

THESIS

Cecilia Zanardini



**THE GLASGOW
SCHOOL OF ART**



The sustainable issue in the garment sector: how reduce consumption and the amount of cast-off clothing acting on buyers and companies.

Michelangelo Pistoletto, La venere degli stracci.

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Legend:

Methodology = Research approach used to inquiry and data collection methods applied with participants.

Evidences = Clear evidences emerged from the research.

Reflection = Second layer personal thoughts, connections built.

What I have learnt = How specific elements helped my project, what I have learned, what I might do differently in the future



= This sign indicates key concepts for project development.

Why I have chosen this topic and what it means to me

The word "fashion" derives from the French "façon", the meaning is referred to the process of making something, creating a particular shape or style. According to the Dictionary of fashion history, its use in the English language has been increasingly associated with clothing and the constant shifts and changes in personal adornment, and this is the topic of my research portfolio. Fashion is one of the most personal and subjective expressions of the self, that is the reason why everyone has a different version and meaning conferred to the term. At the same time, we can agree to define fashion, in a sense, as change; it is the process according to which styles replace each other, it is the rule that forbids any style to become too durable. It is new and contemporary: the voices and the thoughts of people translate by designers in something that cover our self but also reveals who we are. For all these reason fashion is not vain, is not only appearance and it is not marginal in our lives. It concerns 100% of the population and encompasses different industries from agriculture to communication, it is one of the sectors that dictate and affect the strategic development of other industries.

There are also personal reasons that have brought me to focus on this topic. Fashion has been a silent element of growth in my life, always being present without being loud. My grandmother was a seamstress, she sewed clothes for my mother, my aunts and all the village for all her life and those garments have been passed to me and my sister. That is why in my family apparel always had a strong emotional meaning because they are memories and they are love. Respect, for clothes and connection with them, are values that have been taught to me through gesture and observation; I remember my grandmother talking with her clients and asking them what they wanted from their clothes, "how do you want to feel in it?", and I also remember the time she invested to make someone else happy. My childhood is plenty of stories about my grandmother meeting her friends and knitting for hours, this made me think how clothes could have been an element of social aggregation and freedom for those women; make clothes was all their life and they did it with passion sewing something that lasted through generations. I have seen what it means love clothes, from fabric and paper pattern to the day of the first fitting, the way you look at them and even the way you touch them is different.

My idea about clothes has been shaped without even realizing it and the ideal of dress "with a meaning" is what I experienced in my family and what I want to communicate.



My grandmother with her Singer sewing machine in Monastero Bormida (AT), her native place.

Why do we need to improve the fashion system?

The garment sector, since the 19th century, period of industrialization, has been a labor-intensive industry that required relatively low-skilled work compared to other industrial sectors and has shown some streamlined stages and characteristics that seem to reoccur even today. The cycle of fashion picked up speed, thanks to new textile machines, factories, and ready-made clothing



Cottonspinning, 1911.

As the garment manufacturing technology has been adopted by businesses, the sector grew, enhancing productivity and becoming part of an international supply chain. This rise of the industry from craftsmanship to supply chain has brought around the world factories, previously in the US, Japan and Korea and nowadays in Bangladesh, Cambodia and other eastern countries. Nowadays the strenuous rhythm has brought the people who make our clothes predominantly live in poverty, lacking a living wage or the freedom to negotiate for their pay and working conditions. According to the Global Slavery Index (2018), the garment industry is the second most predominant sector driving modern slavery. We should demand radical, revolutionary change. Wearing clothes nowadays must not abuse, harass or discriminate against people but empower workers and liberate them from the old frame of work and exploitation. After so many years changes are needed, to face the new issue and crisis from an environmental and ideological point of view. Follow the fashion system pace is no more what we need, we have reached an excess that is toxic for the environment and our lifestyle because it is tight by materialism, we need to normalize the speed.

Desk research phase 1

Step 1: Exploring a general contemporary issue to find out the specific causes and effects that impact the society.

Issues in the garment sector: the environmental side

Clothing has the fourth largest environmental impact after housing, transport, and food. These impacts occur at all stages of the clothing life cycle, from the production of the raw materials, and the creation of the garment, to how it is used and cared for, and finally discarded. Better ways of designing and producing clothing are on the increase, but there is a risk that these improvements could be undermined by a rise in the amount of clothes being bought. Garments that last longer reduce production and processing impacts, but only if new purchases are avoided.

The fashion industry impacts our planet in different ways and it affects different spheres from air to water. The highest contributors to the carbon footprint of clothing are the production of fiber through polymer extrusion and agriculture. Instead of considering manufacturing the most polluting stages of the supply chain are Dyeing, finishing, and Yarn Preparation due to high dependence on fossil-based energy.

The 'in-use phase', when the garments are with the consumer, is third in terms of impact.

Regarding the growth of the fibers one of the most harmful for the environment (but also for the working standard) is the cotton-growing, that along with textile-production industries, contributes to freshwater contamination, as well as using much of the available clean water in areas suffering water stress. We can generally say that all cellulosic fibers also use a large quantity of water in their production. With viscose, this occurs when the raw material is made into fiber ready for spinning into yarn.

Treated and synthetic fibers contribute also to ocean plastic pollution in a subtle but pervasive way just by being washed: creating microplastics.

Issues in the garment sector: the socio-humanitarian side



Within the data related to the environment, we can find a subgroup related to the accumulation of clothes. Accumulation is the result of overbuying. Increased quantity of clothing now being purchased, will generate a higher environmental impact because of the production. Driven by the ongoing popularity of “fast fashion” the volume of clothes bought rose by nearly 200,000 tonnes to 1.13 million tonnes in 2016 and estimated £140 million worth (around 350,000 tonnes) of used clothing goes to landfill in the UK every year (WRAP 2016).

WRAP’s consumer research has found that on average, clothing lasts for 3.3 years before it is discarded or passed on, and around 30% of clothing in wardrobes has not been worn for at least a year. This situation is related to wrong buying habits affected by business schemes created by companies, but recently consumers have started asking for more transparency pressing brands to disclose information about their supply chain. We are moving to a more “sustainable fashion” even if the path is long and has mechanisms established since the industrial revolution. The first step is to set a definition-goal for “sustainable fashion”. One of the most holistic is about maintaining life on Earth and the ecosystem required to support it, reinventing the way we live addressing human needs within planetary boundaries creating a sustainable society (Fashion Revolution, 2020).



Seven years ago, Rana Plaza factory, in Bangladesh collapsed killing and injuring thousands of garment workers. Those workers were producing garments for western brands. Fashion western brands, whose supply chain is difficult to control because each process is located in different countries, also place orders with one supplier who subcontracts the work to another facility because of the short deadline or necessity of a special process to be done. It is impossible for those companies to make sure human rights are respected, working conditions are adequate and the environment is safeguarded without knowing where their products are being made.

The rise of fast fashion over the last twenty years has relied on low-cost labor to meet the increasing demand for cheap and trendy clothes. Even though wages have gradually increased in many manufacturing countries, the industry is still fuelled by the labor of millions of mostly young, female workers who are not paid enough to provide for themselves and their families. Great part of the sustainable development goals are related to re-establish average living conditions for workers such as, guarantee no poverty, considering that the 90% of workers in the garment sector now do not have the possibility to negotiate their wage or working conditions (Industrial Global Union), and salary is not provided regularly, the solution requires partnership between Government, companies and citizens.

75 million people work in the global garment industries and about 80% of this are women and 60% of them have suffered from sexual harassment at work (Fashion Revolution,2020). This “war of fashion” has also children within its victims. Factories hire children because they can be paid less and because certain tasks are better suited for them. In cotton picking, for example, employers prefer to hire children for their small fingers, which do not damage the crop. To get out of this vicious circle of inequality and decline child labor, we need to deplete poverty, and to do that we need to change this environment where cheap is the driving force and profit.





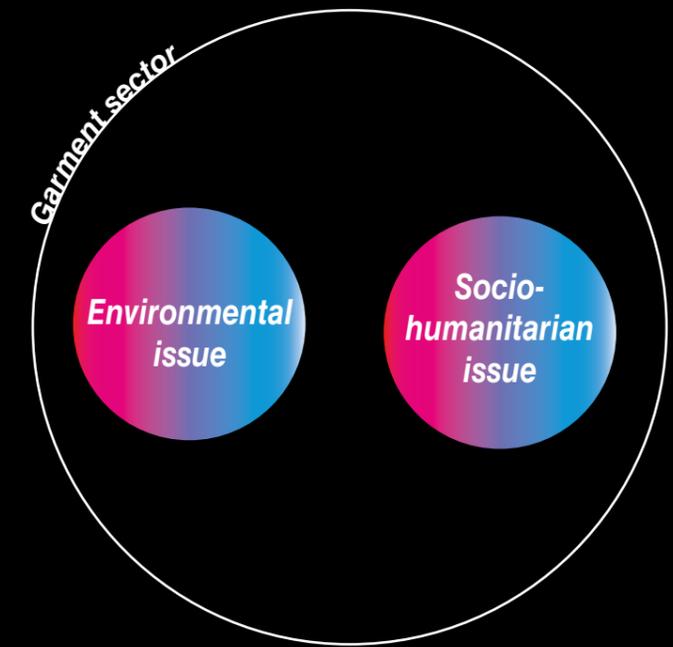
Covid-19 situation

The scenario created by Covid-19 undermine the already unstable situation of garment workers, making them the ones who will pay for this in the fashion industry. Retailers have been cancelling orders, including products already made and waiting to be sent to stores, and payments consequently has been delayed. According to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers Experts the harm is around 3.18 billion dollars in cancelled or suspended orders, the equivalent of 982 million pieces (Fashion Revolution, 2020). On top of job lost for workers we have also an environmental problem, by the time stores will fully reopen around the world these products will be considered “out of season” and what will happen to all of these perfectly good items and all the material that was used to make them?.

Methodology

During this first phase of my desk research, the aim was to gather data and information about the general issues in the garment sector. I realized that findings were from two clear spheres, I have then created two groups: environmental issues and socio-humanitarian issues. This data collection includes different sources: website, documentary, interviews, and analysis; I have created both the group using mainly quantitative research but at the same time I have then bridged it with qualitative research, giving an interpretation of data creating a mode of social and human exploration, creating thoughts around this scientific numbers and data.

I have applied a quantitative method to logically divide the information and analyze the frequency of occurrence of a certain matter and deduct rationally and objectively what could be the causes, verifying my hypothesis with more research. This objective analysis has given me a useful starting point and the grip to approach a topic where I was not an expert, giving me the knowledge to speculate. All the findings could be considered dependent variables because the questions that they raise are: why? What are the causes? . . . these questions will be my indicators for future phases.



Reflection

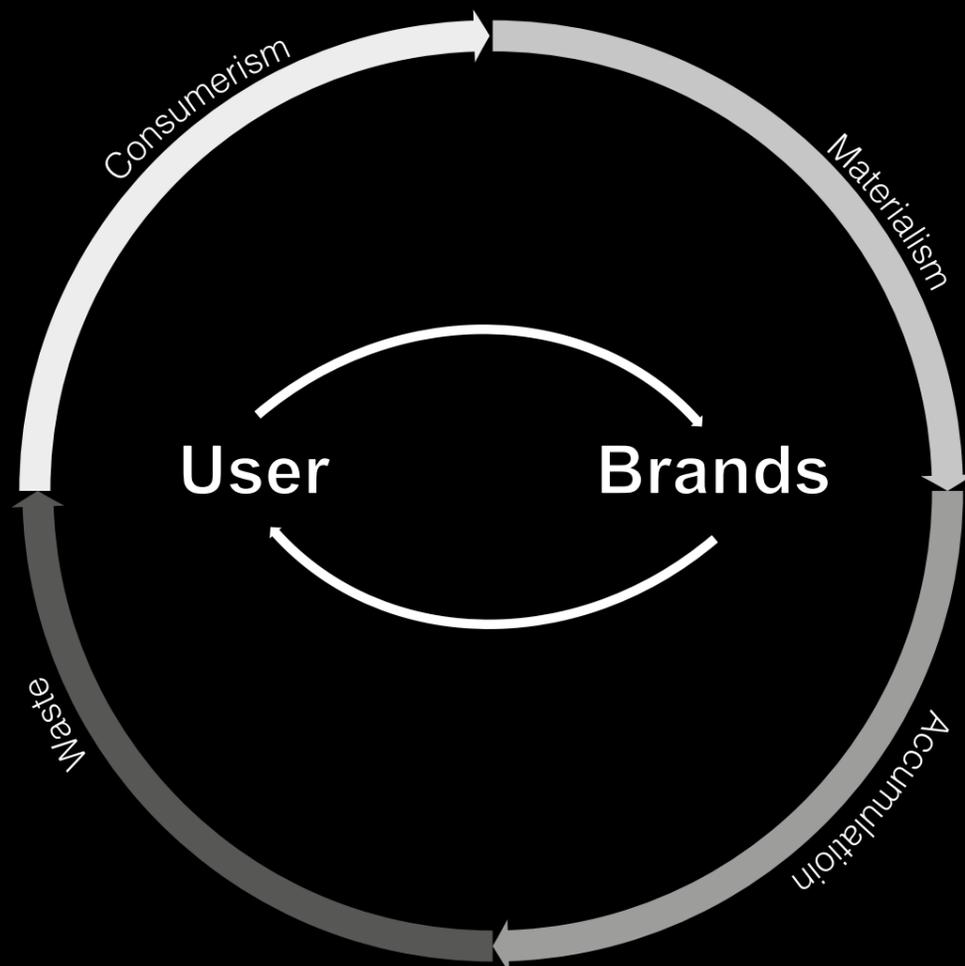
If we stop to think about how we buy, we should consider if we question our self or not, are we buying something that we need or something that is just a cheap occasion? And if it is so cheap, why? Nowadays is way easier to be an aware consumer and find information about what we should avoid but at the same, the market is more tempting. The solution is neither blame the companies, nor our self but start looking for information and ask the brand disclosure and transparency.

<https://www.fashionrevolution.org/about/get-involved/>

This link will send you the “take action” part of the Fashion Revolution website, where you can find an example of an email to contact your love brand and question them. You may receive an answer or maybe not but is for sure a good starting point send it.

Evidences

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Desk research phase 1

Step 2: In step 2 after pointing out the details and the data of the problematic, I have decided to investigate what we are already doing and what potentially can change in our reality to improve the situation. Switch the focus from negative, to positive solutions and thoughts.

What could we do to improve the situation?

Technologies: The intersection between fashion and technology has always been a point of interest for its futuristic aspect and the development of both the subjects because it is in a cross-cultural perspective that we can find innovation. Nancy Tilbury of STUDIO (E)XO is working in "Making science fiction science fact" they develop digital couture experiences, creating interactive and evolving garments. This is design-engineering dress up as fashion but at the same time is near the performance art. This wearable technology is a transformation in the textile world and can also change our idea of fashion in something more conceptual and meaningful.

Another side, brought to light by fashion and technology is the environmental one. Suzanne Lee is the founder of Biocouture, her dictum is embracing nature instead of dominating it. She is rethinking how we might create a piece of clothing that we could imagine growing using bacteria. Biocouture with its labs is also helping the brand to bring these materials on the market. Suzanne imagines a future of living fabric with no waste.w

The 'in-use phase', when the garments are with the consumer, is third in terms of impact. Changes in washing and clothing care, and customers keeping clothes in active use for longer.

Business/Marketing: Clothes are massively underestimated and we need to switch this mentality of disposable clothes in durable products. 3 are the focus area:

- New Business Model that increase clothing use. This can be done giving users more flexibility (slow down the trends) and open to more personal styles and capturing the value.
- Safe and renewable inputs for factories.
- Economic models that rely on sharing or renting rather than ownership, and reuse of vintage garments.



Individual: Care, repair, and reuse sounds like a mantra and is the easy explanation of the concept “circular economy”. The aim of circular economy is to create no waste avoiding landfill and to do that is important commit our self to our clothes, boosting care, but also be involved emotionally (Orsola De Castro, Fashion Revolution). Improve the relation of what we already have in the closet, doubling the number of times we wore a garment on average, reduce the GHG emissions of 44% per garment (Ellen Mcarthur foundation, 2017), this means that the most sustainable clothes are the one we already have in our wardrobe.

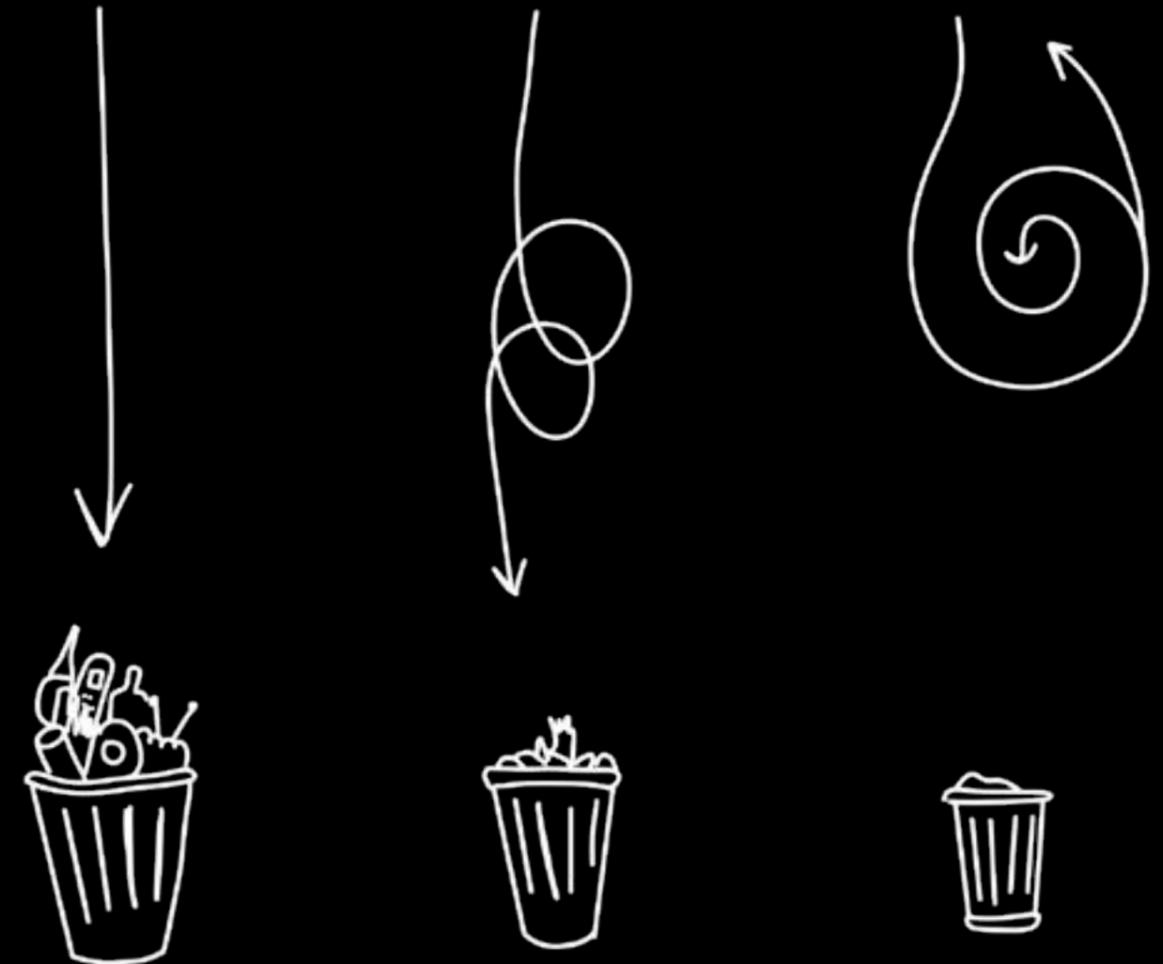


By Fashion Revolution

Linear Economy

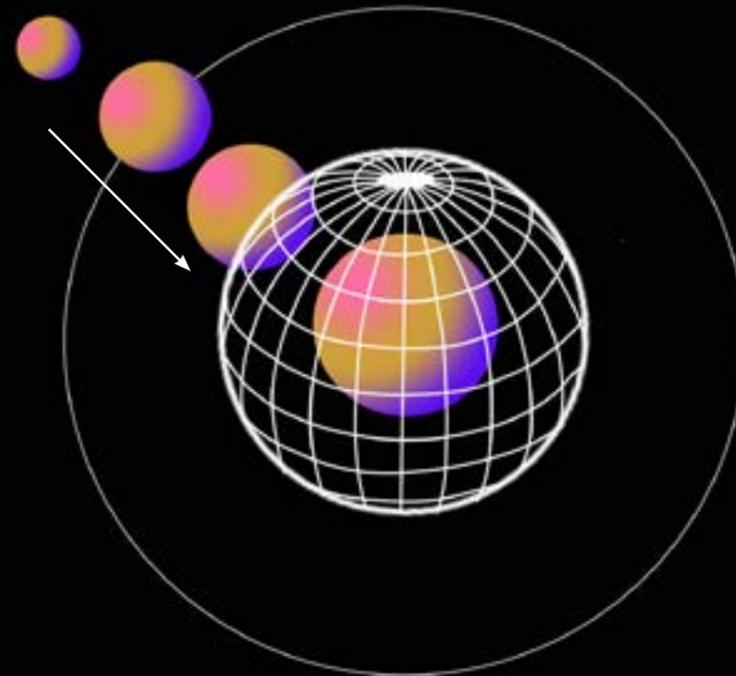
Circular Economy

Recycling Economy



Methodology

If in both the phases I have located me as an observer into the world, looking for contemporary problematic, in this second one I have applied a deeper qualitative approach compared to the first one. There has not been an assumption as a starting point, just a need to investigate what is the understanding of the problem nowadays. The interpretation of these data follows a framework driven by themes such as sustainability, collective and individual behavior, considering the point of view of all the actors in the system and solutions that were emotionally laden, close to people, and practical. The inductive-deductive logic process has brought me to develop reasoning shaped as questions.



"As an observer into the world"

Evidences

what we can do as individuals are small changes that can guarantee a big impact; we buy what we like, why do not take care of it and use it as much as we can? What is objective is also that customers want cheaper prices along with on-time delivery and adequate quality and companies want what the customer needs. Demanding for environmentally responsible behaviour along with all our desire can make the difference also for the business. We have buying power and we should use it.

Reflection

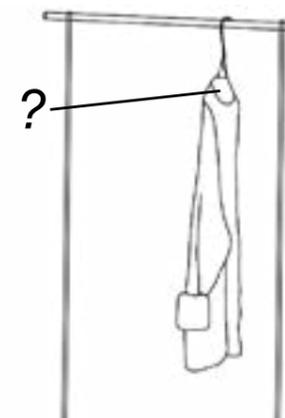
Committee ourselves emotionally to clothes is a concept that really made me think. Clothes are something that lives with us, every major moment of our life we were wearing something, they could be considered the closest kind of product to us, a single entity with our skin. I like to think that they are not only threads, but they absorb our moments and encompass our sensations, and in some cases are part of the family story. Disposable is something that has a reduce value, how can we consider something as clothes that have the potentiality to represent our identity as something without a value and easily replaceable?

Summary

What emerged from these 2 steps of desk research is that the amount of clothes that have been purchased every year is tonnes and tonnes and a great part of the time all these purchases are unused, or we get rid of them in less than 3 years (WRAP, 2016). These fast disposable garments are harmful for the environment and for the workers that produce them. What made me think is that we are causing consequences for something that we use partially and is not meaningful to us. I see these problems as huge consequences of a behavioural human difficulty: consumption.



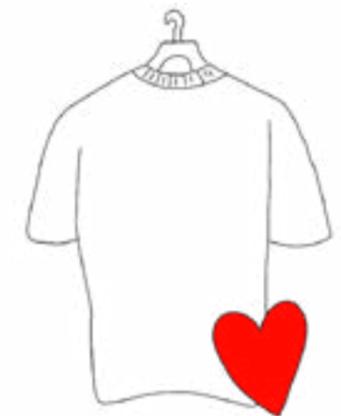
GOALS:



Make people aware of what is behind our clothes



Reduce waste by reduce buying



Commitment to our clothes

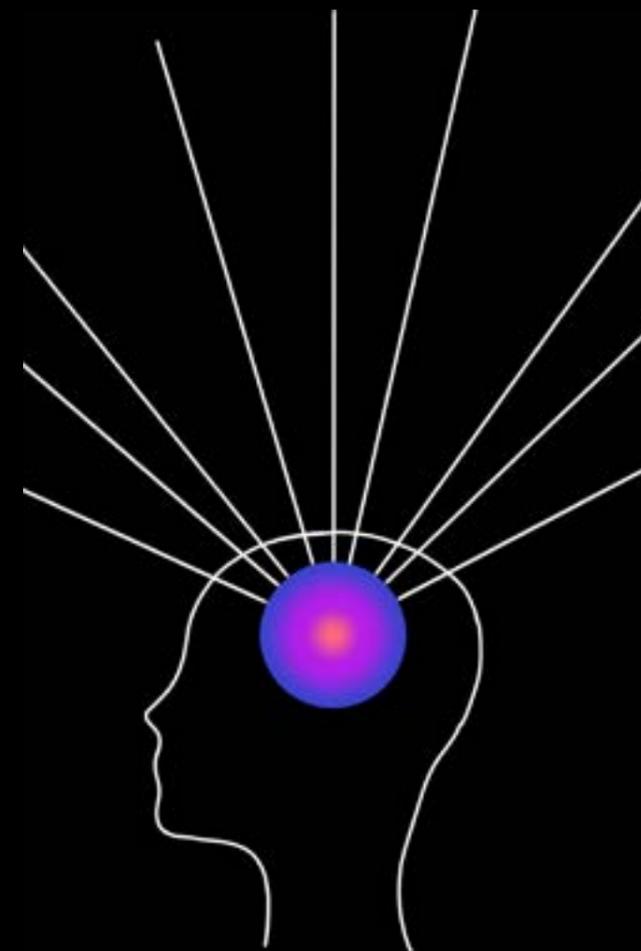
These goals want to create a user that knows the current reality of what he wears and made informed choices, that has an emotional involvement with his clothes and give them a value and this can conduct to a realization that what we already have is enough and we do not need to buy more and with that waste more.

There is a second-level reading of our clothes that is not only related to our personality but our mind. Our minds are unconsciously driven by several elements since we are part of an extended and developed group called society. Every choice if analyzed has an explanation, affected by conscious or unconscious factors, this becomes more interesting if we focus on habits that constantly impact our behaviour (sometimes negatively). I have decided to go deeper behind what could look like just a naïve decision, to the roots of human compoment:



Methodology

This reflection on previous steps has emphasized the phenomenological aspect of my topic, but also on the educational idea of caring relation. This concept of grasping the very nature of things is also due to the usage of both quantitative and qualitative research. What is missing from this approach is the philosophical assumption because I have only opened my reasoning to significant statement data, and analysis.



"Focus on behaviour impact other ares"

What I have learnt

Desk research is the base of the project. From the articles, the readings, and the findings you can find the spark to develop a project with the world problematic. It is important search for valid sources. What I have found complicated has been select the right subgroup of information to be the theme for my next steps. I have decided to operate in an area strictly related to the user behaviour because user-centered design is my approach and is how I want to develop my projects. This has not led to a little consideration of the environmental and socio-humanitarian aspect because improving and reducing the way we purchase impact also these other 2 areas, I have just chosen a broader way to affect them and this drop-down approach could be considered a strength in my research but on the other hand, could be a disadvantage because this breadth could cause loss track of the focus.

Desk research phase 2, sociology&fashion

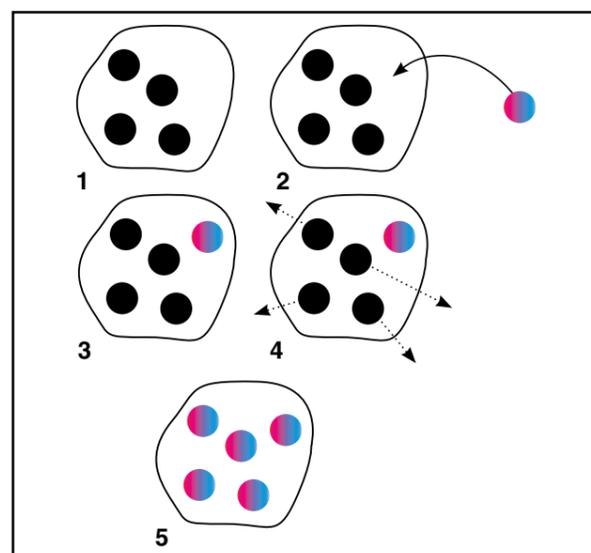
Step 1: In step 3 I have analyzed fashion as a sociological phenomenon, its evolution till the mass result of fast fashion, the byproduct of a new lifestyle.

Consumption nowadays

“We’re in an environment where cheap is the driving force and profit is important,” said Nigel Venes, strategic lead for apparel and textiles at the Ethical Trading Initiative. “Unless you have the whole market involved, there’s going to be a problem, because someone’s always going to be undercutting.” What this quote highlights are the main guidelines of nowadays consumption society. The modern consumer researches in the objects, material culture, looking for meanings. This process of continual self-improvement is relentless and, seldom arrives at the utopian destination that so desperately strives to reach.

Why do we buy things that we do not need?

The Diderot Effect: It is a social phenomenon related to consumer goods. When we introduce a new possession, that is deviant from what is current, for example when we buy something that represents what we would like to be instead of what we are, create a disagreement with existing goods and a negative spiral of consumption, starting a sort of subscription to a different unit.



Denis Diderot and
The diderot effect

Fashion could be considered the intersection of art, consumption, economics, and politics. It articulates social and historical dynamics, serving as social identification. Besides, the current phase of the history of fashion actively brings it closer to the values of mass society and mass taste. Fast fashion is usually recognized as a business strategy that creates an efficient supply chain to manufacture fashionable products rapidly to meet consumer demand (Levy and Weitz, 2008). This rapid fashion trend is a collection of low-cost clothing which is indeed established on contemporary high-cost luxury fashion trends, a fast-response system, that encourages disposability (Fletcher, 2008).

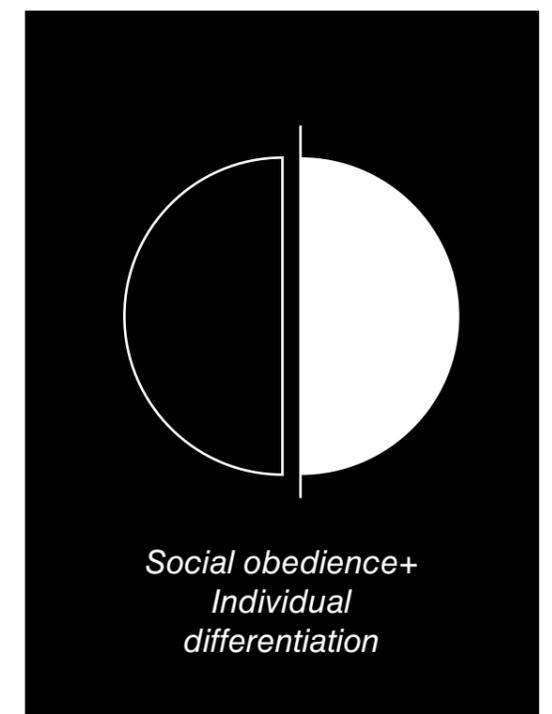
What affect our buying behaviour?/ What clothes mean to us?



George Simmel: According to Simmel, fashion derives from an archetypal tension in the social condition of the human being. Each of us has a tendency to imitate others. On the other, we also distinguish ourselves from others. Undoubtedly, some of us tend more towards imitation (and thus to conformism) while others tend to distinction (and thus to eccentricity), but fashion needs both of these contradictory tendencies in order to work.

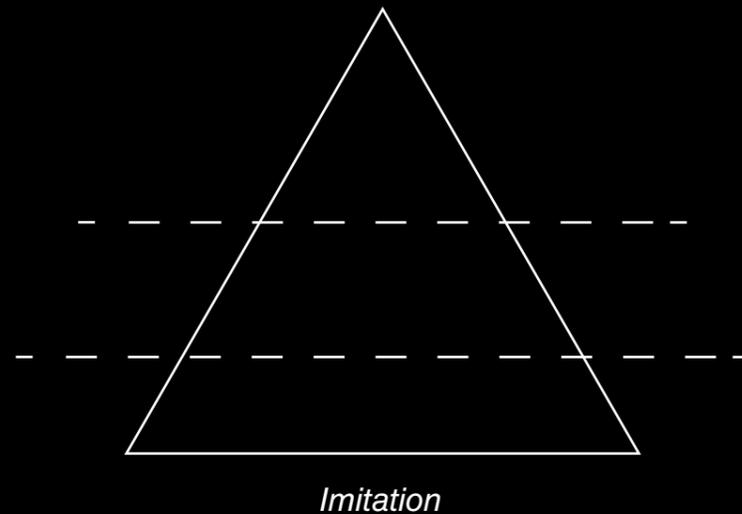
Fashion is an expediency that gives to the individual the satisfaction of standing alone in his actions being inwardly supported by a set of people. Fashion satisfy at the same time the desire for change and the demand for social adaptation. Fashion is born from class distinction, the elite is characterized by the maximal extension of the distinction lower

classes try to imitate it because we do that with people, who are, in one way or another, superior to us, and when it happens the upper ones move to something more exotic, this rapidity and social improvement create fast trends.



Methodology

The phenomenological research method in this case wants to analyze the broad definition of fashion meaning from a society perspective. It is important to understand the context and how it is structured (pyramidal social classes) and process the sociologist theories and then proceed into the project. This kind of inquiry aims to find the real essence of a phenomenon relying on the lived experience around us. In fashion, we have seen a typical cluster of meanings that underline a sort of unconscious structure behind our concept. The sociologic thesis explains how individuals make sense of the world (our individual demand to express identity through clothes), experiences of their imagination, the outside world, and social interaction (imitation is a form of interaction). I would consider it possible also to apply the ethnography's view. Here, researchers consider that the individual does not exist alone, but is influenced by society and will, in some ways, be constrained by their position within that society. For example, the decisions that we make are, in a way, limited by what society has taught us is socially acceptable and therefore we would not even consider certain choices. Ethnography through focus on an entire culture-share group, that here was not the core of the inquiry, that is why I consider Phenomenology a more appropriate research method. Would have been an interesting approach to the cultural aspect of clothes, typical garments of different countries, and their history but would have been a specific part not too relevant in a general behavioral analysis.

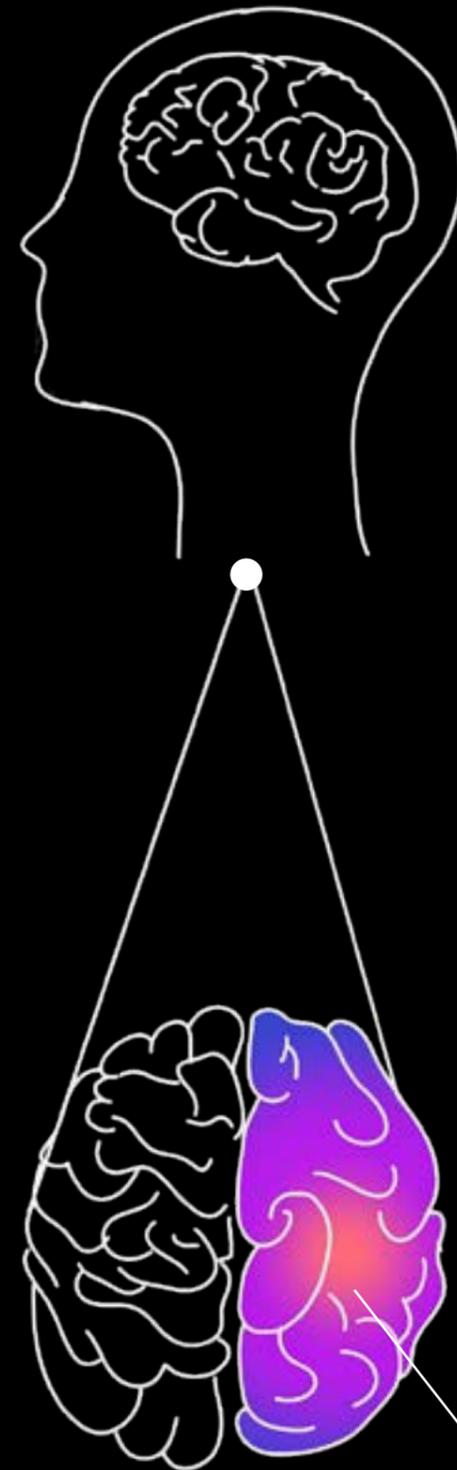


Evidences

Clothes are a means to communicate what we are or what we would like to be. Our affiliation to a social class is the hidden reality that we communicate, and the consumeristic society we are part of whose focus is profit, finds in imitation and its fast mechanism of replacement, a business opportunity.

Reflection

We use clothes to pretend a social position that is not our place, and most of the time we do not admit it to ourselves. We imitate who we envy. Fashion is ruled by irrational factors that is why is ever-evolving. In between all this sociological analysis, I have forgotten for a moment the artistic side of clothes, that is most powerful. If we set aside for a moment the logic examination, we can consider fashion as an applied art, as it is design. We wear clothes every day, they cover us, they warm us up, they have a function but are self-expression and creativity at the same time.



*Unconscious
desires:
Imitation,
Social obedience*

What I have learnt

This sociological analysis has been useful to examine the topic fully and give me the confidence to proceed considering, from a deeper perspective the user needs and develop my goals taking into account unconscious desires. Another reason why I have undertaken this part is simply because of my curiosity for anthropological behaviour. What could be an improvement of this step is take into consideration more researchers such as Jean Baudrillard and his consideration in "The system of objects", the concept of habitus in Pierre Bourdieu and Marshall Sahlins

Desk research phase 2, emotions

Step 2: In this step, I have analyzed the pivotal role of emotions in buying. I have decided to do that because one of the goals is to build an emotional connection with clothes, and to do that I have to understand what kind of sensations have brought people to buy a garment, how the market play with them, how they affect/build our relation with products and how they can be used to reduce buying instead of being a “snare” that increase it.

Desk research phase 2, emotions

Step 3: Analysis of Emotional durability as a means of development for my goals. Progression of the “emotional part” of my project.

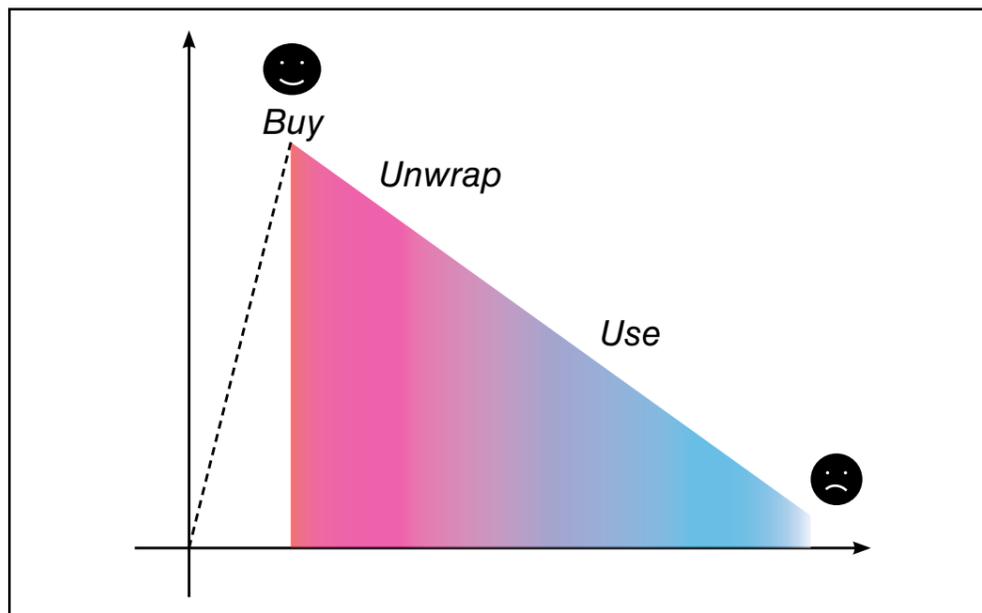
Emotional durability

The role of Emotions

Humans rely heavily on emotions when make decisions. Based on Antonio Damasio, neuroscientist, studies we know that there are connections between the “thinking” and “emotional” areas of the brain. How we feel about the options we have affect our choices. In response to emotions, we are compelled to act.

Consumer behaviour though, referring to apparel consumption is changing also in relation to low cost, globalized usage that has introduced a culture on impulsive buying.

Quick fix:



Less perfect the product become faster we start to desire new goods. This process starts since the moment of the unwrapping. (Ravera,2020)



"If we want to create sustainable fashion we must design product that celebrate the process of ageing, and accumulation of grime and wear and tear"

Johnathan Chapman

“Emotional durable design explores the idea of creating a deeper, more sustainable bond between people and their material things. The ultimate aim is to reduce the consumption and waste of resources by increasing the durability of relationships between consumers and products”.

This definition by Johnathan Chapman explains the potentiality of this concept that has counterpoints to our “throwaway society”, and if we want to stop this environmental crisis we need to shift away from the symptoms and engage with the underpinning behavioural phenomenon.

The 2 main concept that I get from J.C. book are:

-Consumption is natural: it is about far more than simply mindless purchasing of newer, it is a journey through an evolved self. It is an urge, a natural need symptomatic of a stimulus-hungry and it fills our emptiness with meaning that we attribute to objects. We can not stop it.

-Products must develop with the users building meanings through the experience the place were emotions are activated. Creating emotions not only when we are buying, but in other steps of the process/ownership is a key concept to create bonds and reduce waste.



*Johnathan
Chapman*

Reflection

It is relevant to remember that every product after the purchase has a long way with the consumer, the work of designers does not end there. In a service system environment, the experience of the item is part of the project and with clothes, this could be an innovative step forward.



What I have learnt

Understand the role of emotion in buying helped my project, making the users' sensation the core of my possible solution, finding the way to not detach the human side to the market analysis. I have learned that the most interesting solutions are in the intersections of different subjects, and it is always worth doing second layer research between topics that are not strictly connected to the chosen area, for example, J.C.'s book is not specifically about clothes but product design instead. Would have been useful improve this part with an interview with an expert about the role of emotions in marketing.

Summary

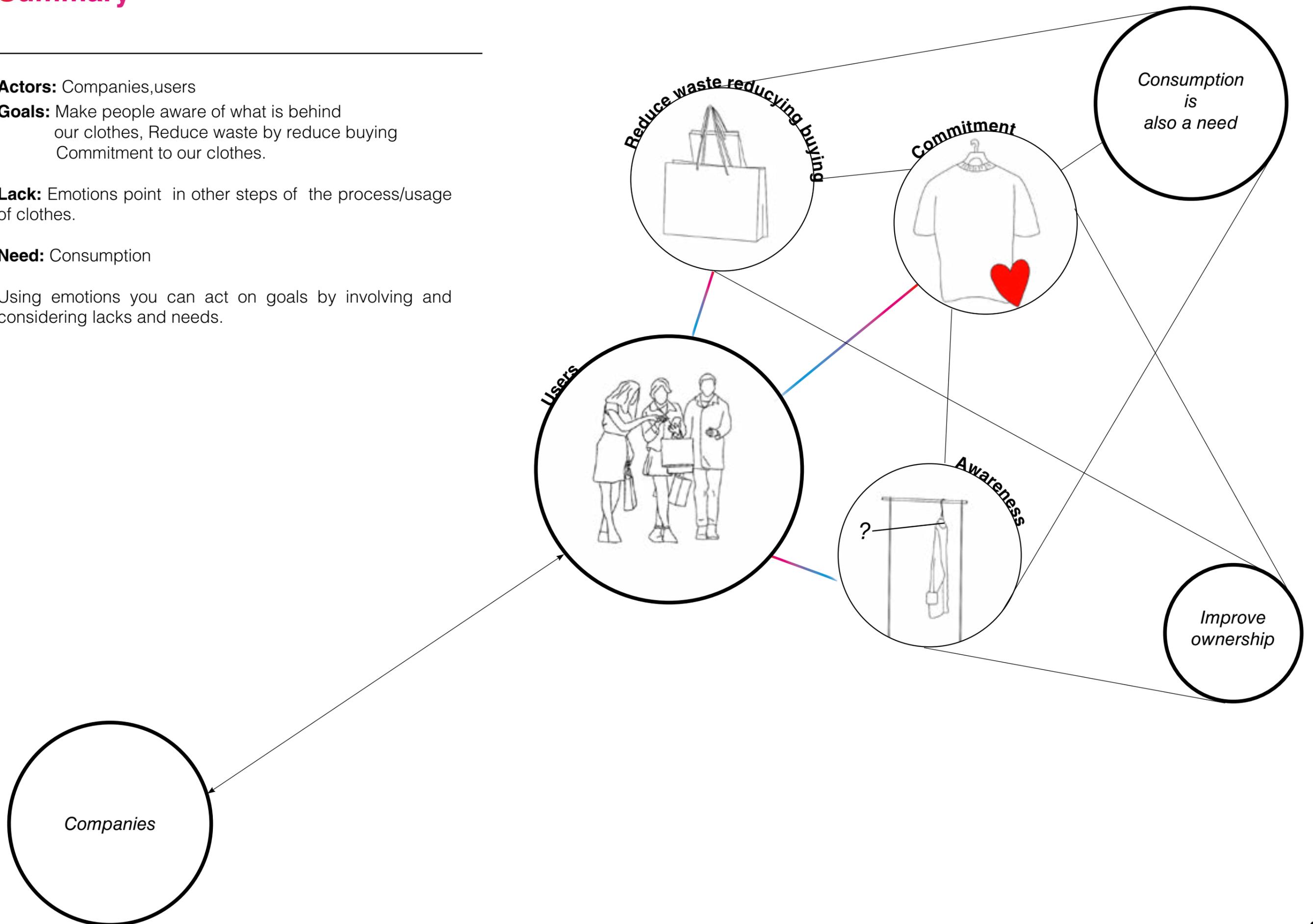
Actors: Companies, users

Goals: Make people aware of what is behind our clothes, Reduce waste by reduce buying
Commitment to our clothes.

Lack: Emotions point in other steps of the process/usage of clothes.

Need: Consumption

Using emotions you can act on goals by involving and considering lacks and needs.

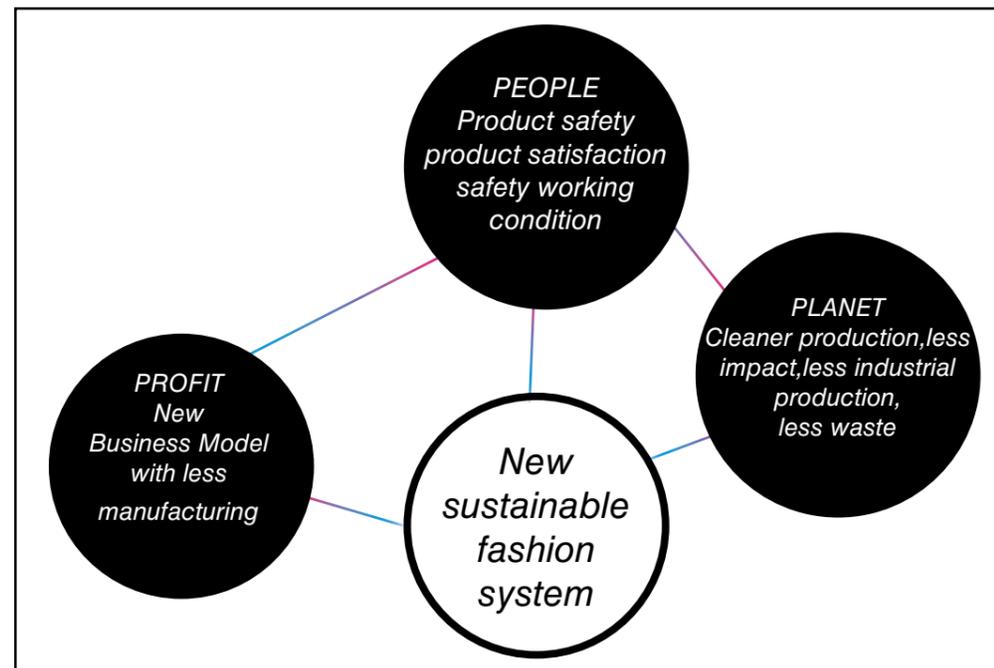


Desk research phase 3, from user to companies

Step 1: After I had worked on the user point of view, I decided to develop a similar but reduced approach on the other part of the system: the companies, because as I wrote in the analysis of the context, the actors influence each other and to make the difference we need to act at a widespread level in the fashion industry.

Niinimaky

Niinimaky wants to delineate a radical new fashion system and to do that he explains that we need to act on new business thinking in the context of sustainability. Currently, the fashion industry is based on fast cycles and planned obsolescence, and to balance the fall of garment prices and guarantee a profit, the amount of sold units grows, but this creates all the problems previously analyzed. To create a win-win situation, for both the consumer and the manufacturer the new model has to take into consideration sustainability, which can be an innovative business opportunity, and develop knowledge of the user. Its long-term goal needs to decrease the materialistic aspect in fashion. Dematerialization can be reached through a product service system creating new emotional experiences that differ from buying. This promotion of emotional bonding should be encouraged by the industry and trust, the base of the relation with the costumers is the result of transparency.



Methodology and reflection

My approach to at this point in the research has been a fundamental change point of view to guarantee objectivity. Has been difficult to understand the needs of the industry because the reality is that they need to create profit to survive as a business and sustainability could be a risky and expensive turn. This turning point could be considered a deeper step in the inquiry, because I have added information about another category (companies), which is strictly related to the consumer category. This connections and analysis of groups remind to Grounded Theory.

What I have learnt

This step has helped me to move forward to my scheme of systemic solution, that would try to involve different stakeholders. I have learned that sometimes bias about a category can make more complicated consider objectively their actions (in this case the group is the industrial system). What could have improved this part is a comparison of two key studies: a brand with an ethical business model and a fast-fashion company.

Summary

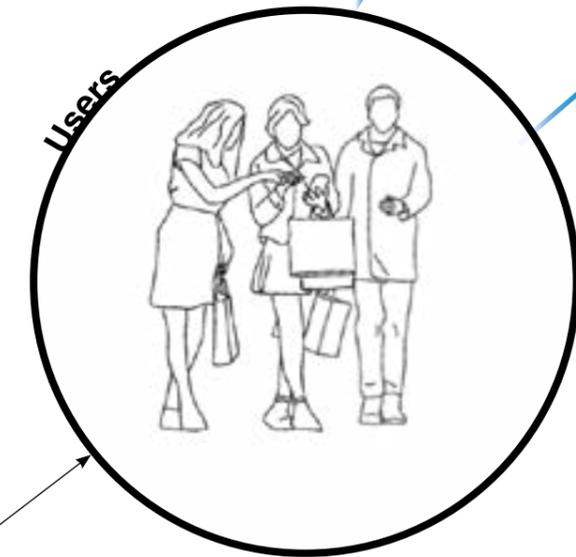
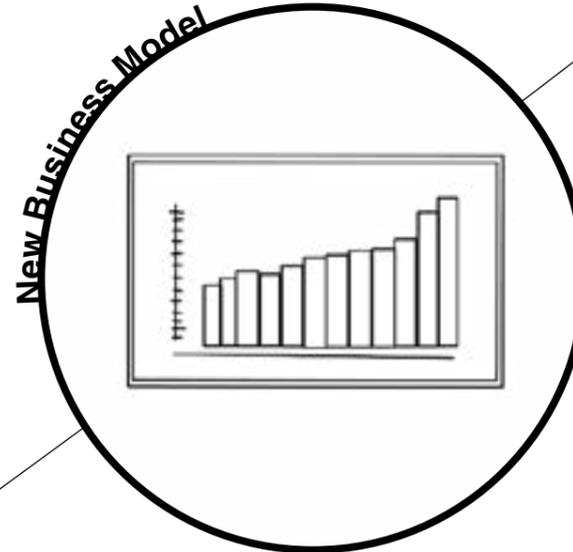
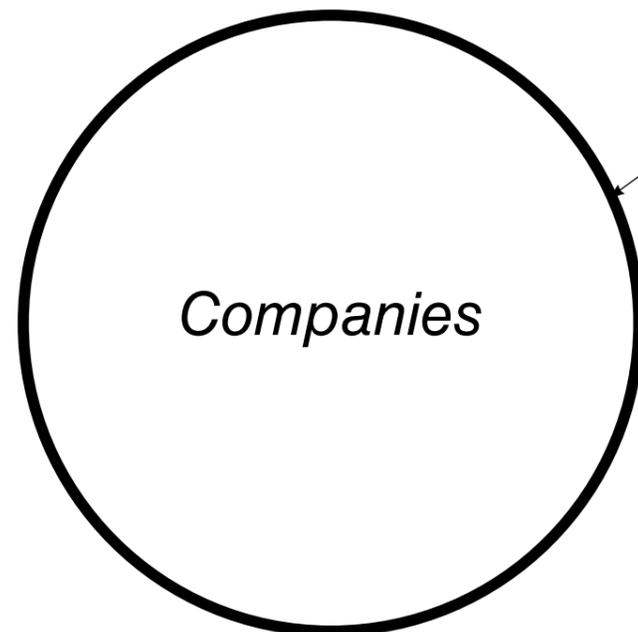
Actors: Companies, users

Goals: Make people aware of what is behind our clothes, Reduce waste by reduce buying
Commitment to our clothes.

Lack: New sustainable fashion system.

Need: Survive in the market.

Acting on the companies and guarantee a more sustainable network, could help also the user behaviour, it is necessary a radical rethink of how businesses operate and what are their value.



Interviews phase 1

Step 1: Interviews with expert to find intuitions and confirmations.

Lauren Cowdery: Leeds Community clothing Exchange



"Clothes have a story. If you wear them once then throw it in the bin, it hasn't had a story. You want to know there is life in these things."

Lauren Cowdery



This quote is the reason why I have decided to interview Lauren Cowdery Director of Leeds Community Clothing Exchange, a swap market.

Her quote represents the idea of clothes as living items, rich in memories, that have in their history an added value. This concept fascinated me, and I wanted to know more about her opinion of clothes.

What I have asked her:

What kind of bond people has with their clothes?

Are there stories behind the clothes?

Do these stories have an effect on people?

Why people use swap markets?

Exchange of clothes is also an exchange of stories? Is this an added value?

Insights



" Importance of the community that goes along "

People communicate

" They have a social history "

Passed from hand to hand

" When you pass clothes they are valued the most "

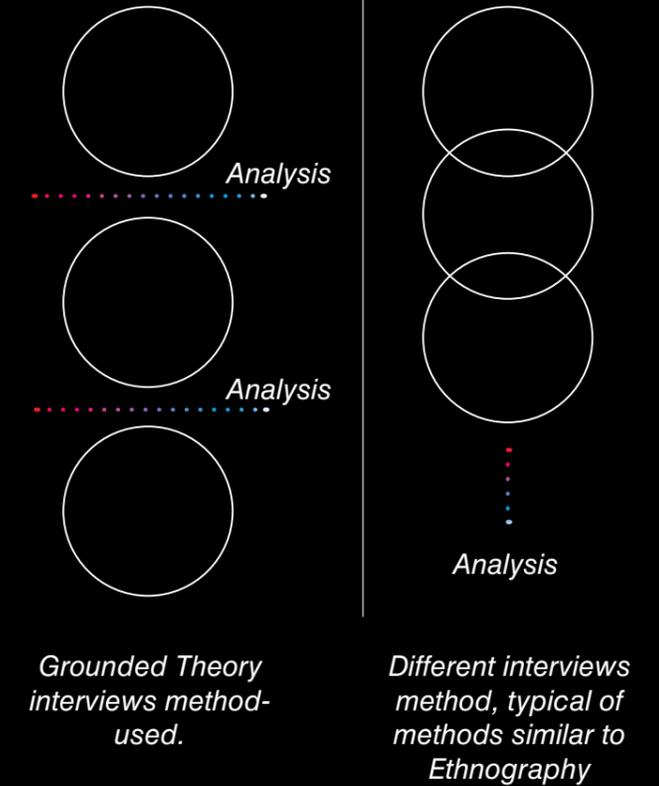
Powerful, "warm"

" Nicer way of shopping "

Thrill of the chaise, you don't know what'll find

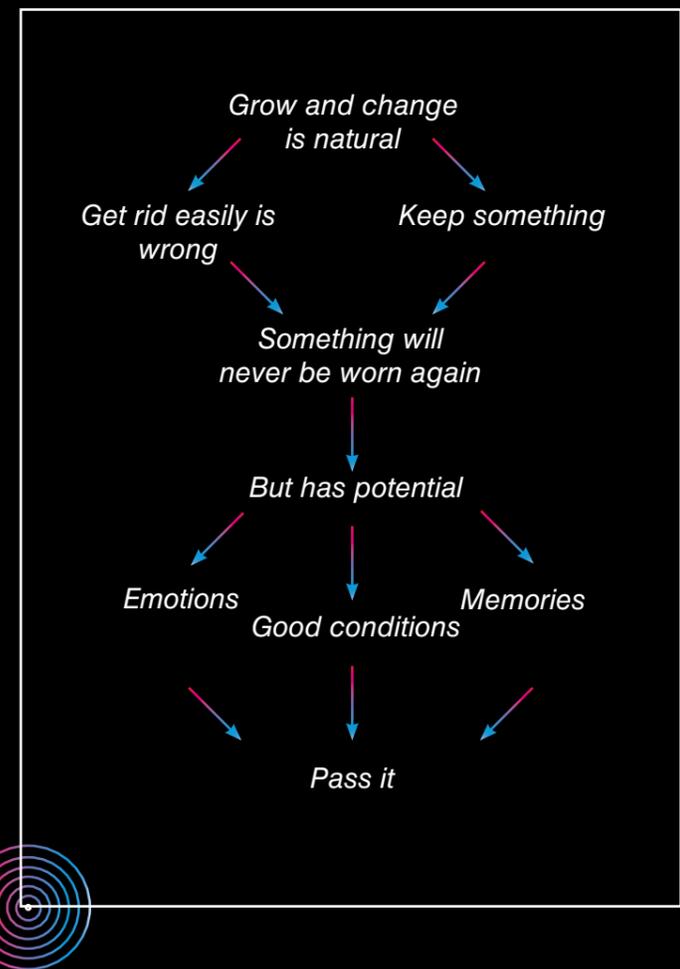
Methodology

I consider this interview as an in-depth semi-structured conversation with broad general questions. These questions were about the context of the swap market and the typical situations lived. Understanding the experience of the phenomenon by people is the focus and the outcome, how people have felt but also how the concept of "living clothes" impact the user. This phenomenological kind of question has been followed by an analysis to find insights, this methodology similar to Grounded Theory approach has been necessary through all the phase because the interviewees have different roles and have brought different components to build the next steps.



Reflection

The value of clothes is not always measurable with the monetary one. If clothes have a family history you will keep them forever, in other cases, they represent a place or a situation. Lauren gave me the example of a pair of chunky boots that were a piece from her youth, she saved money for a long time, but now she does not wear them anymore because she changed style but every time, those boots remind her of the hard work done. Change and grow is a natural process, and we should not deny it to us, at the same time is not sustainable get rid of clothes rapidly, also, some pieces will never be worn again, but they still have potential, maybe they do not fit us, but could fit someone else, and they can also have a story to say.



What I have learnt

This interview has been a key element and gave me the archetype idea of my project outcome. I would have loved to have the possibility to develop fieldwork, and observation, see people interact, without interfere, take pictures or sketch people gesture, this unfortunately was impossible because the market was suspended. This approach, more ethnographic I would say, in data collection, gives to the data collection a "human side" that an interview through a screen can not offsets.

Interviews phase 1

Step 2: After the sociological analysis of the fashion phenomenon I needed a chat with an expert to discuss and confront the thoughts a have developed, clarification, and confirmations.

Gordon Hush: sociologist and head of the Innovation School at GSA

Questions:

What clothes represent to us?

Relation between clothes and need?

Do these stories have an effect on people?

Why do we buy so much?

What affect our buying behaviour as a society?

Insights



"Blasé attitude"

Things are easily replaced than they are less significant and that is why they means so little to us.

"In a certain amount fashion allows membership"

Simmel concept

"The concept of fashion is different from age to age"

Age as a factor

"Subculture: «I don't change the way they change»"

Simmel concept

What I have learnt

This conversation with Gordon helps me understand that if I am looking for an outcome for my research, I need to identify a specific stakeholders area of action. A small change with value and the capacity to impact proactively a small range of people can make the difference. It is not important the scale of the project but the meaning behind it.



Interviews phase 2

Step 1: General inquiry to discover behaviour based on age.

Survey

The screenshot shows a survey form with the following sections:

- Master project:** My name is Cecilia Zanardini and I am currently studying for my MDes in Design Innovation & Service Design. For my master project, I am exploring themes of buying behaviour and sustainability, related to the garment sector. As part of my research, I would like to ask you some questions about the way you shop and the relationships you have with your clothes. What I want to know is whether or not people are aware of how they buy and what meaning clothes have to them.
- Ethics & Privacy:** Your responses to this form will remain anonymous and confidential but they will help me to develop my final project which may go public. For any queries please contact me at: C.Zanardini@tudum.ges.at.uk
- How old are you? *** (Radio button selected): 15-24 years old

Questions want to discover the frequency with every age group buy, dispose and connect their self to clothes and why they do that, verifying if the most compulsive behaviour is in the youngest groups.

Questions:

How old are you?

How often do you buy clothes?

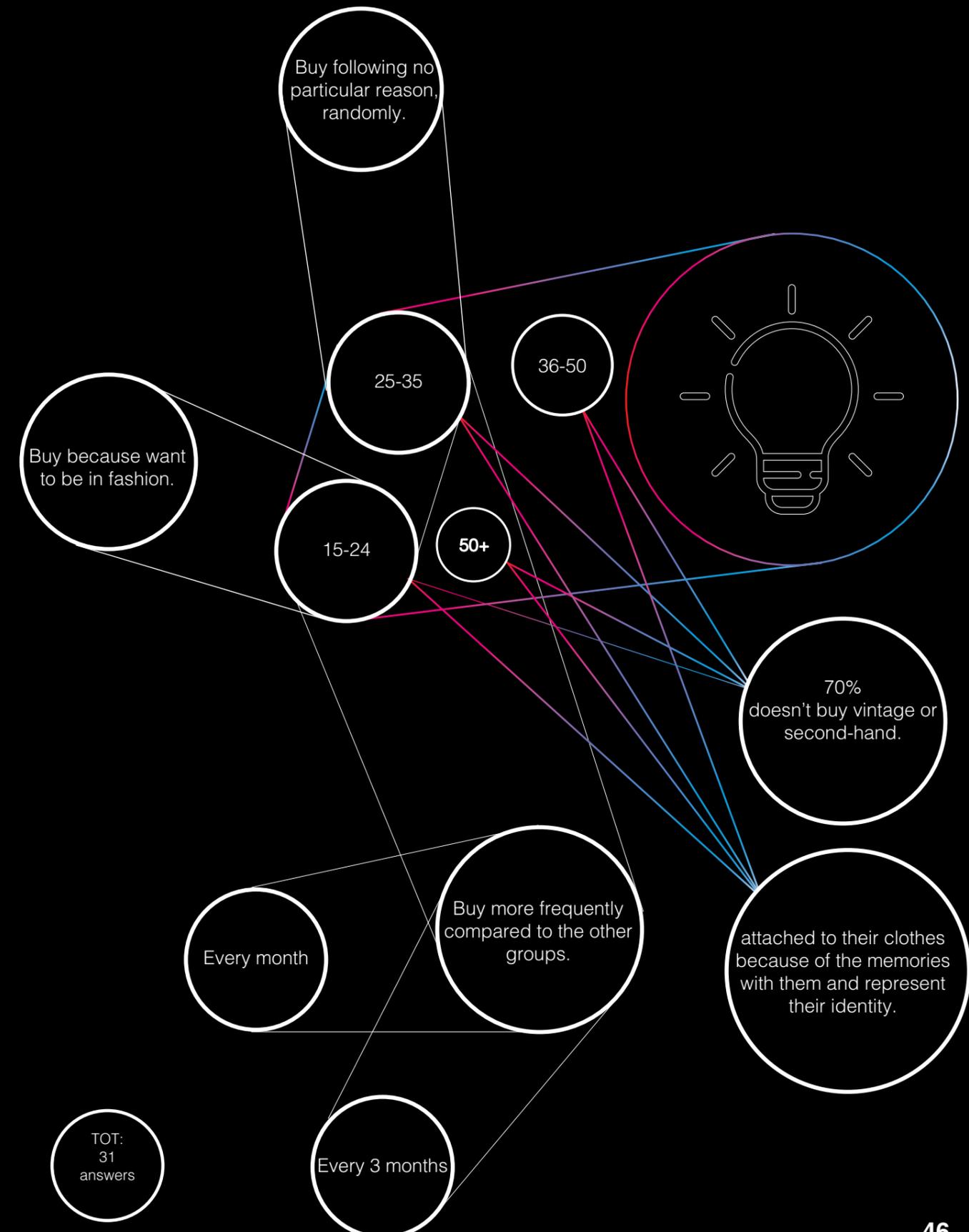
For how long do you wear your clothes before you stop wearing them?

Do you usually buy seond hand or vintage? why?

Are you attached to your clothes? and if so, why?

Do you have and wear garments previously belonged to your mother, father, grandparents, other members of your family, or friends?

Insights



Should I consider age as a distinguish factor?

15-24

Income and exposition to social media affect our relation with fashion and identity. Irrational behaviour and individual demand for differentiation are characteristics that create various aesthetics expressions.

25-35

«In UK half of clothes that people have set in a closet are not being used during the last 12 months. It is estimated 2.4 billion items in the UK alone and most of those unused clothes are owned by young consumers from 25 to 34 years old »
Niinimaki,2015

36-50

During this phase is difficult control our emotions, bcause we are building our personality (Ravera,2019)

50+

Changes in fashion go hand in hand with nervous impulses, more nervous is the age more rapidly fashion change. (Simmel)

Methodology



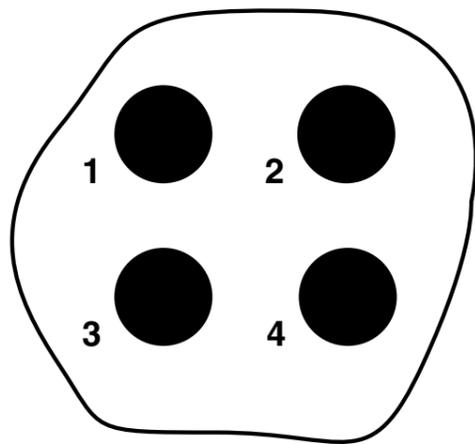
What I have learnt

Survey gave me the certainty that interesting age groups with would be coherent work were, 15-24 and 25-25 years old. What I would do differently is probably collect more answers. The survey remained online only 4 days because I needed to proceed in the next steps and start thinking about the concept. A longer exposition of the survey would have given me a greater variety of answers for each age group.

Interviews phase 3

Step 1: The last set of interviews is with 4 students from the fashion department at GSA. I have interviewed them because they have more knowledge than average consumers about the fashion system. They could be considered “expert” but at the same time they are in the age range considered and they still have the user point of view.

Fashion students



Questions:

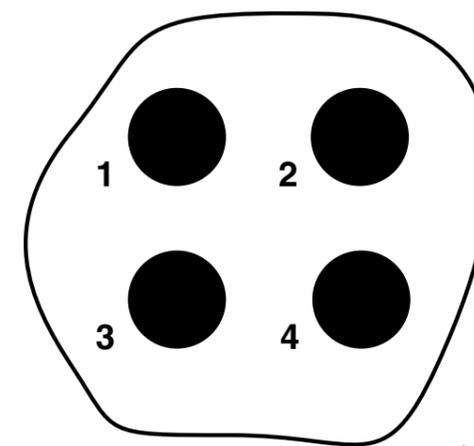
Does your knowledge of the fashion system influence your purchases?

How fast fashion has changed our way of buy clothes?

How do you imagine the future of fashion?

Do you think the concept of fashion could change based on age?

Insights



The future of fashion is more sustainable and aim to cultural contents in clothes they recognize and confirm the new attention on the topic.

They pay more attention to the design of the garments but they buy only when they need: it was interesting to observe how the sustainability was not one of the important part for them

More exposition to information creates more diversity in style, but at the same time, who has a defined look does not care about trends agree in youth thing

Fast fashion uses great variety and imitation of luxury brands along with sales to coax people to buy more: this concept was important for them as a creative professional but this does not stop them to buy from fast fashion shops

Methodology

Questions I have asked to the participants in this set of interviews were less broad and the outcome were structured interviews, probably because they happened after the survey phase, and what I wanted to know from them were similar to the aim of the questionnaire.

What I have learnt

Sometimes the output of an interview is different from what we would have expected, or not so significant, this could be a problem related to the question asked or the audience selected. In this case, integrate the interviews with another chat with fashion experts, that might have facilitated me to develop new reflections, would have helped me to ask different and more specific questions.

Summary.

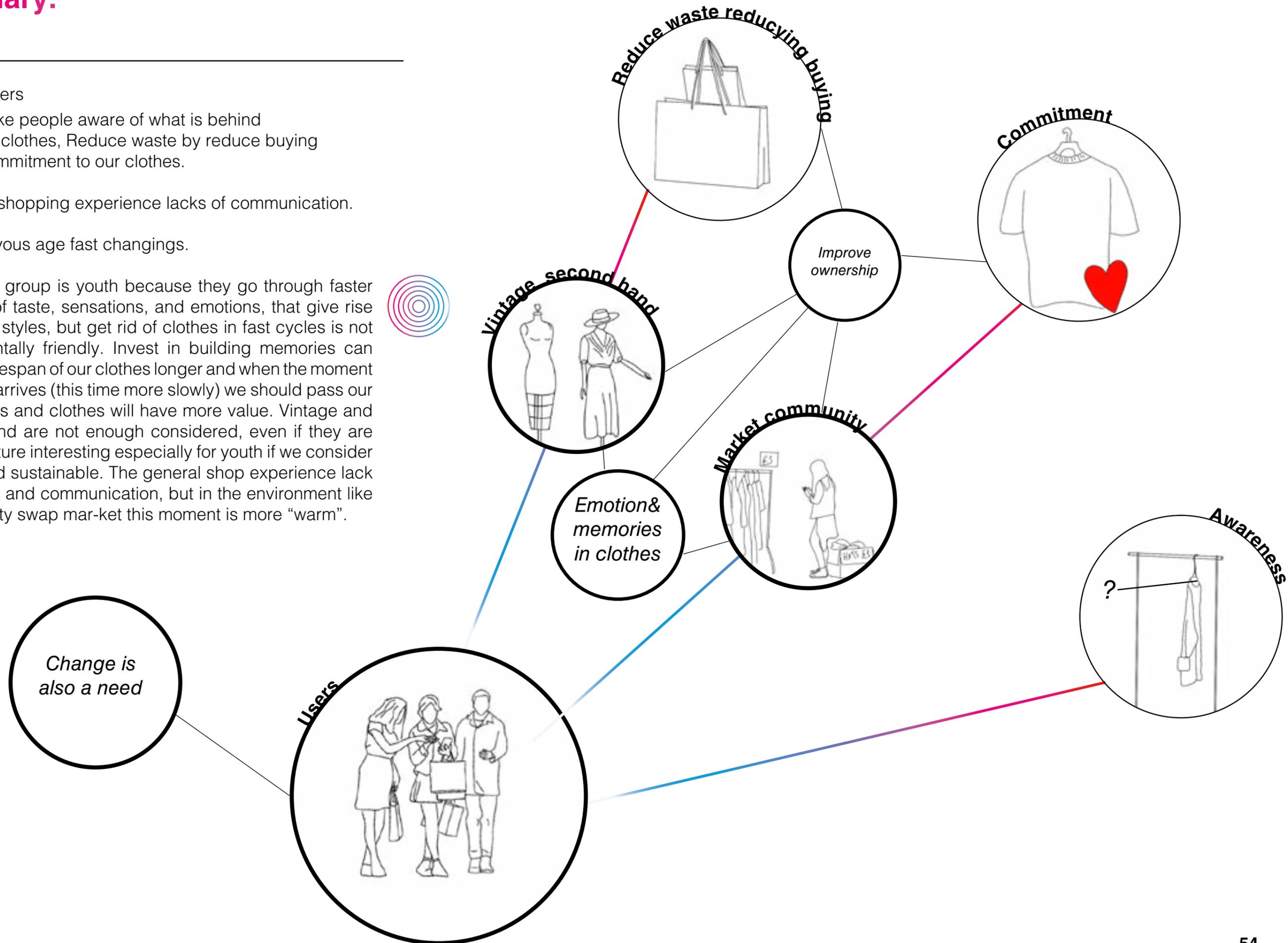
Actors: Users

Goals: Make people aware of what is behind our clothes, Reduce waste by reduce buying
Commitment to our clothes.

Lack: The shopping experience lacks of communication.

Need: Nervous age fast changings.

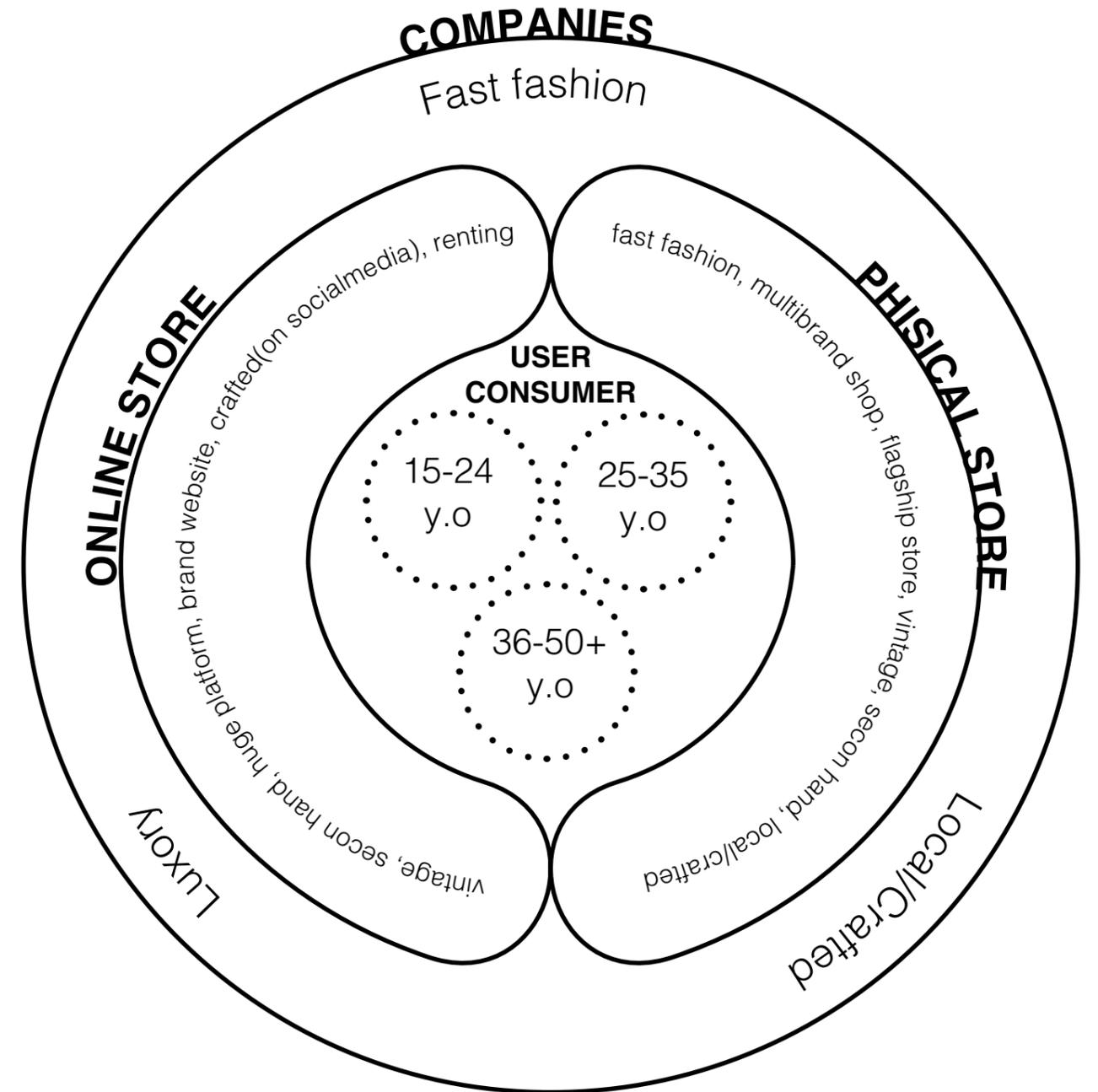
A sensitive group is youth because they go through faster changing of taste, sensations, and emotions, that give rise to different styles, but get rid of clothes in fast cycles is not environmentally friendly. Invest in building memories can make the lifespan of our clothes longer and when the moment of change arrives (this time more slowly) we should pass our experiences and clothes will have more value. Vintage and second hand are not enough considered, even if they are cheap (feature interesting especially for youth if we consider income) and sustainable. The general shop experience lack of empathy and communication, but in the environment like a community swap market this moment is more "warm".



PROJECT

Outcome

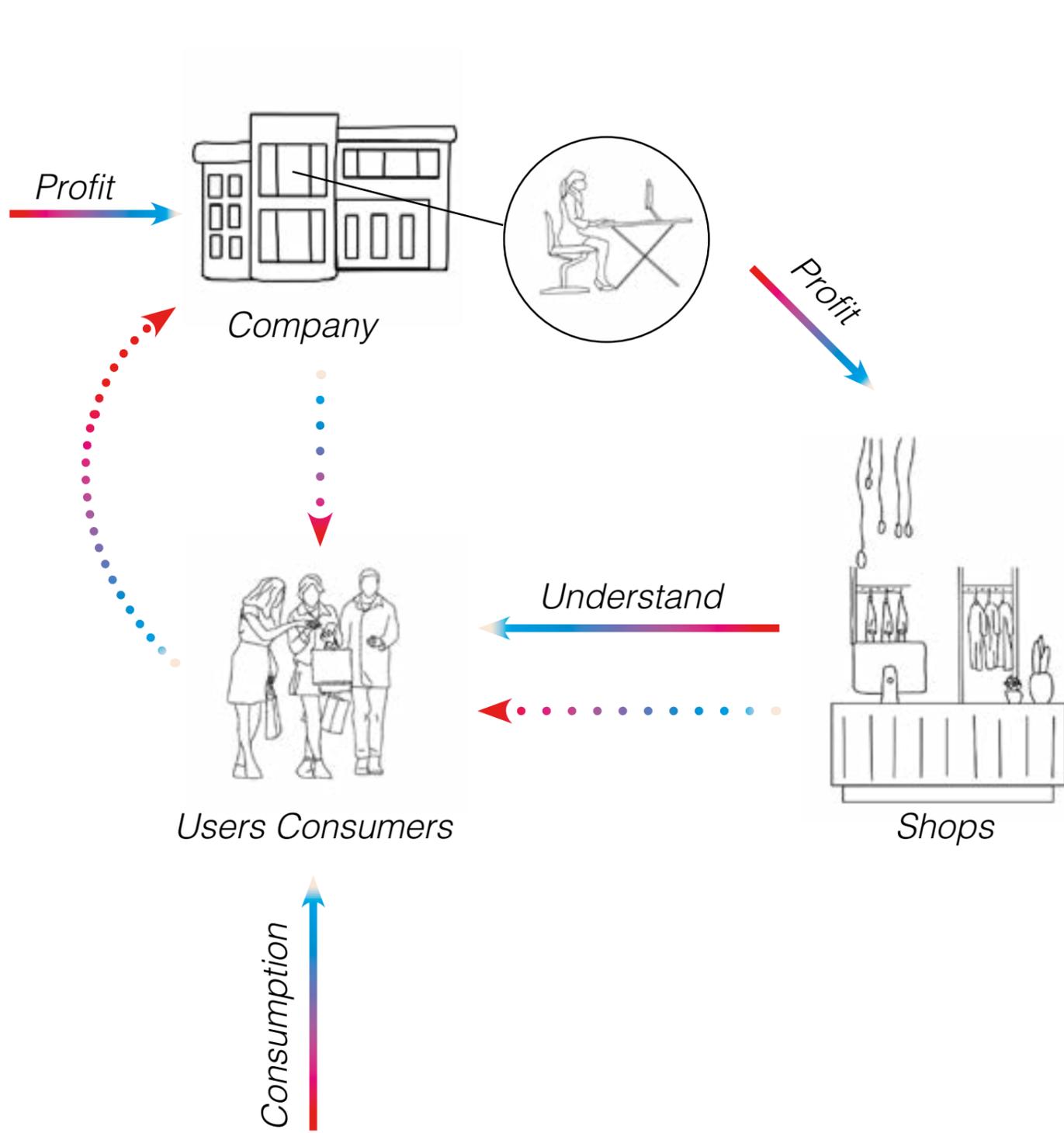
Stakeholders



Give a context : what, where and who

Stakeholders

The fine line between needs and influence



Company

INFLUENCE: Products lead to pattern of everyday consumption habits, planned obsolescence, fast-changing and price fall

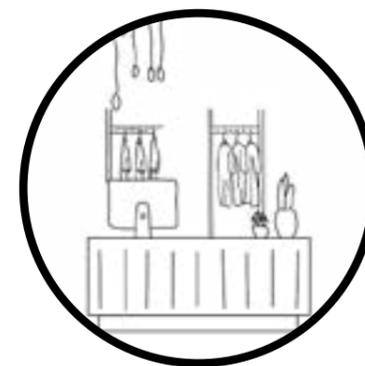
NEED: Producers must maintain profitability by increasing the amount of sold units.



Users Consumers

INFLUENCE: People are clearly influenced by pattern of disposal behaviour by fashion system and by the experience they can have in stores. All the users, though can affect the companies with their buying power.

NEED: consumption is also a way of life and it's natural, we can't completely stop it because is symptomatic of the stimulus-hungry



Shops

INFLUENCE: Shops provides experiences and emotions for the users (UX) affecting their buying behaviour

NEED: Shops are the "front lines" which really have to understand people in order to close a deal. Their role is clearly a need to sell, accomplish what management says.

Defined context

Focus on:



Company

Create a new Business Model Canvas, for companies that want to switch their mentality and focus on sustainability, transparency and trust.

Shops: Vintage, second -hand, markets

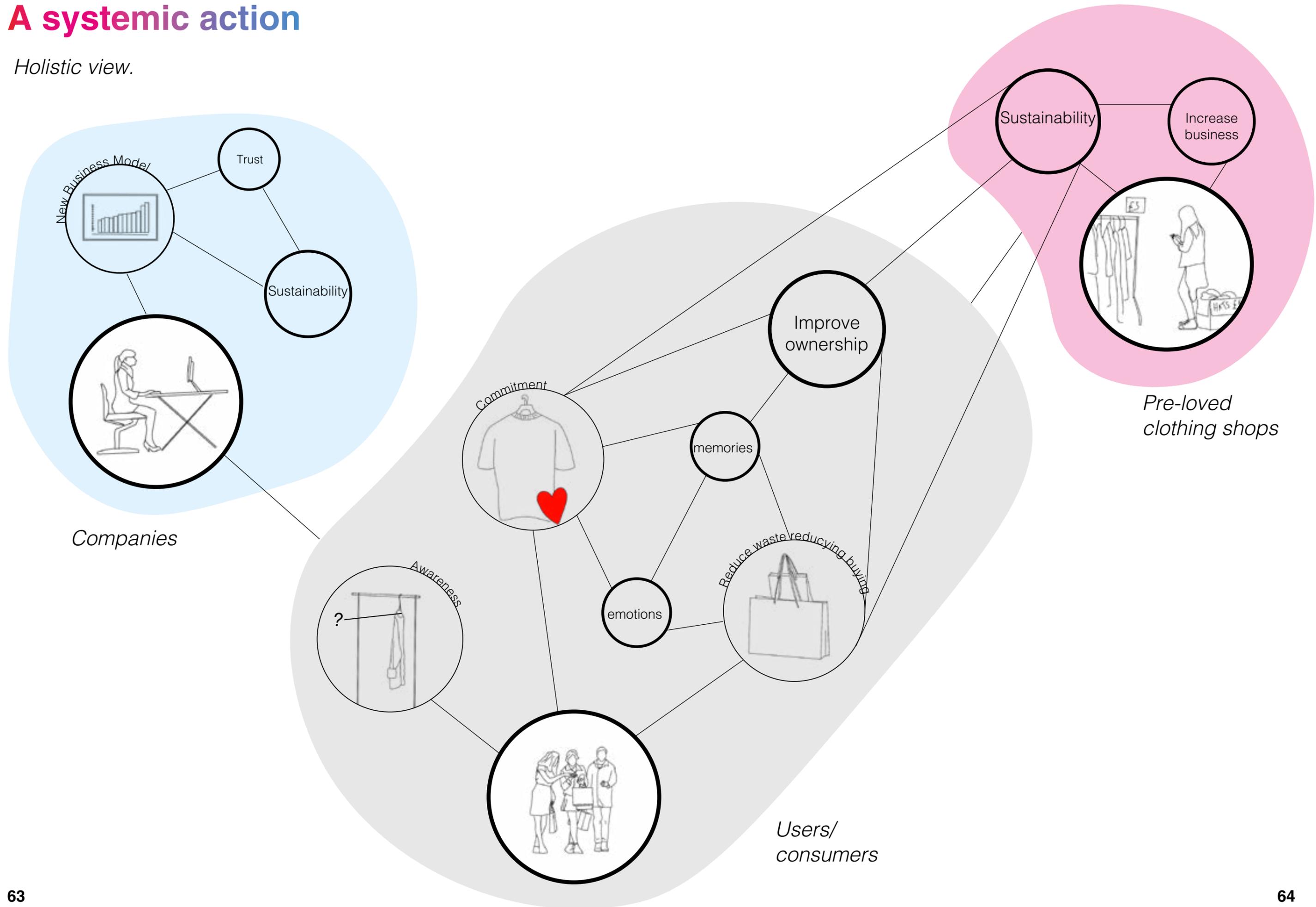
My improvement of the ownership adding emotional steps in the process has as context, those environments where you can find pre-loved clothes. The improvement of the experience want to increase the popularity of those business, advantage also for the environment.

Users Consumers

Especially 15-24 and 25-35 years old. Increase the lifespan of clothes, building memories, and emotions, slowing down the disposal. Improving the ownership experience can slow down the disposal and buying process.

A systemic action

Holistic view.

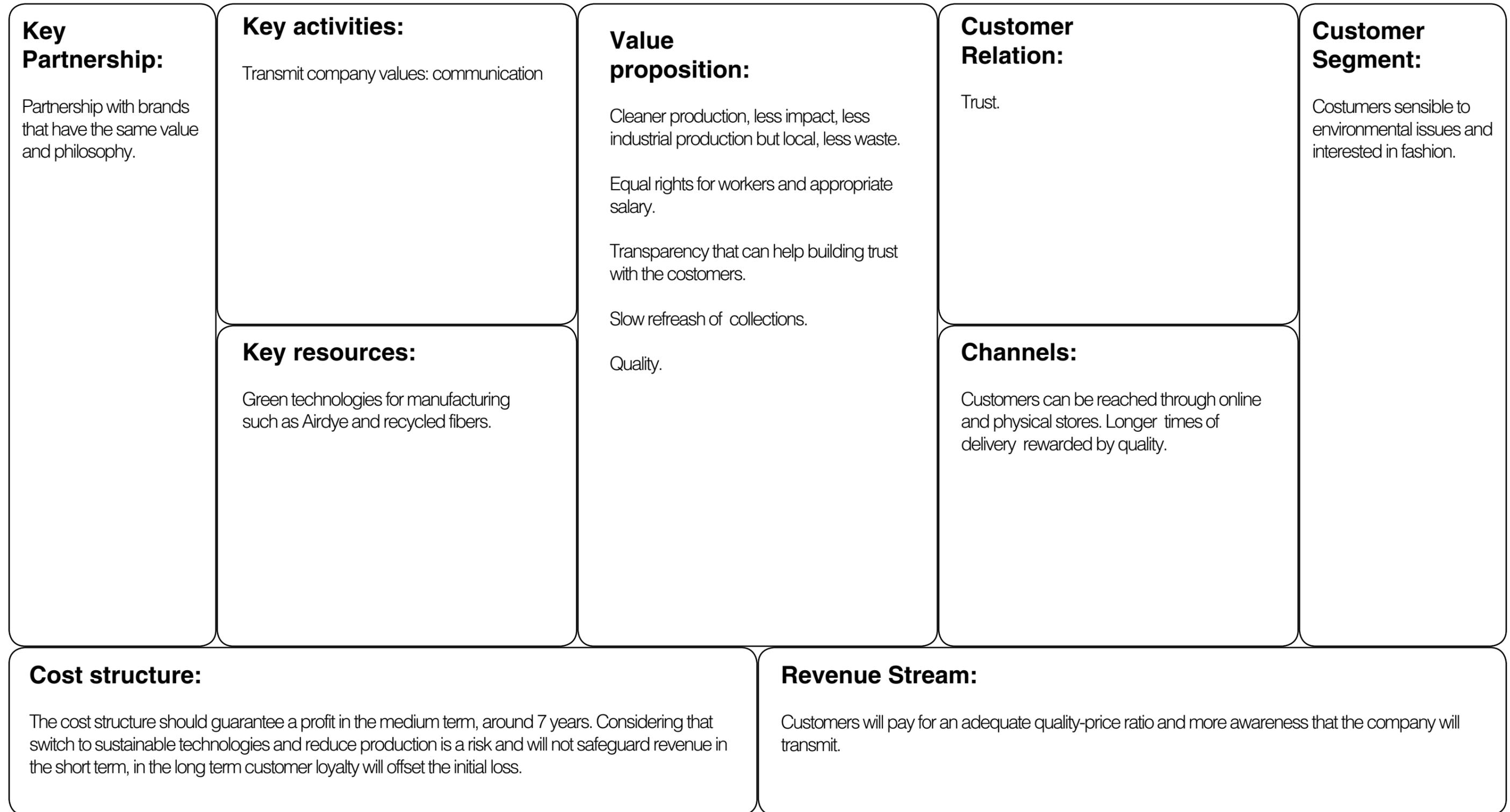


Companies

Outcome

New Business Model Canvas

The general formula of how a company intends to compete on the market, what are the goals and what practices are necessary to achieve these objectives. (Porter)



Users and shops

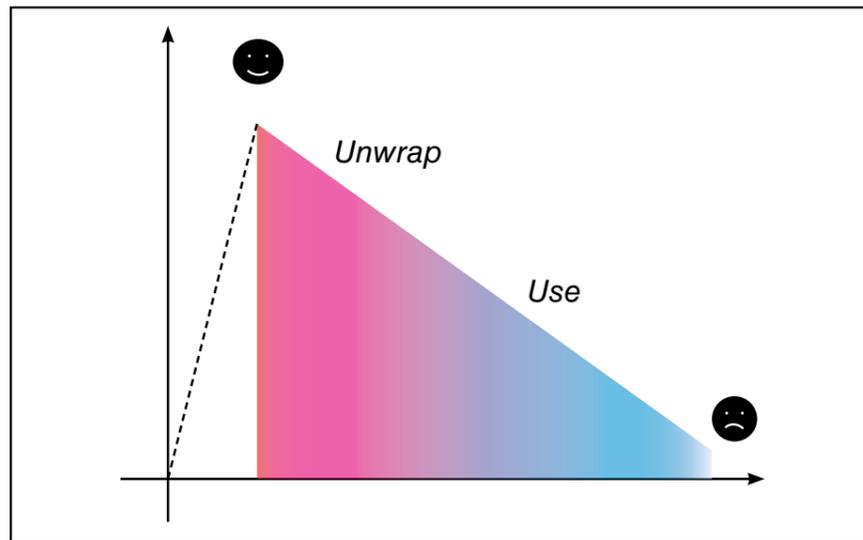
Outcome

The social history code.

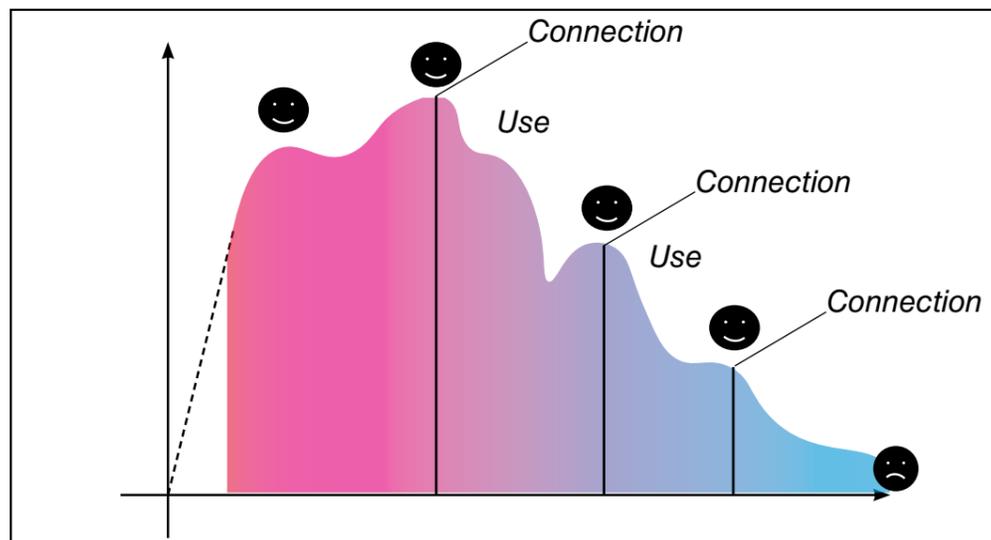
Concept.

Use of Emotional Durability

Celebrate the process of aging building memories create an emotional connection with our garments, it can slow the disposal process, generating a longer lifespan.



Emotional journey before



Emotional journey after

Personas

Personas based findings and needs of the research. Ideal users for my outcome.



Eve

20 Y.O
Student

She likes to be in step with fashion, she buys quite often, every month, but her budget is limited. During the pandemic, she kept up with the situation in the fashion system, and now she is more aware. Want to start buying more responsibly.

Ross

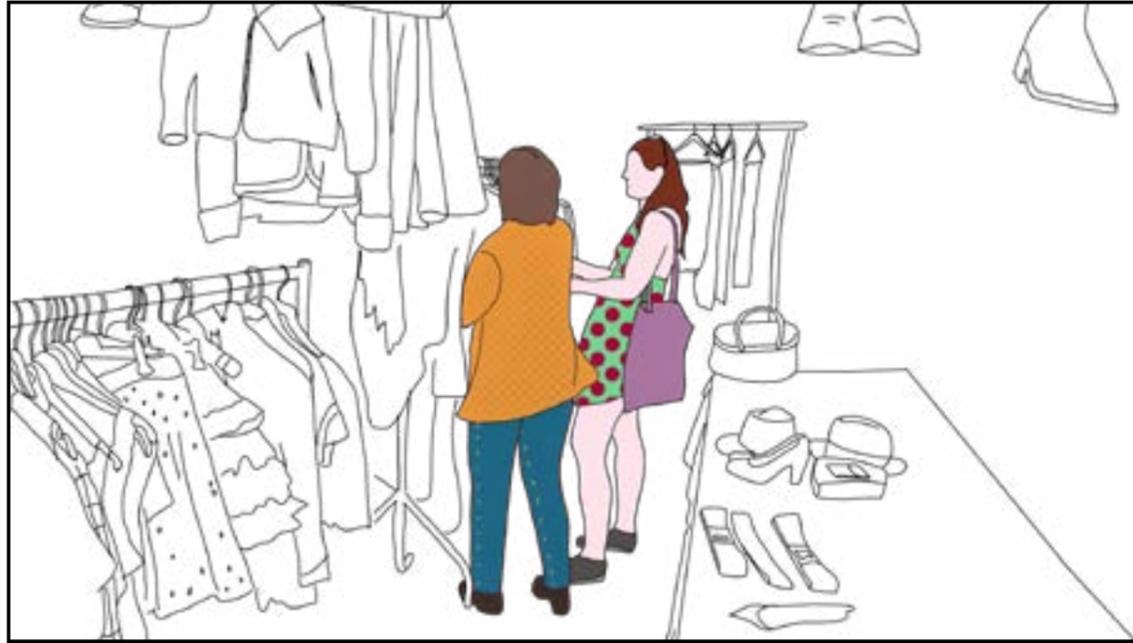
32 Y.O
Painter

He cares about the environment and he is trying to change his lifestyle more sustainably. He likes to express his personality through his clothes. He usually buys every 3 months. He would like to do environmentally friendly shopping .

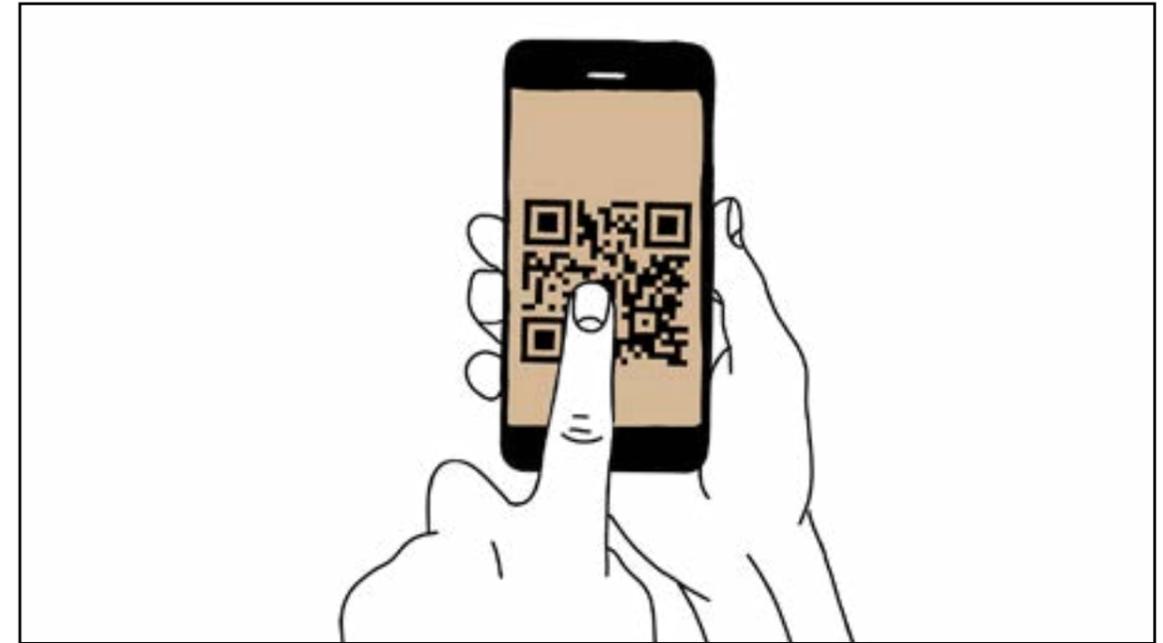
Storyboard

How the social history code works.

I have imagined as context the Leeds Community Clothes Exchange, source of my research, but the code can be applied in every pre-loved shop context.



At Leeds Community Clothes Exchange, you can swap your clothes and interact with people.



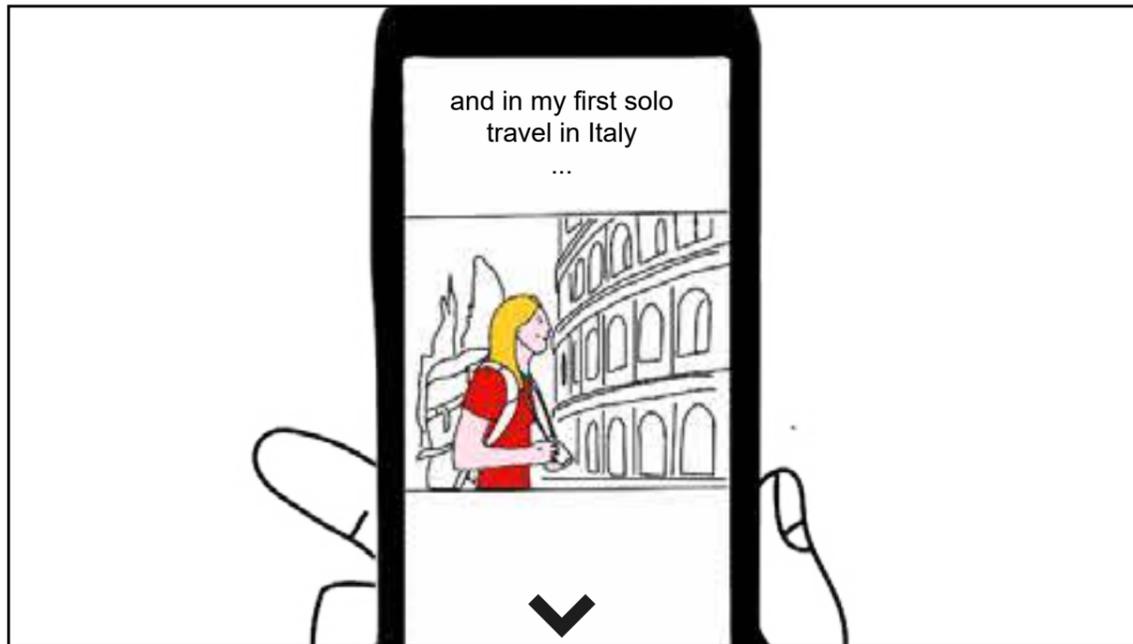
If you are interested in that particular garment, discover what that label and qrcode mean.



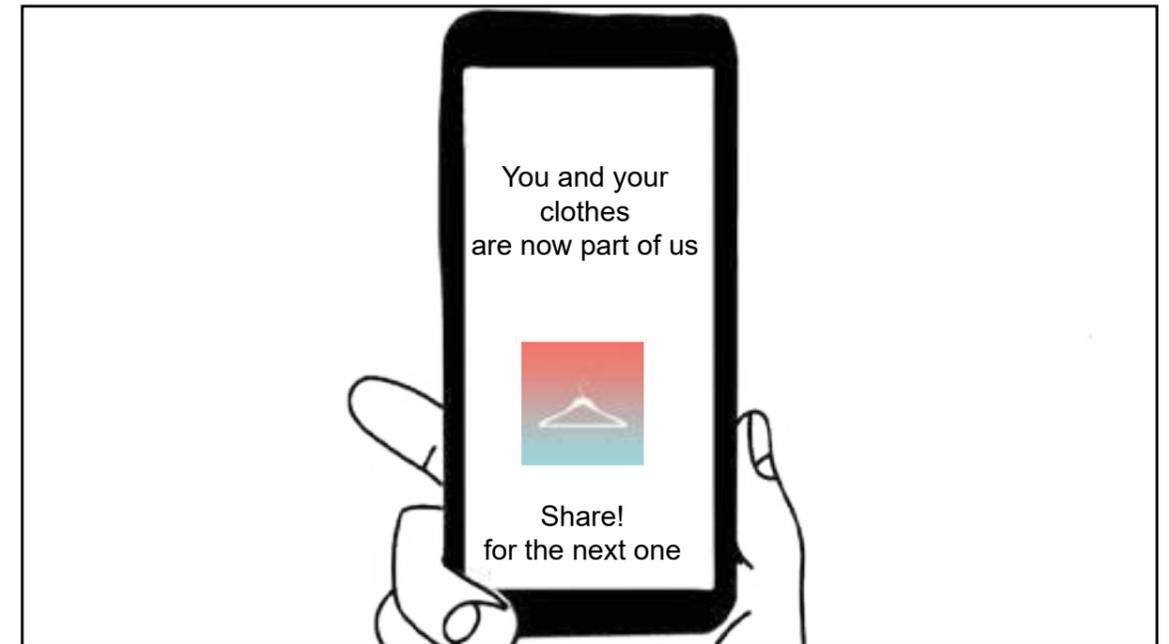
If you pay attention on the label of the clothes you can find a sentence: - Where I have been... and where we will go- and a qrcode.



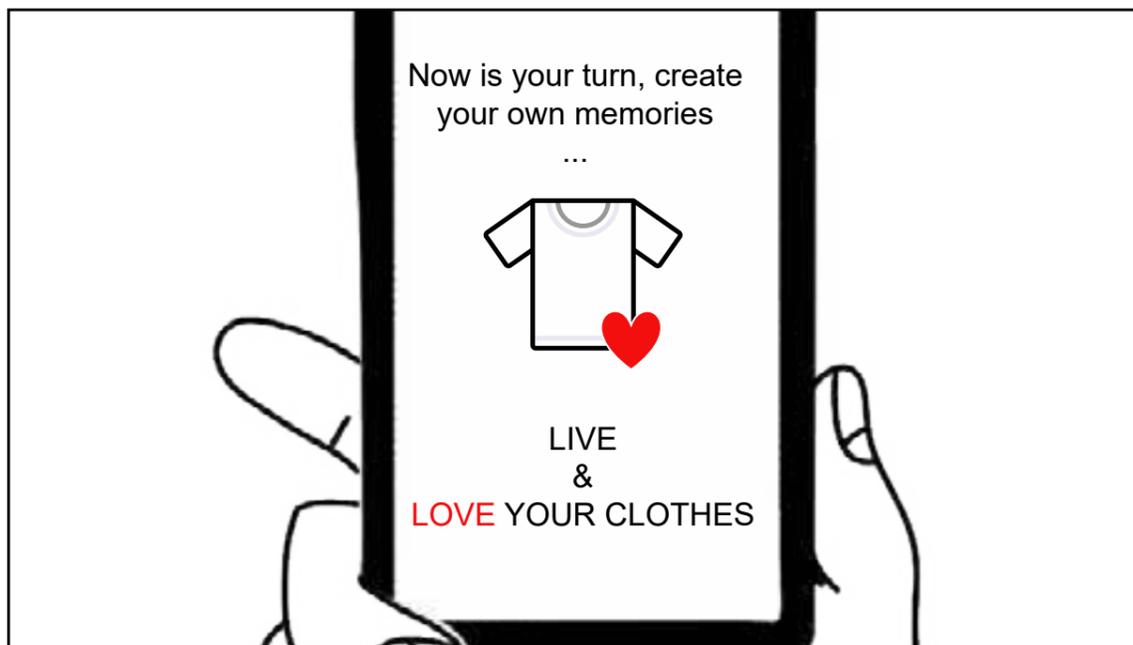
That garment has been of someone else before, that person shared unforgettable moments with it, her first concert...



And her first travel alone around Italy...



When you decide to take care of a new garment from Leeds swap market, you join a community. You can create memories with your new cloth and with all the ones you will donate to the market, create a Social history and pass it to the next buyer.



If you have decided to be the next owner of that garment you have the chance to live and love that cloth and build your own unique experiences.

Community: Along with the sustainable and the emotional aspect, the social history code develop a sense of community among the people that usually shop in a pre-loved clothes business.

Testing.

This engagement part has been done showing the storyboard and asking for opinions, pros, and cons.

I have tested my concept with 2 girls that are part of the age group considered with an interest in Fashion that usually do not buy in second-hand or vintage, this characteristic can help me understand if the idea can approach and attract people that usually are not interested.



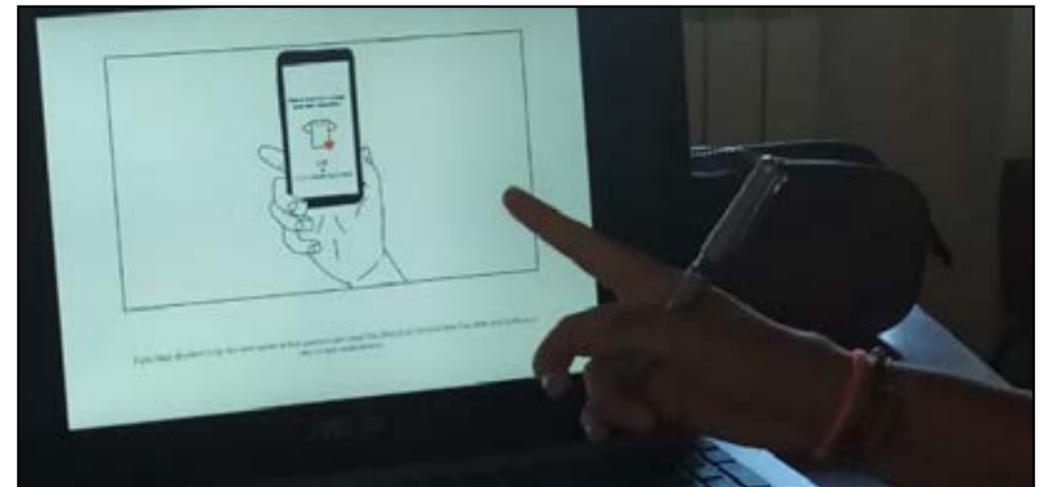
The first girl finds really interesting the concept, an added value for the people who usually buy second hand. She defined "funny" the idea of seeing the previous memories and possible similarities with the previous owner.



The cons are that she would not buy more vintage or second-hand because of this idea. She does not like the general idea of wearing something that has been worn by someone else before.



The second girl thinks that the idea would appeal who already buys second hand, but for someone like her, see how many people have worn the garment before, is something negative, and make her feel uncomfortable. That is why she does not buy pre-loved clothes.



She suggested that, instead of memories, would be interesting to give informations about, fibers and the historical period of the garment.

Conclusions

What I have learnt: testing part

The engagement-testing part is the one I would do in an alternative way. I tried to contact the Leeds Community Clothes swap market to have an exchange of opinion, about my concept as a possible improvement of their experience, but unfortunately, I did not receive a response. In a different scenario, I would have organized a workshop with swappers to test if people who usually buy second-hand would find the idea interesting and helpful.

On the other hand, has been useful to interact with users that do not use the swap market, they give me a different point of view, that makes me understand that is difficult to change people's mindset and we have to respect all the ideas and needs.

What I have learnt: concept development

My first concept added to the new Business Model Canvas a coordinated new kind of flagship store where the costumers would have found a vintage section with unsold garments from previous collection and information transmitted through the QRcode. I have decided to discard this idea because what I wanted to develop was a sort of simple guideline for brands, a mindset to apply. This simpler solution is a model, probably imaginary but with a large impact systemic impact.

I was also reluctant to incorporate technologies, while I was developing a project focused on emotions because I thought it was antithetical. Eventually, I have understood that the QR code is only a mean and a display to live and love more moments with our clothes.

I have decided to work on a young age group, but at the end, my outcome could be easily used and understood by different users, despite the age, without losing value.

What I have learnt: unmeet goals

In my project outcome, the goal that is overshadowed compared to the other is to create awareness about the issues in the garment sector. This unmeet goal is also a need for the user, because there is growing attention about the problematic and in some case it is a direct demand of the user, in other circumstances is a latent need because the consumer does not realize what he needs to know and is the designer duty, create and rise knowledge. This thing happened because the other 2 needs were tangible and could have been realized with a concrete outcome, instead, awareness is a long process that needs especially time and self-commitment. I also think though, that awareness is a second layer inside of my project, not addressed directly, but a product of emotional durability.