic cohort, making data collection within this age group smooth. However, reaching younger participants aged 15 to 19 years presented challenges. Therefore, collaboration was made with a local high school to increase the survey's reach among this demographic. Ultimately, 232 respondents completed the survey. Due to incomplete responses, only 145 survey results were deemed appropriate for analysis.

6.5 Validation

To ensure validity, the survey was designed based on relevant literature selected for relevance to the research question. Only the most recent literature was consulted for the survey, enhancing the findings' validity.

7 Results

7.1 Purpose statement

This study examines how sustainability-oriented marketing strategies and collaborative sales channels impact Generation Z consumers' perception and engagement in Belgium's luxury second-hand fashion market. It focuses on correlations between these strategies and consumer behavior among Generation Z in Belgium. The study seeks to understand if sustainability-oriented marketing strategies are associated with enhanced brand perception and consumer engagement among Generation Z consumers in Belgium's second-hand fashion market. It aims to investigate the relationship between using sustainability-focused marketing approaches and positive outcomes in how Generation Z perceives brands and engages with them in the context of second-hand fashion. The study further explores whether collaborative efforts, such as company-controlled second-hand sales channels and partnerships with platforms, play a role in boosting market share and fostering brand loyalty for luxury brands that target Generation Z consumers in Belgium's second-hand fashion market. It investigates if partnerships between luxury brands and specific platforms or sales channels impact market growth and consumer loyalty within the Generation Z demographic in Belgium's second-hand fashion industry.

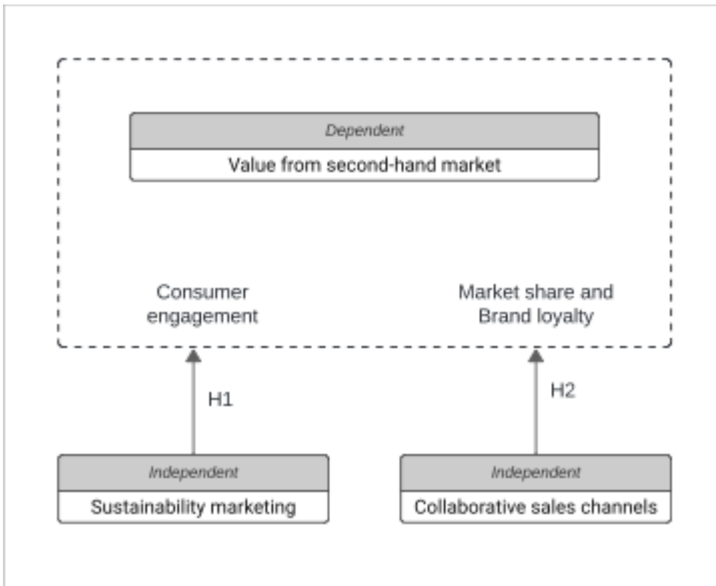


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

7.1.1 H1: Sustainability marketing's impact on brand perception and consumer engagement

The hypothesis proposes that luxury brands can influence brand perception and consumer engagement among Generation Z consumers in Belgium's second-hand fashion market by adopting marketing strategies aligned with sustainability initiatives. This hypothesis implies that implementing sustainability-focused marketing approaches may directly affect how Generation Z perceives brands and engages with them in the context of second-hand fashion. However, findings by Palomo-Domínguez et al. (2023) and McKinsey & Company (2023) indicate that despite Generation Z consumers expressing concerns about sustainability, their actual purchasing behavior often contradicts these values. This suggests that although sustainability-oriented marketing strategies can be implemented, their effectiveness in significantly increasing brand perception and consumer engagement within the second-hand fashion market among Generation Z consumers in Belgium may be limited by a gap between intention and action.

7.1.2 H2: Collaborative channels boost market share & brand loyalty

This hypothesis suggests that the collaborative integration of corporate-controlled used-goods sales channels and partnerships with non-corporate-controlled stakeholders impacts the market share and brand loyalty of luxury brands targeting Generation Z consumers in the Belgian second-hand market. It emphasizes the direct influence of collaborative sales channels on market share and brand loyalty, where factors like partnership effectiveness and sales channel accessibility could moderate this relationship. Support for this hypothesis comes from insights by McKinsey & Company (2023) and Dragolea et al. (2023b), which discuss Generation Z's advocacy of circular fashion and their preference for thrift stores and vintage styles. McKinsey's research underscores the significance of circularity in fashion and its appeal to sustainability-focused Gen Z consumers. Additionally, Dragolea et al. highlight Gen Z's interest in thrift and vintage styles, showcasing their desire for unique and eco-friendly fashion choices.

7.2 Demographics

This survey focused on the preferences and purchasing behavior of the Gen Z population. Respondents were divided into different age groups to gain a deeper understanding of the trends and preferences within this diverse generation. The results shown in Table 1 indicate that the majority of respondents (45.5%) belong to the 20-23 age group, followed by the 24-27 age group (26.9%). A significant proportion of respondents also falls within the 16-19 age group (24.8%), while the 13-15 age group represents the smallest percentage (2.8%).

Table 1

Frequency table: age distribution respondents (N=145)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
13 - 15 years old	4	2.8	2.8	2.8
16 - 19 years old	36	24.8	24.8	27.6
20 - 23 years old	66	45.5	45.5	73.1
24 - 27 years old	39	26.9	26.9	100.0
Total	145	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: Age frequency

7.3 Insights into second-hand fashion consumer behavior

7.3.1 Influence of age and gender on second-hand purchases

Table 2 shows a clear relationship between age, gender, and frequency of second-hand purchases. First, it appears that a significant percentage of respondents (53.10%[11]) have ever purchased something from second-hand stores or online platforms. Women seem to be more likely to make second-hand purchases, accounting for 79.5% of the total responses, while men represent only 19.2% of the total responses. However, it is important to highlight that the proportion of respondents identifying as non-binary was relatively small, constituting only 0.7% of the total sample.

Table 2

Crosstabulation: gender distribution within second-hand purchases

			Male	Female	Non-binary	Total
Second-hand purchase	Yes	% within second-hand Purchase	19.2%	79.5%	1.3%	100.0%
	No		32.8%	67.2%	0.0%	100.0%
	Total		25.5%	73.8%	0.7%	100.0%

Table 2: Second-hand purchase per gender

7.3.2 Differences between age groups and genders

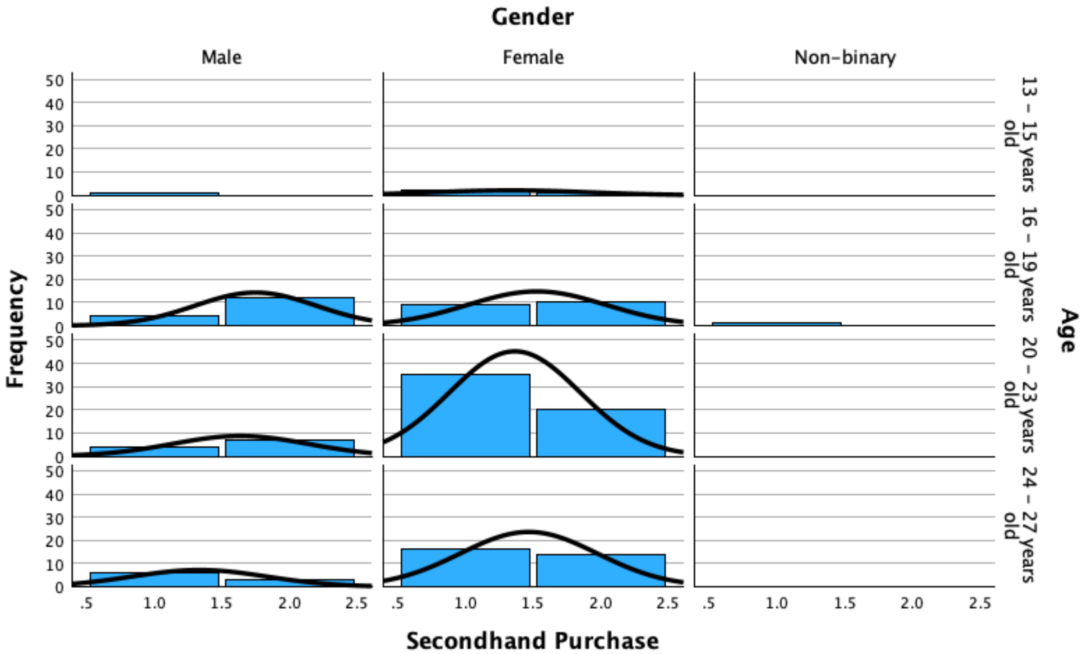
In each age group, there are notable differences in the frequency of second-hand purchases between men and women. Among those aged 13-19 years, men appear to engage in slightly more second-hand purchasing compared to women, although the variation in responses is minimal. It's important to highlight that only one non-binary individual participated in the survey, belonging to the 16-19 age group, and they reported engaging in second-hand purchases.

In older age brackets, women generally exhibit a higher propensity for second-hand purchases compared to men. Specifically, within the 24-27 age group, more men are observed purchasing second-hand clothing than among their counterparts in the younger 16-23 age group.

[11] $\frac{62\ females+15\ males}{145} * 100 = \frac{females+males\ who\ purchased\ second-hand}{total\ respondents}$

Chart 1

Histogram: Differences between age groups and genders in second-hand purchases



Histogram 1: Second-hand purchase age and gender

Note. X-axis: 1 = yes, 2 = no (purchase of second-hand goods)
Note. Table generated with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

7.3.3 Preferred locations for second-hand purchases

Table 3 displays the distribution of purchase locations for second-hand items among survey respondents. Physical consignment stores emerged as the most popular choice, accounting for 44.9% of valid responses. Online platforms, including Vestiaire Collective, The RealReal, 1stDibs, By Rotation, and HURR, were also widely favored, comprising 39.7% of all valid responses. A smaller yet notable percentage (12.8%) of respondents reported using social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook groups for their second-hand shopping. Additionally, a minority of respondents (2.6%) mentioned other purchase locations not covered in the survey options.

Table 3

Frequency table: purchase location of used items

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Online platforms (e.g. Vestiaire Collective, The RealReal, 1stDibs, By Rotation, HURR,...)	31	21.4	39.7	39.7
Physical consignment stores	35	24.1	44.9	84.6
Social media (e.g. Instagram, Facebook groups)	10	6.9	12.8	97.6
Other	2	1.4	2.6	100.0
Total	78	53.8	100.0	
Missing	67	46.2		
Total	145	100.0		

Table 3: Purchase location

Note. 'Missing' refers to respondents who did not make any used purchases. 'Valid Percentage' represents the percentage of respondents who made second-hand purchases within each purchase location category.

7.4 Attitudes towards sustainability and second-hand fashion

7.4.1 Impact of sustainability initiatives on purchasing decisions

When examining the correlation between the level of support for sustainable fashion practices and concerns about environmental issues, the data analysis in Table 4 shows that there are links between various beliefs and attitudes related to sustainability and second-hand fashion. Individuals who express stronger support for sustainable fashion practices also exhibit higher levels of concern about environmental issues. This correlation was measured at 0.51, indicating a clear positive relationship between these two variables. In other words, those who are more committed to sustainable fashion also generally show higher concern about environmental issues.

Another interesting result concerns the correlation between support for sustainable fashion practices and advocacy of the circular economy. The data reveals that individuals who show higher levels of support for sustainable fashion practices are also more likely to support the circular economy. This correlation was found to be 0.56, indicating a strong positive relationship between these two aspects.

On the opposite side, individuals who express greater concern about environmental issues tend to show less interest in unique or vintage fashion styles. The correlation between these two variables is -0.26, implying a moderate negative relationship. In other words, those who are more concerned about environmental issues tend to place less value on unique or vintage fashion.

Table 4

Correlation table: correlation between sustainability initiatives and purchasing decisions

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Influence- Environmental concerns	1.00				
2. Influence- Affordability	.10	1.00			
3. Influence- Unique or vintage styles	-.26*	.05	1.00		
4. Influence- Supporting circular economy	.49**	.10	.06	1.00	
5. Influence- Support for sustainable fashion practices	.51**	.07	.06	.56*	1.00

Table 4: Correlation between sustainability initiatives and purchasing decisions

Note. This table shows the Pearson correlation (r) (* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$).

7.4.2 Analysis of attitudes and perceptions

The crosstab analysis in Table 5 shows that preferences for attitude quotes differ significantly between age groups and genders. Women in the 20-23 age group show the strongest preference for the quote "Quality over quantity - my wardrobe is an investment in sustainability and ethics," with 14 out of 17 selections in this group. This quote is chosen a total of 21 times by women, indicating a clear emphasis on sustainability and ethics in their clothing choices. Men in the 24-27 age group primarily choose the quote "I want to buy more expensive clothes because I want something ethical on my body," indicating their willingness to invest in ethical clothing. Furthermore, both men and women in the 24-27 age group indicate that they consider luxury clothing to express their style, as evidenced by the quote "I consider luxury clothing as a means to express my personal style and distinguish myself." These findings underscore the impact of age and gender on the perception and appreciation of sustainable fashion, with young women appearing to be particularly at the forefront of the acceptance of sustainable and ethical clothing practices.

Table 5

Crosstabulation: Analysis of attitude quotes by age group and gender

Attitude quote			Male	Female	Non-binary	Total
"I want to buy more expensive clothes because I want something ethical on my body."	Age	13 - 15 years old				
		16 - 19 years old				
		20 - 23 years old				
		24 - 27 years old		2		2
	Total			2		2
"Quality over quantity - my wardrobe is an investment in sustainability and ethics."	Age	13 - 15 years old	1	0	0	1
		16 - 19 years old	0	2	1	3
		20 - 23 years old	3	14	0	17
		24 - 27 years old	2	5	0	7
	Total		6	21	1	28
"I simply follow the latest trends and buy what is in fashion. Sustainability is not my primary consideration when choosing clothing."	Age	13 - 15 years old	0	1		1
		16 - 19 years old	3	3		6
		20 - 23 years old	0	10		10
		24 - 27 years old	1	4		5
	Total		4	18		22
"I consider luxury clothing as a means to express my personal style and distinguish myself."	Age	13 - 15 years old	0	1		1
		16 - 19 years old	1	0		1
		20 - 23 years old	1	3		4
		24 - 27 years old	2	2		4
	Total		4	6		10
"I embrace the timeless charm of second-hand luxury clothing; each piece tells a unique story and contributes to a sustainable and style-conscious choice."		16 - 19 years old	0	4		4
		20 - 23 years old	0	8		8
		24 - 27 years old	1	3		4
	Total		1	15		16
Total		13 - 15 years old	1	2	0	3
		16 - 19 years old	4	9	1	14
		20 - 23 years old	4	35	0	39
		24 - 27 years old	6	16	0	22
	Total		15	62	1	78

Table 5: Analysis of attitude by age group and gender

7.5 Perceptions of used platforms

7.5.1 Factors affecting the choice of used platforms.

Table 6 represents the results of the one-sample t-tests, showing significantly different mean scores for factors that influence the decision to buy used clothing or accessories. These findings suggest that a holistic approach to sustainability, fashion, and price is crucial for consumers when considering purchases on second-hand luxury platforms. Respondents find environmental issues, affordability, unique styles, and sustainable fashion practices all significantly important, with higher mean scores than the neutral value of 3 on a scale of 1 to 5. However, support for the circular economy has a slightly less prominent influence, with a mean score lower than 3.

Table 6

One-sample statistics: Influential factors on the choice of second-hand platforms

	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Influence- Environmental concerns	78	2.3205	134.351	0.15212
Influence- Affordability	78	3.5769	123.287	0.13960
Influence- Unique or vintage styles	78	3.2821	134.741	0.15256
Influence - Supporting circular economy	78	2.1923	115.160	0.13039
Influence - Support for sustainable fashion practices	78	2.3590	119.495	0.13530

Table 6: Influential factors on second-hand platform choice

7.5.2 Willingness to buy used items from a favorite luxury brand

The frequency chart in Table 7 indicates that a significant portion of respondents (28.2% valid percentage) are "very likely" and a substantial group (50.0% valid percentage) are "likely" to purchase second-hand items from a favorite luxury brand, demonstrating a strong positive inclination towards second-hand shopping. A smaller proportion expressed neutrality (16.7% of respondents), while only a minority indicated being "unlikely" or "very unlikely" (each 2.6% of respondents) to buy second-hand.

Table 7

Frequency table: Likelihood of buying second-hand items

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very likely	22	13.3	28.2	28.2
Likely	39	25.5	50.0	78.2
Neutral	13	7.8	16.7	94.9
Unlikely	2	1.2	2.6	97.4
Very unlikely	2	1.2	2.6	100.0
Total	78	47.0	100.0	
Missing stystem	88	53.0		
Total	166	100.0		

Table 7: Likelihood purchase second-hand

Note: 'Missing system' refers to respondents who did not purchased second-hand. 'Valid Percent' represents the percentage of respondents within each category who gave a valid response.

Chart 1 represents the analysis of the frequency of initiatives promoting shopping on a luxury second-hand platform showing that different strategies revealed different levels of appeal among respondents. The “Curated selection process to ensure high-quality and exclusive items” initiative was selected most frequently, with 27.7% of respondents indicating support for this initiative. This was followed by “Luxury resale programs offering store credit or discounts” (23.5%) and “Circular economy model with repair and restoration services” (16.3%). Interestingly, the “Concierge service for personalized shopping experiences” initiative was the least frequently chosen, with only 4.8% of respondents indicating support for it.

Chart 1

Histogram: Frequency of support for initiatives on a luxury second-hand platform.

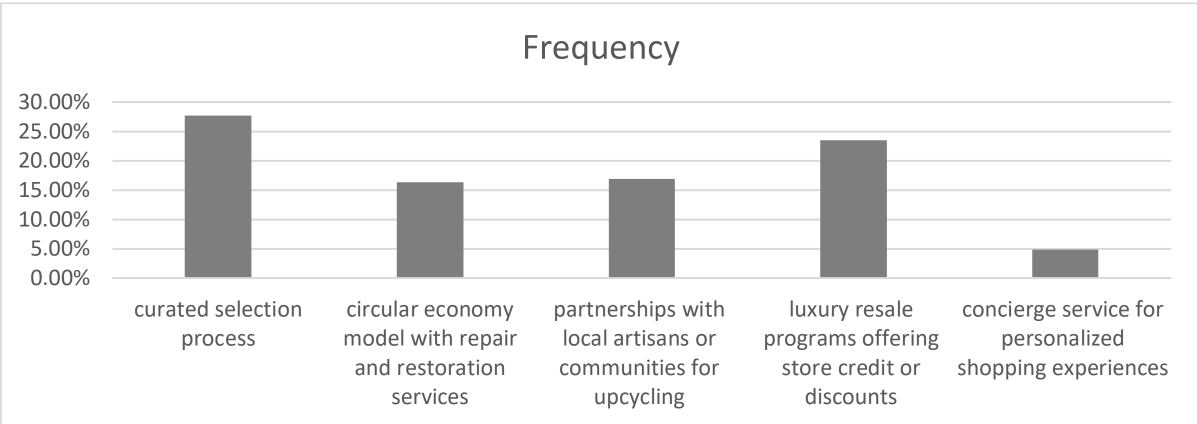


Chart 1: Frequency of second-hand platform initiatives

7.6 Brand loyalty and engagement

7.6.1 Impact of access to a second-hand luxury platform

Table 8 shows the frequency table for brand loyalty on luxury platforms. Most respondents indicate they are neutral about brand loyalty on these platforms, with 35.9% indicating this as their choice. A significant number of respondents (51.3%) indicate that they are unlikely to be highly loyal to a specific brand on luxury platforms. Only a small percentage of respondents indicate they are very likely (1.3%) or likely (3.8%) to be very loyal to a brand. 'Valid Percent' shows the percentage of respondents within each category who gave a valid answer, while 'Missing system' refers to respondents who did not answer the question asked. The frequency graph is consistent with the original research question, "Would gaining access to a used platform from your favorite luxury brand increase your loyalty to the brand?

Table 8

Frequency table: Luxury platform - brand loyalty

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very likely	1	0.6	1.3	1.3
Likely	3	1.8	3.8	5.1
Neutral	28	16.9	35.9	41.0
Unlikely	40	24.1	51.3	92.3
Very unlikely	6	3.6	7.7	100.0
Total	78	47.0	100.0	
Missing stystem	88	53.0		
Total	166	100.0		

Table 8: Luxury-platform - brand loyalty

7.6.2 Preferences when shopping in second-hand stores

Table 9 shows respondents' preferences when shopping in second-hand stores for various luxury items. The most popular category is clothing (designer clothing), with 56 respondents showing a strong interest in buying luxury second-hand fashion. Luxury handbags and purses also attracted strong interest, with 41 respondents indicating that they preferred buying high-quality accessories second-hand. In addition, smaller groups showed interest in luxury shoes (9 respondents) and luxury jewelry and watches (24 respondents), reflecting diverse consumer preferences within the luxury resale market. Interestingly, no respondents showed interest in buying luxury perfumes in second-hand stores.

Table 9

Frequency table: Preferences

		Clothing (designer apparel)	Luxury handbags and purses	Luxury shoes	Luxury jewelry and watches	High-end fragrances
N	Valid	56	41	9	24	0
	Missing	110	125	157	142	166

Table 9: Item preferences

Note. ‘Missing’ varies because respondents could select all options that applied to them in this question.

7.6.3 Willingness to make first-hand purchases after purchasing second-hand items

Table 10 shows the frequency table for the willingness to make first-hand purchases after buying second-hand items. The analysis of the respondents shows a variety of attitudes toward making first-hand purchases after buying second-hand items. Only a small percentage (16.7%) of respondents indicated that it is ‘very unlikely’ for them to make first-hand purchases after buying second-hand items, while a larger number (42.3%) indicated that it is "unlikely". A significant proportion of respondents (25.6%) remained 'neutral' on this topic, while a smaller number (15.4%) indicated that it is 'likely' for them to make first-hand purchases after buying second-hand items.

Table 10

Frequency table: Likelihood firsthand purchase

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very unlikely	13	7.8	16.7	16.7
Unlikely	33	19.9	42.3	59.0
Neutral	20	12.0	25.6	84.6
Likely	12	7.2	15.4	100.0
Total	78	47.0	100.0	
Missing stystem	88	53.0		
Total	166	100.0		

Table 10: Likelihood firsthand purchase

7.6.4 Preference for second-hand platform

The survey results revealed in Table 11 show nuanced preferences among respondents when purchasing second-hand luxury items. While a notable segment (29.5%) expressed a preference for buying directly from the company's platform due to brand-associated status, the majority (59.0%) indicated openness to purchasing from other resale platforms, highlighting a willingness to explore alternative channels. A smaller percentage (11.5%) expressed uncertainty regarding their preferred purchase platform.

Table 11

Frequency table: Preferred purchase platform

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes, I prefer buying from the company's platform because it represents the status associated with the brand.	23	13.9	29.5	29.5
No, I don't mind purchasing from other resale platforms.	46	27.7	59.0	88.5
I don't know.	9	5.4	11.5	100.0
Total	78	47.0	100.0	
Missing stystem	88	53.0		
Total	166	100.0		

Table 11: Preferred purchase platform

7.6.5 Impact of sustainability practices on brand loyalty

Table 12 examines the relationship between sustainability practices and brand loyalty among respondents. The results indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents express a positive inclination towards remaining loyal to a luxury fashion brand that prioritizes sustainability. Specifically, 62.9% of respondents combined ("likely" at 46.2% and "very likely" at 16.7%) demonstrate a willingness to remain loyal to a brand with sustainability practices. In contrast, only a small percentage of respondents (10.3% combined for "very unlikely" at 2.6% and "unlikely" at 7.7%) indicate a reluctance to remain loyal to such brands.

Table 12

Frequency table: Brand sustainability influence

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very unlikely	2	1.2	2.6	2.6
Unlikely	6	3.6	7.7	10.3
Neutral	21	12.7	26.9	37.2
Likely	36	21.7	46.2	83.3
Very likely	13	7.8	16.7	100.0
Total	78	47.0	100.0	
Missing stystem	88	53.0		
Total	166	100.0		

Table 12: Brand sustainability influence

7.6.6 Influence of brand reputation and history when buying used items

In Table 13, the analysis of respondents shows that a majority (26.9%) believe that brand reputation and history are important when deciding to buy from a luxury brand platform for pre-owned items, even if affordability is not a factor. Among the respondents, 32.1% indicated that it is somewhat important, 29.5% moderately important, and 5.1% extremely important.

Table 13

Frequency table: Brand reputation influence

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not important at all	5	3.0	6.4	6.4
Slightly important	25	15.1	32.1	38.5
Moderately important	23	13.9	29.5	67.9
Very important	21	12.7	26.9	94.9
Extremely important	4	2.4	5.1	100.0
Total	78	47.0	100.0	
Missing stystem	88	53.0		
Total	166	100.0		

Table 13: Brand reputation influence

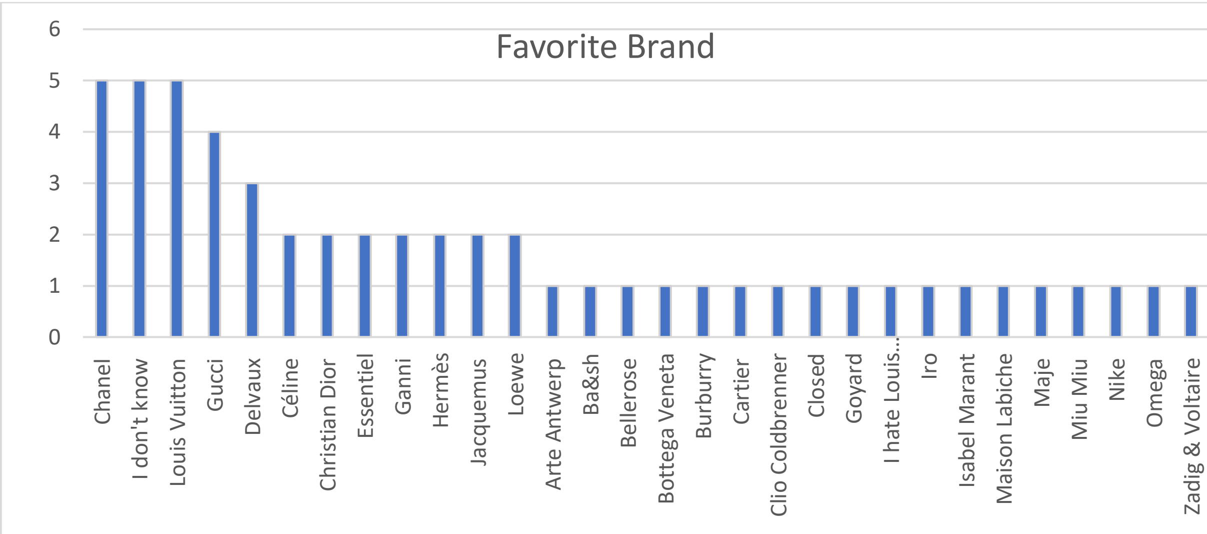
7.7 Communication and marketing

7.7.1 Favorite luxury brand

Chart 2 illustrates the frequency of the set of findings regarding respondents' favorite luxury brands. Brands such as Chanel, Dior, and Louis Vuitton are consistently mentioned, highlighting their position as leading players in the luxury industry. The diversity of brands mentioned by respondents is striking, ranging from established fashion houses to exclusive accessory brands such as Cartier and Rolex, and even sportswear brands such as Nike. However, a small percentage of respondents reported being unsure about their favorite brand or what is considered luxury. Also interesting is the single respondent who indicated they had no specific favorite brand, except for a negative perception of Louis Vuitton.

Chart 2

Histogram: Favorite brand.



Histogram 2: Favorite brand

7.7.2 Importance of the luxury brand in terms of prestige and exclusivity

Table 14 underscores the widespread recognition of the importance of luxury brands in terms of prestige and exclusivity among respondents, with a substantial majority attributing varying degrees of significance to this aspect. Specifically, the results reveal that 15.4% of respondents indicate that their favorite luxury brand is not important to them in terms of prestige and exclusivity. Conversely, others attribute levels of importance ranging from slightly important (26.9%) to moderately important (28.2%), very important (24.4%), and extremely important (5.1%).

Table 14

Frequency table: Importance of the luxury brand in terms of prestige and exclusivity

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not important at all	12	7.2	15.4	15.4
Slightly important	21	12.7	26.9	42.3
Moderately important	22	13.3	28.2	70.5
Very important	19	11.4	24.4	94.9
Extremely important	4	2.4	5.1	100.0
Total	78	47.0	100.0	
Missing stystem	88	53.0		
Total	166	100.0		

Table 14: Importance prestige and exclusivity

7.7.3 Effect of second-hand platform on prestige perception

Table 15 shows that a majority of respondents (44.9%) believe that the introduction of a second-hand platform would not affect their perception of the prestige and exclusivity of the luxury brand. However, a significant proportion of respondents believe that a pre-owned platform could somewhat harm (20.5%) or enhance (28.2%) the brand's prestige and exclusivity. Only a small percentage of respondents (2.6%) believe that a second-hand platform would significantly harm brand prestige and exclusivity, while another small percentage (3.8%) believe that it would significantly improve prestige and exclusivity.

Table 15

Frequency table: Perception with second-hand platform

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
It would significantly harm the brand's prestige and exclusivity.	2	1.2	2.6	2.6
It would somewhat harm the brand's prestige and exclusivity.	16	9.6	20.5	23.1
It would have no impact on my perception of the brand's prestige and exclusivity.	35	21.1	44.9	67.9
It would somewhat enhance the brand's prestige and exclusivity	22	13.3	28.2	96.2
It would significantly enhance the brand's prestige and exclusivity.	3	1.8	3.8	100.0
Total	78	47.0	100.0	
Missing stystem	88	53.0		
Total	166	100.0		

Table 15: Perception with second-hand platform

7.7.4 Gen Z's perspective on second-hand luxury platforms

The final question reflects the in-depth considerations and views of respondents regarding the potential introduction of a second-hand platform by luxury brands. A striking aspect is the diversity of responses, which expose a wide range of perspectives and concerns. Some respondents emphasize the importance of price, indicating that the affordability of the product is a crucial factor in their decision-making process. Others appreciate the potential of a used platform as a means of increasing loyalty to luxury brands, especially when it comes to sustainability initiatives such as free repair services. Several respondents stressed the importance of sustainability, suggesting that a second-hand platform would appreciate the efforts of luxury brands in this area and increase their willingness to support brands that are committed to sustainable practices. Authenticity also turns out to be a central concern, with respondents emphasizing that the second-hand platform should look professional and reliable to avoid questions about the genuineness of luxury brands. In addition, some respondents express concern about the proliferation of replica purchases on other platforms and suggest that a dedicated second-use platform could counter this trend. Finally, others advocate greater attention to reducing the sale of counterfeit luxury items on second-hand platforms, stressing that this should be an essential focus for luxury fashion brands.

7.8 Barriers to purchasing luxury fashion from second-hand market

Table 16 shows how often specific reasons were cited for never buying used clothing, varying by concern. The most common reason is hygiene concerns, as it was mentioned 41 times. This is followed by concerns about the lower quality of second-hand items (mentioned 39 times), lack of trust in second-hand sellers (mentioned 35 times), limited availability of desired items (mentioned 24 times), and doubts about the authenticity of the products (mentioned 21 times).

Table 16

Frequency table: Barriers to purchasing luxury fashion from the second-hand market

		Concerns about authenticity	Limited availability of desired items	Lack of trust in second-hand sellers	Perception that second-hand items are of lower quality	Hygienic concerns
N	Valid	21	24	35	39	41
	Missing	99	99	99	99	99

Table 16: Barriers to purchasing luxury second-hand fashion

Note. ‘Missing’ refers to the respondents who purchased second-hand items at least once.

The analysis of barriers to buying luxury fashion in the second-hand market is shown in Table 17. These barriers are focused on five key concerns respondents may have when considering purchases of second-hand items. These concerns include authenticity, availability of desired items, trust in second-hand sellers, perception of lower quality of second-hand products, and hygiene concerns. Mean scores for each of these concerns were calculated on a scale of 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating greater concerns. The results show that respondents had the least concerns about authenticity, with an average score of 2.87. However, they were more concerned about trust in second-hand sellers, with an average score of 3.31. In addition, respondents expressed moderate concerns about perceptions of lower quality (mean score: 3.40) and hygiene considerations (mean score: 3.55). These findings suggest that building trust in sellers, improving perceptions of quality, and addressing hygiene concerns are important aspects of increasing the acceptance of second-hand luxury fashion.

Table 17

Frequency table: Average scores for barriers to buying second-hand luxury fashion

		Concerns about authenticity	Limited availability of desired items	Lack of trust in second-hand sellers	Perception that second-hand items are of lower quality	Hygienic concerns
N	Valid	67	67	67	67	67
	Missing	99	99	99	99	99
	Mean	2.8657	2.6269	3.3134	3.4030	3.5522

Table 17: Average score barriers second-hand fashion purchase

7.8.1 Potential interest in second-hand luxury platforms

Table 18 demonstrates the level of interest among respondents regarding second-hand luxury platforms based on their experience. Approximately 29.9% of respondents show a high level of interest, with 34.3% remaining neutral. A notable proportion, representing 26.9%, express a lower level of interest, while 9.0% indicate no interest at all in second-hand luxury platforms

Table 18

Frequency table: Interest in second-hand luxury platforms based on experience

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Interested	20	12.0	29.9	29.9
Neutral	23	13.9	34.3	64.2
Not very interested	18	10.8	26.9	91.0
Not interested at all	6	3.6	9.0	100.0
Total	67	40.4	100.0	
Missing stystem	99	59.6		
Total	166	100.0		

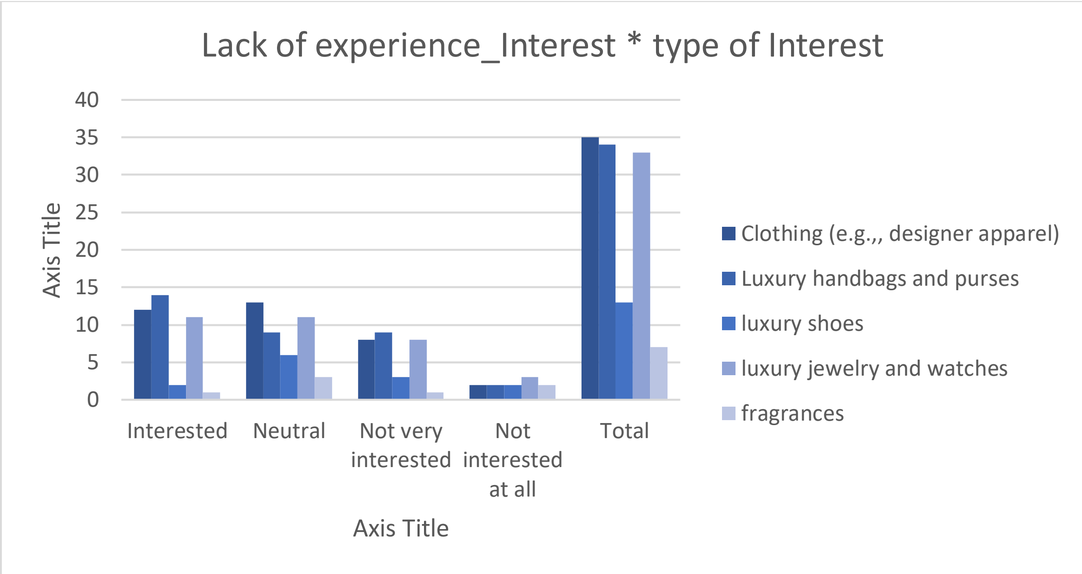
Table 18: Interest in second-hand luxury platforms based on experience

7.8.2 Preferences luxury items on second-hand platforms by level of interest

This analysis was calculated using a crosstable in SPSS. The purpose of the crosstable is to examine the relationship between respondents' interest level in used luxury platforms and their preferences for different categories of luxury items. The analysis shown in Chart 3 reveals that respondents with different levels of interest in used luxury platforms have diverse preferences for luxury items. For those who are interested, luxury jewelry and watches are the most popular, followed by handbags and purses. Neutral respondents, on the other hand, show more interest in clothing, followed by handbags and purses. As the interest level decreases, interest in high-end fragrances appears to be lowest, with only a single respondent showing interest in this category among those who are very interested, and two respondents among those who are not interested at all. These findings provide valuable insights for developing marketing strategies and optimizing offerings on second-hand luxury platforms.

Chart 3

Histogram: Relationship between interest in second-hand luxury platforms and preferences for luxury items.



Histogram 3: Interest in second-hand platforms

7.9 Analysis hypotheses

7.9.1 H1: Sustainability marketing and Gen Z engagement in Belgian second-hand fashion

The correlation results represented in Table 19 offer valuable insights into potential relationships among sustainability-focused marketing strategies, brand perception, and consumer engagement within the second-hand fashion market among Generation Z consumers in Belgium. Specifically, a positive and significant correlation was identified between respondents' attitudes toward sustainability and their interest in unique or vintage styles, as well as their support for the circular economy (r = .34, p = .002). Additionally, the analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between environmental concerns and support for the circular economy (r = -.25, p = .03), coupled with a positive correlation between environmental concerns and support for sustainable fashion practices (r = .49, p < .001). Furthermore, a positive correlation was observed between the importance of brand prestige and brand loyalty (r = .32, p = .004). These findings provide empirical evidence of potential associations among these variables within the context of the second-hand fashion market and underscore the importance of considering sustainability-driven marketing strategies and brand perceptions to enhance consumer engagement among Gen Z consumers.

Table 19

Crosstabulation: Correlations between sustainability marketing and engagement of Generation Z at second-hand fashion in Belgium

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Attitude Quote	1.00								
2. Influence- Environmental concerns	-.13*	1.00							
3. Influece- Affordability	.16	.13	1.00						
4. Influence- Unique or vintage styles	.34**	-.25*	.03	1.00					
5. Influence- Supporting circular economy	-.11	.45**	.11	.04	1.00				
6. Influence- Support for sustainable fashion	-.02	.49**	.05	.06	.50**	1.00			
7. Brand Importance Prestige	.07	-.17	.01	.12	.12	.05	1.00		
8. Luxury platform- Brand loyalty	-.07	-.07	.19	.01	.12	.12	.32	1.00	
9. Preferred purchase platform	-.06	.19	-.09	-.09	.15	.03	-.15	.01	1.00

Table 19: Correlations between sustainability marketing and engagement of Gen Z

Note. This table shows the Spearman's Rho correlations (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$).

7.9.2 H2: Corporate collaboration impact on luxury brand loyalty in Belgian Gen Z second-hand fashion

The survey results offer insights into the potential impact of integrating corporate-controlled second-hand sales channels. They also shed light on the influence of partnerships with non-corporate stakeholders. These factors are examined in relation to market share and brand loyalty of luxury fashion brands. The study focuses on brands targeting Generation Z consumers in the Belgian second-hand fashion market. Specific initiatives like the 'Curated selection process to ensure high-quality and exclusive items' attracted interest from 31% of respondents. Luxury resale programs offering store credit or discounts garnered interest from 26% of participants. 'Partnerships with local artisans or communities for upcycling' were of interest to 19% of respondents. These findings, shown in Chart 4, demonstrate the high-value survey participants placed on sustainable collaborations in the second-hand fashion sector.

Chart 4

Pie chart: Importance of Initiatives for business-driven second-hand sales channels among Generation Z in Belgium.

Chart 2: Importance initiatives for business-driven second-hand sales

A closer look at respondents who chose "Partnerships with local artisans" as their preferred initiative, as shown in Table 20, reveals that the majority (60.7%) believe that a luxury brand introducing a second-hand platform would not affect their perception of the brand's prestige and exclusivity. A smaller proportion (17.9%) express concern that it could harm the brand's prestige, while another minority (21.4%) believe it would enhance prestige.

Regarding brand loyalty, respondents exhibit a split perspective: approximately half (42.9%) are neutral about the impact of a second-hand platform on their loyalty, while a similar percentage (42.9%) believe access to such a platform would increase their loyalty.

Table 20

Frequency table: Impact of second-hand platforms on brand perception and loyalty in preferred Partnerships

Case processing summary		N	Marginal percentage
Initiatives - Partnerships with local artisans or communities for upcycling	Partnerships with local artisans or communities for upcycling	28	100.0%
Perception with second-hand platform	It would somewhat harm the brand's prestige and exclusivity.	5	17.9%
	It would have no impact on my perception of the brand's prestige and exclusivity.	17	60.7%
	It would somewhat enhance the brand's prestige and exclusivity	6	21.4%
Luxury platform - Brand Loyalty	Strongly disagree	1	3.6%
	Disagree	1	3.6%
	Neutral	12	42.9%
	Agree	12	42.9%
Valid		28	100.0%

Table 20: Impact of second-hand platforms on brand perception and loyalty

8 Discussion, Conclusion, limitations

8.1 Discussion

The findings of this research are supported by a rigorous methodology aimed at investigating the relationship between sustainability-focused marketing strategies, brand perception, and consumer engagement within the second-hand fashion market among Gen Z consumers in Belgium. The research instruments used were carefully designed to measure relevant attitudes, preferences, and behaviors. The sample population was representative of the target audience, enhancing the generalizability of the results.

The study revealed intriguing trends in shopping habits related to second-hand purchases among different demographics. Boys aged 13-19 demonstrated a notably high percentage of second-hand purchases, whereas women aged 20-27 exhibited the highest rates of engagement in this market. It's interesting to note that as men move into the 24-27 age group, they become more involved in second-hand shopping. This suggests that consumer behaviors change as men become older. Our analysis revealed that physical consignment stores are the top choice for second-hand purchases. Online platforms and social media came next in popularity. This emphasizes the importance of both physical and digital marketplaces for meeting consumer preferences.

The research provides strong support for hypothesis 1, suggesting that luxury brands that implement effective marketing strategies focused on sustainability will see significant improvements in brand perception and consumer engagement within the second-hand fashion market among Generation Z consumers in Belgium. This is reinforced by the clear link demonstrated between the sustainability attitudes of Generation Z consumers in Belgium and their interest in unique or vintage styles, as well as their support for the circular economy. Moreover, the findings show that Millennials and Gen Z have a growing preference for sustainability when making purchasing decisions, making sustainability-focused marketing strategies an essential role in shaping consumer behavior (Devic, 2023). The research also highlights a positive correlation between brand prestige and brand loyalty, suggesting that tailored sustainability-focused marketing strategies can help improve brand perception and cultivate consumer loyalty within this market segment. This is consistent with the proposition that honest and open brands can gain more trust and loyalty from Gen Z consumers (Britton, 2023). Moreover, our research contradicts the findings of Palomo-Domínguez et al. (2023) and McKinsey & Company (2023), as well as Brooks (2022), which stated that Generation Z consumers who express concerns about sustainability do not align their purchasing behavior with these values. Brooks' (2022) research shows that only 37% of Generation Z consumers exhibit traditional brand loyalty and prefer brands that align with their values, indicating that Generation Z's expectations of brands are unique and not necessarily traditional like older generations such as baby boomers.

The study supports also the second hypothesis. It suggests that combining company-controlled second-hand sales channels with partnerships like Vestiaire Collective benefits luxury fashion brands targeting Generation Z in the Belgian second-hand fashion market. This approach boosts market share and fosters stronger brand loyalty. The findings show that respondents are highly interested in specific initiatives. These include curated selection processes, luxury resale programs, and partnerships with local artisans. This suggests a positive response to collaborations that improve access and sustainability of luxury second-hand items. Further research was conducted among respondents who preferred collaborations with local artisans. The findings showed a prevailing belief that launching a luxury brand's second-hand platform does not necessarily impact brand prestige and exclusivity. This indicates an openness to innovative approaches in the second-hand market. Opinions vary on the impact of second-hand platforms on brand loyalty. Some respondents are neutral, while others believe these platforms can increase loyalty. Overall, there is potential for collaboration strategies to positively influence consumer engagement and perceptions in the luxury second-hand market. This finding is consistent with the argument presented in the literature review regarding consumer brand partnerships, which underscores the critical importance of sustainability and relationship-building strategies to appeal to Generation Z consumers (Tanveer et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the findings show that respondents like to buy used items from their favorite luxury brands. This highlights the opportunity for luxury brands to use second-hand offerings to boost consumer engagement and loyalty. Access to a second-hand luxury platform from a favorite brand was linked to increased consumer loyalty. Respondents showed keen interest in buying designer apparel and luxury handbags and purses from second-hand stores. This highlights specific product categories that appeal to second-hand consumers.

The study also sheds light on communication and marketing preferences within the context of second-hand luxury fashion. Consumers prefer curated selection processes and luxury resale programs that provide store credit or discounts. These initiatives effectively encourage shopping on luxury second-hand platforms. Respondents overwhelmingly recognized the importance of brand reputation and history when buying pre-owned luxury items. This underscores the enduring significance of brand image in consumer decision-making.

8.2 Conclusion

In this study, the central question of how Generation Z consumers in Belgium perceive second-hand luxury platforms and the factors influencing their attitudes and behaviors when purchasing second-hand luxury fashion items has been explored. To address this question, several sub-questions were investigated, leading to insightful conclusions. Firstly, the results indicate a significant interest among Gen Z consumers in second-hand luxury platforms, with nearly 70% of respondents expressing interest or neutrality towards these platforms. This interest is primarily driven by considerations such as affordability, sustainability, and the opportunity to find unique and exclusive items. The main barriers hindering the purchase of second-hand luxury fashion items include concerns about hygiene, doubts about the quality of second-hand products, lack of trust in sellers, limited availability of desired items, and doubts about product authenticity. Addressing these concerns is crucial to increasing consumer confidence in second-hand luxury platforms. Furthermore, the results show that the introduction of a second-hand platform by a luxury brand generally does not negatively impact the perception of the brand's prestige and exclusivity. A significant portion of respondents believe that a second-hand platform could potentially enhance the prestige and exclusivity of the brand, especially when supported by sustainable initiatives such as repair services. Based on the correlation analysis, attitudes towards sustainability are positively related to interest in unique items and support for the circular economy within the second-hand fashion market. Additionally, there is a positive correlation between the importance consumers place on brand prestige and brand loyalty, suggesting that luxury fashion houses that cultivate brand prestige are better positioned to foster customer loyalty, even within the context of the second-hand fashion market. In conclusion, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the attitudes and behaviors of Generation Z consumers towards second-hand luxury platforms. These insights can be leveraged by luxury brands and retailers to develop effective strategies that cater to the growing interest in sustainable and second-hand fashion, and to overcome consumer barriers limiting the adoption of second-hand luxury items.

8.3 Limitations and further research

This thesis has several limitations. The consumers interviewed for the quantitative study formed a relatively homogeneous sample. Specifically, they all came from the same country, Belgium. Moreover, most respondents were women, and the age group of 13-15 years was not adequately represented. Additionally, the social status and ethnic background of the respondents were not examined, which could influence the purchasing behavior of luxury second-hand items but was not investigated in this study.

Further research should focus on expanding the sample. This means adding consumers from diverse cultural backgrounds and geographic locations. This will allow a better understanding of Generation Z consumers' perceptions and behaviors regarding second-hand luxury fashion. Further research on the impact of social status and ethnic diversity on consumer engagement with the second-hand market can provide valuable insights. These insights are relevant to luxury brands seeking to effectively adapt their sustainability strategies. Moreover, it would be useful to examine the effectiveness of different sustainability-oriented marketing approaches and partnership strategies in influencing brand perception and consumer loyalty among Generation Z. This could include longitudinal studies. This would result in a better understanding of Generation Z consumers' perceptions and behaviors toward sustainable luxury fashions.

9 Recommendations

The comprehensive research findings highlight key insights into Generation Z consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards second-hand luxury platforms in the Belgian market. These insights pave the way for strategic recommendations to improve brand perception, consumer engagement, and sustainability within the luxury fashion industry. Using these recommendations can enable luxury brands to navigate the evolving landscape of consumer preferences and build meaningful relationships with this discerning demographic. The recommendations in this dissertation focus on the luxury brand Chanel, using publicly available information and insights from conducted research as sources of inspiration. No confidential information was used in formulating these recommendations.

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 Case study

In today's fashion market, more and more consumers are attracted to second-hand items from luxury brands, including Chanel. Platforms such as Vestiaire Collective and Farfetch offer an abundance of pre-owned Chanel products, which are an attractive option for consumers looking for high-quality fashion at discounted prices. However, for luxury fashion brands like Chanel, this means they are potentially missing out on important sales opportunities. In the absence of an official channel for second-hand sales, Chanel loses control over the sale of their second-hand products and cannot take full advantage of the growing popularity of the second-hand fashion market.

In response, there arises a critical need for Chanel to devise strategic initiatives that not only bolster their presence within the second-hand market but also safeguard their brand integrity. This dissertation presents a pioneering recommendation born from rigorous research and insight: the inception of Coco Closet—a bespoke second-hand platform envisioned and developed to meet the unique demands of Chanel's discerning clientele.

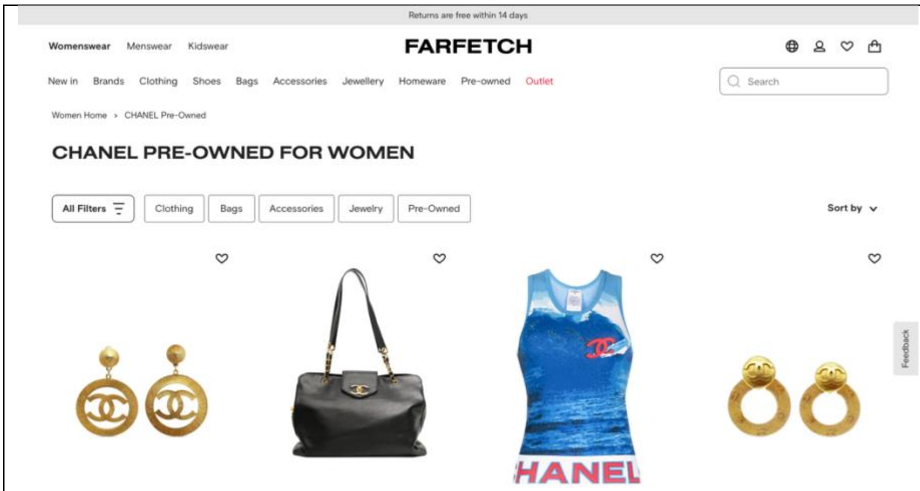


Figure 2: (Farfetch, s. d.)

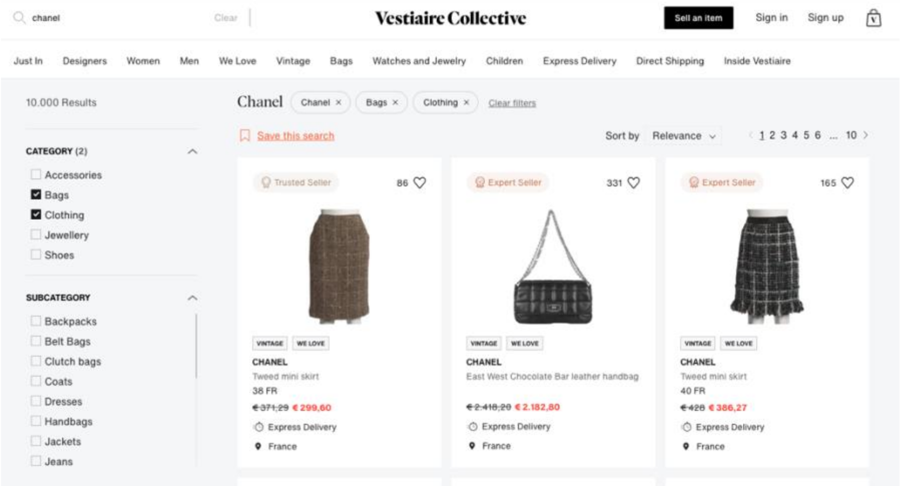


Figure 3: (Vestiaire Collective, s. d.)

9.1.2 Chanel's mission

Chanel's internal mission is to maintain the conditions in which creation thrives, believing that creativity and beauty are essential drivers of progress. CHANEL also believes that by providing the enabling environment for creation, we can be a positive force for change in the world and contribute to transforming lives and societies (Chanel, 2018).

9.2 Research Methodology

To conduct the research among Gen Z consumers in Belgium, a structured survey was used to gain insight into their attitudes, preferences, and buying behavior regarding second-hand luxury fashion items. The survey included questions on topics such as brand loyalty, interest in second-hand platforms, sustainability preferences, barriers to buying second-hand fashion, and perceptions of luxury brands. The sample consisted of randomly selected Gen Z consumers from various sources, such as social media and online panels. The survey was distributed online, and the data collected was analyzed using statistical methods to identify trends and patterns. The results of this study provide valuable insights into Gen Z consumers' views and behaviors regarding second-hand luxury fashion in the Belgian market.

9.3 Marketing strategy

9.3.1 Unlocking the second-hand market opportunity for Chanel (SWOT)

Coco's Closet, an innovative second-hand platform for the renowned Chanel brand, is at the intersection of luxury fashion and sustainability. In this SWOT analysis, we examine the internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats that define the platform's trajectory in the dynamic fashion landscape. This SWOT analysis is created using the findings from our research.

Internal factors	**Strengths**	• **Strong brand association:** The association with the prestigious Chanel brand enhances Coco's Closet's credibility and appeal, as indicated by respondents' preference for buying pre-owned luxury items from the company's platform because of the status associated with the brand. • **Curated selection:** Offering a curated selection of pre-loved Chanel items ensures high quality and exclusivity, which resonates with respondents who value a "Curated selection process to ensure high-quality and exclusive items". • **Sustainability focus:** Coco's Closet aligns with growing consumer demand for sustainable fashion, as evidenced by respondents' likelihood to remain loyal to a brand prioritizing sustainability practice. • **Customer loyalty:** The platform benefits from Chanel's existing customer base, fostering loyalty and trust among respondents who believe access to a used luxury platform would increase their loyalty to the brand.
	Weaknesses	• **Limited product range:** Focusing primarily on clothing and handbags may limit Coco's Closet's appeal to respondents interested in other luxury items such as shoes and jewelry. • **Price perception:** poses a challenge as some respondents view pre-loved items as less desirable or overpriced, potentially impacting sales and profitability. This effect is particularly pronounced among those disinclined to purchase first-hand items following second-hand transactions. • **Competition:** Coco's Closet faces competition from other luxury resale platforms, with varying appeal among respondents for different shopping initiatives, highlighting the need to differentiate offerings effectively.

		• **Brand image risks:** Any negative association or controversy involving Chanel could potentially impact Coco's Closet's reputation and sales, underscoring the importance of brand protection and risk management.
External factors	Opportunities	• **Market expansion:** Expanding the product range to include accessories, shoes, and jewelry could cater to a wider audience, addressing respondents' preferences for luxury items beyond clothing and handbags. • **Collaborations:** Collaborating with influencers, celebrities, or fashion designers could enhance Coco's Closet's visibility and attract new customers, leveraging respondents' interest in personalized shopping experiences. • **Sustainability trends:** Promoting eco-friendly practices and initiatives could attract environmentally conscious consumers, tapping into respondents' support for a circular economy model with repair and restoration services.
	Threats	• **Economic downturn:** Economic fluctuations could impact consumer spending on luxury items, affecting Coco's Closet's sales and profitability, particularly among respondents who are neutral on making first-hand purchases after buying second-hand items • **Counterfeit Products:** Presence of counterfeit items in the resale market poses a threat to Coco's Closet's reputation and customer trust, emphasizing the importance of stringent authenticity verification measures. • **Changing consumer preferences:** Shifts in consumer preferences or trends towards fast fashion could affect demand for pre-loved luxury items, necessitating flexibility and adaptation to evolving market dynamics. • **Regulatory risks:** Changes in regulations related to resale, authenticity verification, or sustainability practices could impact Coco's Closet's operations and compliance, requiring ongoing monitoring and adaptation to regulatory changes. • **Technological disruption:** Advances in technology or emergence of new online platforms could disrupt Coco's Closet's business model and competitive landscape, underscoring the need for continuous innovation and differentiation to stay ahead of the competition.

9.3.2 Coco's Closet

Dive deep into Coco's Closet, recommended for luxury fashion house Chanel, where you can explore a carefully curated selection of pre-owned Chanel items such as handbags and accessories. Imagine yourself in the virtual closet of Coco Chanel herself, where each item tells a unique story of timeless elegance and luxury. This integrated platform offers a user-friendly experience and meets the preferences revealed by the research conducted.

To complement this concept, Coco's Closet presents visuals that reflect the chic aesthetic synonymous with Chanel. The front page of the platform welcomes visitors with elegant design elements - curved frames and sophisticated typography - that exude luxury and exclusivity. These carefully curated visuals appeal to Gen Z consumers looking for authentic, high-quality pre-owned items that embody Chanel's iconic style.

Figure 4: Home page Coco's Closet by Oona Sabbe

9.3.3 Concept

The second-life platform facilitates a streamlined process for selling and acquiring pre-owned Chanel treasures, with an emphasis on durability and style. Sellers can submit items for review by completing a short questionnaire to ensure they meet quality standards. Once approved, items can be shipped to Chanel at no cost. The team of experts carefully evaluates each item and provides a detailed product description and authenticity guarantee before it is displayed on the platform.

For buyers, the collection of second-hand Chanel pieces encourages the rediscovery of timeless elegance with a sustainable approach. Each second-hand item tells its own story and awaits a new chapter of appreciation. By embracing second-life Chanel treasures, customers can indulge in eco-conscious luxury without compromising on style.

Figure 5: Concept by Oona Sabbe

9.3.4 Commercial strategy

Offering sellers the option to receive a voucher with an additional 15% bonus on the estimated value of their Chanel pre-loved items presents compelling advantages for the brand. Opting for the voucher over a cash payout incentivizes sellers to reinvest their earnings into Chanel's products and boutique offerings, thereby enhancing brand loyalty and engagement. This strategy cultivates repeat customers among sellers, driving sales within Chanel's ecosystem. Moreover, encouraging vendors to redeem their vouchers in Chanel boutiques not only increases sales revenue but also stimulates foot traffic and enhances the overall shopping experience.

Although consumer preferences regarding the use of vouchers - for first-time or second-hand purchases - are not definitively known, offering the voucher only for first-time purchases may influence sellers' decisions. However, some sellers prefer the flexibility of a cash payout or choose to use the voucher for second-hand purchases, even if the voucher is valid only for firsthand items. Therefore, understanding and responding to different consumer preferences is essential to maximize the effectiveness of this strategy.

From a sustainability standpoint, promoting the voucher opportunity aligns seamlessly with Chanel's commitment to a circular economy, prolonging the life cycle of luxury goods and fostering a community around sustainable fashion practices. Therefore, emphasizing vouchers with a bonus emerges as a strategic approach for Chanel to deepen customer relationships, bolster sales, and champion sustainability within the luxury fashion market.

Figure 6: Reimbursement page by Oona Sabbe

Presenting second-hand clothing as chic on a hanger in a fitting room visualizes a stylish and attractive way to display second-hand clothing. Presenting the clothing in an elegant way emphasizes the timeless and high-quality aspects of the items, making them attractive to potential buyers.

Figure 7: Representation second-hand items by Oona Sabbe

9.3.5 Curated selection of the items

Coco's Closet features an innovative feature called the Style Explorer, an interactive quiz that allows platform visitors to discover their unique fashion preferences through five simple questions. By answering these questions, users gain insight into their fashion aesthetic and personal style. Based on the answers, the Style Explorer then suggests second-hand garments that perfectly match their individual preferences. This feature was developed in response to survey respondents' strong preference for a carefully curated selection of high-quality and exclusive items on a luxury second-hand platform.

STYLE EXPLORER

1. Color Inspiration: Which color palette speaks to you the most?

- A. Soft pastels and blush tones
- B. Classic neutrals like black, white, and beige
- C. Bold and vibrant colors like red, blue, and yellow
- D. Dark and moody hues like navy, forest green, and burgundy

2. Iconic Bag: Choose your go-to Chanel handbag style:

- A. The classic and timeless Flap Bag
- B. The elegant and sophisticated 2.55 Classic Bag
- C. The trendy and edgy Boy Bag
- D. The versatile and modern Gabrielle Bag

3. Fashion Icon: Who do you consider as your style icon for clothing and handbags?

- A. Emma Chamberlain
- B. Harry Styles
- C. Billie Eillish
- D. Millie Bobby Brown

4. Evening Look: Pick your ideal outfit for a glamorous night out:

- A. A flowy and feminine dress paired with delicate accessories
- B. A tailored suit or tuxedo with statement jewelry
- C. A striking ensemble featuring bold patterns and textures
- D. An understated yet sophisticated outfit with subtle embellishments

5. Chanel Accessory: Select the perfect Chanel accessory to complete your look:

- A. A string of pearls for a touch of timeless elegance
- B. A classic quilted Chanel handbag for effortless chic
- C. A pair of oversized sunglasses for a touch of glamour
- D. A sleek leather belt to cinch the waist and add structure

After completing the quiz, discover your unique Chanel style based on your chosen responses!

Figure 8: Style explorer by Oona Sabbe

This innovative feature not only highlights Coco's Closet's commitment to quality and exclusivity but also demonstrates the platform's ability to respond to Gen Z's needs and preferences, making shopping on Coco's Closet an engaging and personalized experience for each user.

Profile A: Classic Elegance

For those drawn to timeless elegance with a touch of vintage, this profile reflects Gen Z's preference for styles that step back to the past yet remain timeless and elegant. Inspirational figures such as Audrey Hepburn and Emma Chamberlain are cited, with Emma Chamberlain serving as a Gen Z icon known for her classic and vintage-inspired fashion choices that resonate with younger generations. The emphasis on the classic Flap Bag and pearl necklace as signature accessories underscores the appeal of timeless and iconic pieces popular with Gen Z, who values durable and versatile fashion items.

Figure 9: Profile A by Oona Sabbe

Profile B: Sophisticated Minimalist

This profile speaks to the sophisticated and minimalist style that many Gen Z'ers embrace, with a preference for timeless and versatile looks that are effortlessly chic. Icons such as Harry Styles and Zendaya are mentioned, both of whom are influential to Gen Z and are known for their contemporary and stylish fashion choices that embody a minimalist aesthetic. The emphasis on the 2.55 Classic Bag as the go-to Chanel handbag highlights Gen Z's preference for timeless and iconic accessories that complement a sophisticated and versatile style.

Figure 10: Profile B by Oona Sabbe

Profile C: Bold Trendsetter

This profile focuses on the bold and trendsetting style characteristic of many Gen Z'ers, with a penchant for bold colors and bold statement pieces. Icons such as Rihanna and Billie Eilish are mentioned, who are known for their edgy and bold fashion choices that challenge the norm and are inspiring to younger generations. The emphasis on the Boy Bag as the go-to Chanel handbag highlights Gen Z's preference for edgy and trendy accessories that express personality and individuality.

Figure 11: Profile C by Oona Sabbe

Profile D: Modern Chic

For those seeking a modern and contemporary aesthetic with a touch of edge, this profile offers a perfect blend of sophistication and contemporary flair. Icons such as Millie Bobby Brown reflect contemporary and trendy fashion choices that embody a modern aesthetic. The emphasis on the Gabrielle Bag as the go-to Chanel handbag highlights Gen Z's preference for versatile and modern accessories that suit their dynamic lifestyle and ever-changing fashion preferences.

Figure 12: Profile D by Oona Sabbe

9.3.6 Product page

If a buyer is identified as Profile A, which stands for "Classic Elegance," the platform only displays pre-owned garments and handbags that fit this specific style. This means a carefully curated collection of timeless and elegant items, including classic dresses, stylish blouses, and iconic handbags such as the Flap Bag. By focusing on this approach, the platform acts as a service and inspiration for Gen Z buyers looking for vintage-inspired fashion with a touch of timeless sophistication. This tailored approach ensures that the online shopping experience precisely matches the preferences and tastes associated with classic and elegant styles, creating a cohesive and enjoyable browsing and purchasing experience.

Figure 13: Curated selection service by Oona Sabbe

If the buyer comes across an item that meets his or her expectations, such as the pink tweed dress, upon selection, detailed information about the fabrics used, available sizes, collection, and year of the garment can be viewed. This comprehensive information provides the buyer with a deeper understanding of the item's features and history, enabling a well-informed purchasing decision. The inclusion of the year and collection context enhances the buyer's understanding of the garment's historical and fashion significance, thereby enriching the shopping experience on the platform tailored to the specific style profile.

Figure 14: Product page by Oona Sabbe

9.3.7 Customer Experience

Marketing 5.0, as described by Kotler et al. (2022), represents a new era of customer experience (CX) where businesses must focus on delivering this enhanced journey across three different levels: informative, interactive, and immersive. This shift underscores the evolving expectations of consumers, particularly Generation Z, who demand personalized content, offers, and experiences from brands (Kotler et al., 2022).

Moreover, personalized marketing offers tangible benefits for companies, as highlighted by McKinsey & Company (2023). It can lead to significant reductions in customer acquisition costs, with potential savings of up to 50 percent. Additionally, personalized strategies can lift revenues by 5 to 15 percent and increase marketing Return On Investment (ROI) by 10 to 30 percent. Companies that embrace personalization also experience faster growth rates, deriving 40 percent more of their revenue from personalized initiatives compared to slower-growing counterparts. This research underscores the critical role of personalized experiences in driving customer loyalty and overall sales performance, further emphasizing the strategic imperative for businesses to adopt personalized marketing approaches (McKinsey & Company, 2023).

Aware	Appeal	Ask	Act	Advocate
Discover	*Interest*	*Questioning*	*Buy*	*Engage*
• Social media • Chanel official website • word-of-mouth • Influencer marketing • Billboards	• Browsing • Curated selection process	• Product reviews • Price Comparison • Customer service	• Add products to cart • Complete check-out process	• Feeling of community • After-sales engagement

Aware

This stage involves potential customers discovering the second-hand platform “Coco’s Closet”. This can be achieved through various channels, including social media, Chanel's official website, word of mouth, influencer marketing, and billboards. These channels increase the visibility of the platform and bring it to the attention of potential buyers.

The use of billboards aims to raise awareness of two different audiences: individuals who want to sell their Chanel items and younger generations, especially Gen Z, who are interested in buying used luxury goods. By displaying images from the homepage of Coco's Closet on billboards, the strategy seeks to attract the attention of potential sellers who may no longer use their Chanel items and are considering selling them. At the same time, the billboards target Gen Z and other potential buyers, highlighting the appeal and value of buying pre-owned Chanel items from Coco's Closet.

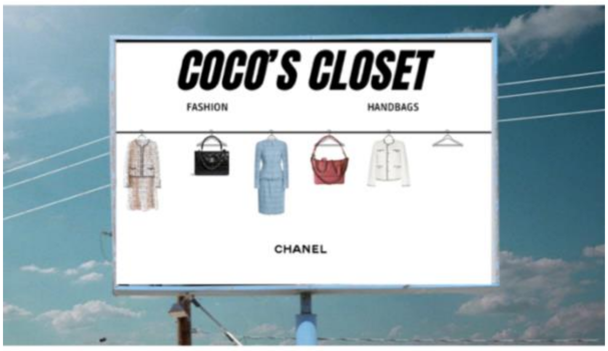


Figure 15: Billboard campaign by Oona Sabbe

Appeal

Once customers are aware of the platform, the process of attraction and interest begins. Customers are attracted to the platform by the products displayed and the compilation of an attractive selection. This sparks customers' interest and encourages them to explore further.

Ask

To captivate the interest of individuals, especially Gen Z, a key recommendation is to leverage the online platform as a means of information gathering. Customers can ask questions and look up information about the products on the platform. This includes reading product reviews, comparing prices between first and second-hand products, and researching customer service options to make an informed decision. By highlighting these informational opportunities, customers can gain a deeper understanding of available products and make informed choices that fit their preferences and needs. This approach is crucial to generate interest and build trust with potential buyers.

Act

When customers decide to purchase from Coco’s Closet, they perform actions such as adding products to their shopping cart and completing the checkout process. This stage represents the actual purchase decision and transaction

Advocate

After the purchase, the customer enters the stage of engagement and a sense of community. Creating a vibrant Coco community fosters a sense of belonging, summed up in the mantra “I have a Coco, I am a Coco.” This sense of belonging not only strengthens engagement but also serves as a catalyst for advocacy. After the purchase, customers move into the engagement and community phase, where interactions and shared experiences contribute to positive brand perception. Through post-sale engagement such as community events, customers become advocates, actively recommending the platform to others and contributing to a thriving ecosystem of brand experiences.

9.3.8 Marketing mix: first-hand vs. second-hand Chanel items

This examination aims to clarify the distinct characteristics of Chanel's first-hand and second-hand experiences within the framework of the marketing mix.

	First-hand	**Second-hand**
Product	• Latest collections	• Pre-loved Chanel items
Price	• Premium luxury • 11.100 € (Chanel, z.d.-a) 	• Value for authentic pieces • 12.175 € (Farfetch, z.d.-b) 
	Wool and cotton tweed marineblue dress • 3.700 € (Chanel, z.d.-b) 	2007 frayed tweed minidress • 2.821 € (Farfetch, z.d.-a) 
Place	• Chanel boutiques • Official site	• Online second-hand platform • Coco’s Closet

	First-hand	Second-hand
Promotion	• Marketing campaigns (billboards, magazines, etc.) • Events collaborations (influencers, etc.)	• Digital marketing campaigns partnerships with fashion bloggers and influencers to raise awareness and attract customers interested in sustainable luxury fashion.
People	• Chanel's sales staff and brand ambassadors provide personalized assistance and expertise to enhance the shopping experience for customers purchasing first-hand products	• Coco's Closet customer support team offers responsive and helpful assistance addressing inquiries, provide product information, and ensures shopping experience for customers browsing and purchasing second-hand items online.
Process	• The process of purchasing first-hand Chanel products englobes a traditional retail experience, with customers visiting Chanel boutiques or the official website to explore and purchase items.	• Purchasing second-hand Chanel items from Coco's Closet involves browsing and purchasing items online, with streamlined processes submitting inquiries, receiving product information, and making payments
Physical Evidence	• Chanel's elegant and luxurious retail environments, including store layout, interior design, and packaging, convey the brand's prestigious image and enhance the overall shopping experience.	• Coco's Closet provides detailed product descriptions, high-quality images, and authenticity guarantees for second-hand items, instilling confidence and trust in customers when making purchases online.

One notable fact from this comparative analysis is the difference in price between first- and second-hand Chanel products, especially for the same type of handbag. The research shows that for similar items such as the Chanel Classic Flap Bag, pre-owned ones can have significantly higher prices compared to new ones. For example, while a new Chanel Classic Flap Bag is available directly from Chanel for €11,100, second-hand ones can be offered on platforms such as Farfetch for €12,175. This price difference suggests that second-hand Chanel products, despite their used condition, may have a higher value in the market, possibly due to their authenticity, rarity, or historical value.

9.3.9 Design

The visual presentation of the featured pre-loved platform presents a striking contrast to the front page of Chanel.com. The platform displays an arranged line of clothes hangers, each showcasing a unique pre-loved garment. This arrangement emphasizes the focus on individual items and the diversity of the offerings. In contrast, Chanel.com uses photos from fashion shows and campaigns, reflecting a more conceptual and trend-oriented approach. This visual comparison highlights the unique positioning of the recommended second-hand platform as a source for authentic and distinctive fashion finds, as opposed to the curation of new collections on the official Chanel website.

Figure 16: (Chanel, s. d.)

Figure 17: Homepage by Oona Sabbe

The product page of Chanel.com and that of its recommendation, Coco's Closet, show striking differences in presentation. On Chanel.com, garments are presented with photos from fashion shows and on mannequins. In contrast, on Coco's Closet, garments are displayed on a visual hanger, with each piece of fabric presented individually. This approach emphasizes the individuality of each garment and offers a more detailed and personal view of the pre-loved items.

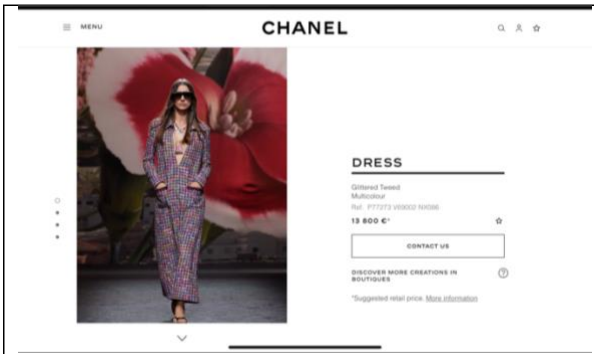


Figure 18: Product page Chanel (Chanel.com, s.d.)

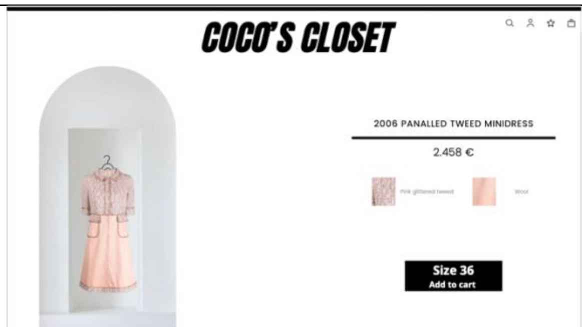


Figure 19: Product page Coco's Closet by Oona Sabbe

10 Navigating the future

As luxury brands navigate this dynamic landscape, the insights in this dissertation offer actionable strategies to harness the potential of second-hand platforms while maintaining brand prestige and exclusivity. By embracing sustainability and establishing strategic partnerships, luxury brands can build deeper connections with discerning Gen Z consumers and pave the way for a more ethical and inclusive future in luxury fashion. This shift toward sustainability not only responds to changing consumer preferences but also challenges traditional paradigms and encourages a re-evaluation of norms and values in the industry.

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