SLOW FASHION BRAND CUSTOMER PERSONA
— THE PROFILE AND BUYING INSIGHTS OF A SLOW FASHION BRAND CUSTOMER

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Title: Slow Fashion Brand Customer Persona - The profile and buying insights of a slow fashion brand customer.

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Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to expand knowledge of slow fashion brand customer by creating a persona that communicates the characteristics and aspects that influence purchase decisions of slow fashion consumers.

Method: Since slow fashion consumer concept is still rather unexplored area, qualitative research strategy approach was chosen for this thesis, to get more deep data about the slow fashion consumer profile and buying insights. To address the research questions, single case study was used. The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews that were conducted with five female slow fashion consumers who had recently made a purchase from a Swedish slow fashion brand MASKA’s online store. To analyse the data, a coding approach was used. As a result of the coding process, themes that described the slow fashion consumer’s profile and buying insights emerged and were used later to create a narrative of the slow fashion buyer persona.

Conclusion: In order to expand knowledge of slow fashion brand customer, a persona that communicates the characteristics and aspects that influence purchase decisions of slow fashion buyer was developed with this study. To answer the research questions and develop persona, five female slow fashion brand buyers were interviewed. Answering the research questions provided 8 different themes that emerged from the interview transcripts and made up slow fashion brand buyer persona, which fulfilled the purpose. The emerged themes were describing who slow fashion brand buyer persona is: 1) creative mind; 2) globetrotter and explorer; 3) fond of nature, and themes that described what influences the slow fashion buyer: 4) consciousness; 5) quality over quantity; 6) shoppers of small boutiques; 7) trust; 8) esthetics.

This study did not come to a firm conclusion, but rather aimed to provide more in-depth knowledge about slow fashion brand buyer and point out implications to further study the slow fashion consumer.

Keywords: slow fashion, slow movement, buyer persona, marketing persona, consumer behavior, slow fashion consumer, slow fashion communication
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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Globalisation of the fashion industry has a significant effect on the environment and people. Next to oil, fashion takes the second place as the most environment polluting industry (Conca, 2015). This has been triggered by the quantity oriented fast fashion sector which currently dominates the business (Fletcher, 2010). The success of fast fashion companies lies in the ability to respond to consumers’ needs when and as they arise, while maintaining low prices of trendy garments (Ghemawat and Nueno, 2003). Fast changing trends and low prices of fast fashion clothing has created a consumer culture where garments have no significant value. Garments are most likely discarded after being worn a few times or not at all, which is considered as a waste of resources (LeBlanc, 2012).

Fast fashion is mass produced, which means that the garments are designed to be produced quickly and in large quantities. However, processes from fibre growing to fabric and apparel manufacturing take as long as with any other garment production. Producing large quantities of fast fashion consumes massive amounts of water, energy and toxic chemicals, that all affect the environment and climate change (Fletcher, 2010). Besides using a lot of natural resources, the price of the garment is also kept low by using low-cost labour. A lot of production has been transferred to countries where labour cost is low and no significant attention has been paid to working conditions or the age of the workers (Fletcher, 2010). Therefore, the ability to face consumer's evolving need for novelty and trendiness comes from exploiting natural and labour resources (Fletcher, 2010).

However, the dominance of fast fashion has grown interest in slow fashion, which emphasises on quality through slower production and consumption cycle. The slow movement stresses on sustainable living with taking into consideration production and consumption of goods (Clark, 2008). Slow fashion represents different approach where designers, buyers, retailers and consumers are educated on where their products are coming from and the impact it has on workers, as well as ecosystems (Fletcher 2010, Ertekin and Atik, 2014). It prioritises timeless design over following trends. Quality of the products is provided by using quality materials and producing locally in small quantities. This together with transparency of the supply chain makes consumers perceive more value and trust in what they pay for, eventually keeping the garment longer and taking good care of it (Fletcher, 2010).

Watson and Yan (2013) have defined slow fashion consumer as one who chooses to purchase high quality, versatile clothing that allows them to build a wardrobe based on the concept of clothing created out of care and consideration. They also describe the slow fashion customer as a consumer who seeks more classic and timeless styles, as well as expects longer life span out of it. With these requirements, slow fashion customers are expecting to pay more for a quality garment in contrast to fast fashion customer, who desire to buy multiple clothing
pieces for the same amount. Trend forecasting and analytics company World Global Style Network (WGSN) brings out in their "Future consumer 2018" report that more people are making conscious decisions, meaning that consumers are paying more attention to the quality, style and long-lasting design of the garment. According to the report, 38% of American adults believe green products and services are the new standard and required expectation for consumers (WGSN(a), 2015).

Henninger, et al. (2016), as a result of their study, state that communication has a major role in spreading the sustainable fashion and its importance. People are nowadays exposed to information sharing and advertisements more than ever due to the social and digital media emergence. Social media gives companies the ability to easily promote their content to a specific target group. This allows brands to provide information that their customers want and expect, making it one of the most powerful tools influencing customer decision. This, however, requires an understanding of company’s target market and consumer group. Long-time fashion brand consultant Karen Harvey states that fashion companies should think more like tech companies (Segran, 2017). In the past, people looked at fashion designers for inspiration what to wear, whereas currently the consumers dictate their wants and companies respond. She further states that consumer-centric technology companies have changed the way people relate to brands. Many fashion companies are still creating aspirational lifestyle and assume that if the consumer wants to be part of that they will simply follow the brand, though brands that will thrive are the ones that focus on understanding their consumers and meeting them where they are (Segran, 2017).

Therefore, communicating desirable content to the right target group requires knowing your audience. One of the ways to gain the knowledge is to create a persona that communicates the characteristics and aspects that influence a group of customers (Scott, 2015, pp190). Marketing and sales platform HubSpot defines persona as a semi-fictional character of an ideal customer. It is built based on market research and real customer data describing the buyer and the buying decision process of the consumer (Kusinitz, 2014). The importance of knowing the consumer to market commodities was already considered in the 20th century. Daniel T. Cook investigates in his study "The Rise of "The Toddler" as Subject and as Merchandising Category in the 1930s" (2000), how the commercial personas of "the child" and "the mother" were rhetorically, visually, and symbolically created to market consumer goods. Commercial personas are set up with assemblages of characteristics (Cook, 2000). To give a customer what they want requires a product that somewhere or somehow proffers a model of a customer of this garment. The persona profiles are used to satisfy the needs of the broader range of people that the persona represents (Goodwin, 2011, pp.11). The customer has specific priorities, concerns, abilities, wants, needs and motivations. Cook (2000, pp.113) has written: "A commercial persona consists of both statements and images that together give shape to these imputed characteristics." The aim of the persona creation is to create a direct representation of a customer group that shares similar values, goals and a set of behavioural
patterns (Goodwin, 2011, pp.11). Personas are created with the help of interviews, observation and market research process. They are fictional and representative of a target consumer, which helps make decisions related to design, communication or marketing strategy (Goodwin, 2011, pp.11). The description of persona, using demographic and psychographic data, creates the buyer profile of the buyer persona, where buying decision-making process is described through buying insights. Knowing consumer’s exact likes, interests, activities and media preferences gives marketers the opportunity and ability to create content that speaks to the customer, which is an important part of building a successful marketing and PR plan (Scott, 2015, pp190).

1.2. Problem statement

After the II World War mass consumption society emerged, where people’s desires were fulfilled with mass production and further fuelled by mass communication (Barber and Lobel, 1952). The mass consumption resulted in the emergence of fast fashion industry that has its negative effects on environment and on people. However, there is an increasing interest by consumers in sustainability and ethical consumption, which has resulted in slow fashion movement emergence (Fletcher, 2010). However, there is still little to know about the slow fashion consumer (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2012). Previous studies on the subject have investigated people’s perception about slow fashion, not looking into the actual consumers of slow fashion (Watson and Yan, 2013; Pookulangara and Shephard, 2012; Jung and Jin, 2014). Providing in-depth knowledge about the slow fashion brand customers can be of great benefit for slow fashion companies. Knowing their customers gives companies the valuable foundation to create successful marketing and communication strategies, which help them strive in today’s market (Hooley and Saunders, 1993; Baines, 2013). Since slow fashion concept promotes slow culture and values in fashion, providing in depth information regarding its customers would benefit the fashion industry to contribute to more sustainable approach. Also insights to future research on the slow fashion buyer concept as well persona concept could be used from this study.

1.3. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to expand knowledge of female slow fashion brand customer by creating a persona that communicates the characteristics and aspects that influence purchase decisions of slow fashion consumers.

To achieve the previously mentioned purpose, the study has two research questions:

1. How can the current slow fashion brand consumer’s profile be described?
2. What influences the slow fashion brand consumer’s buying process?
1.4 Delimitations

The study goes through persona development procedure, where slow fashion brand customer personas are created with and aim to communicate the characteristics and aspects that influence purchase decisions of slow fashion customers. In order to study slow fashion customers, a brand, that defines itself as slow fashion brand and through its practices can be counted as slow fashion brand, was chosen. Also, the slow fashion brand was chosen because of previous experience in the company during field study project and their allowance to study their customers. Furthermore, the study does not intend to explain how the personas are used, but introduce the persona creation background and how they are constructed. Also, since the slow fashion brand, contributing to this study, is a women’s wear brand, all the customers participating in this study are female.
2. Literature Review

A literature review of this thesis gives an overview of the subjects of the mass consumption society, slow fashion, slow fashion consumer and social media. The mentioned topics are presented to establish a foundation of knowledge to understand further developments of this thesis. The information provided in this paragraph is mainly gathered from academic journals. However, since slow fashion concept is rather new, also information sources like trend forecasting company reports, books and essays of slow movement activists were used.

2.1 Mass consumption society

As productivity improved among industries after the II World War, consumer goods became more affordable to constantly increasing number of households (Matsuyama, 2002). This expanded the range of goods households consumed, generated larger markets for consumer goods in general, which in turn resulted in further improvements in productivity (Matsuyama, 2002). Therefore, mass consumption society is a society where the majority of households enjoy consuming and constantly expanding their range of consumer goods (Matsuyama, 2002). Mass consumption of different consumer goods, as well in women's fashion, can be seen as a cause as well as an effect of mass production (Barber and Lobel, 1952). Mass production made consumer goods available for all social class levels. However, mass production should not be seen as an independent cause for mass production. Class structures and a desire to stay “in fashion”, has encouraged the fashion industry to develop in order to satisfy the needs of its consumers (Barber and Lobel, 1952).

Thorstein Veblen, an economist and sociologist, coined a term “conspicuous consumption” which means that consumers, besides fulfilling their own needs, are consuming certain goods and services to publicly display their economic power and status (Veblen, 1899). Veblen’s theory is based on the evolution of a leisure class, also known as upper class, or people who are living in surplus that is provided to them by a working class (Trigg, 2001). According to his theory, low class consumers interpret the consumption patterns of other consumers situated at higher point in the hierarchy (Trigg, 2001). This can also be seen in the theory of fashion as emulation, which is supported by Veblen (1953) and Simmel (1971). According to emulation theory, also known as trickle-down theory, leisure class, known as upper class, were always admired of their style and life by the working class, also known as lower class. Therefore the lower classes, in order to move to higher class, tried to imitate the upper classes style, and fashion therefore “trickles down”. In order to still appear as a higher class, led the higher class people to follow as well invent new fashion trends (Entwistle 2015).

Consumer goods play a strong psychological role for people. Constructing, expressing and maintaining a sense of identity is central why material possessions are so important to people (Dittmar, 2008). The value of the good can be perceived by the social status it symbolises.
After lower classes adoption of the style of higher classes, fashion items lost quickly their value, causing shift changes in fashion (LeBlanc, 2012; Entwistle 2015). Meaning, that even though the item was still in a good shape for using, they were not used, because they were out of fashion for the higher class. This pursuit of novelty caused higher consumer demands, being a starting point for mass production and which was in turn further fuelled by mass communication (Sheth, et al., 2000).

In today’s world, what is “fashionable”, “trendy” and “hip” has to be different from the mainstream. Once the style has become mainstream, meaning that it has become widely adopted, it is no longer different and therefore no longer fashionable or trendy (Entwistle, 2015). When in the past, trends were set by the upper class people, nowadays the trends are coming from the streets and youth subcultures. Once copied universally, a trendsetting group will move on to adopt another style. Today, this process is commercialised and trends are changing in speed that have not been seen before, having often not a positive effect on designers, fashion buyers, journalists and the environment (Entwistle 2015).

The development of mass production has brought us to fast fashion business model, also known as “throw away” fashion, where the clothes have low prices, assortment of clothes changes after a short period of time, which is possible as a result of short lead time and an efficient supply chain (Byun and Sternquist, 2008). As stated in the background of this study, fast fashion is mass produced, which means that the garments are designed to be produced quickly and in large quantities (Fletcher, 2010). The ability to face consumer's evolving need for novelty and being trendy comes from exploiting natural and labour resources (Fletcher, 2010).

2.2 Slow fashion

Against cheap, quantity oriented fast fashion approach, a movement that promotes slow culture and values in fashion has emerged (Fletcher, 2010). In Milan in 2006 at the "Slow Design" symposium the "Slow Design Manifesto" was presented. It describes the slow approach of creating clothes which give time to produce, appreciate and cultivate quality (Ertekin and Atik, 2014). “Slow Fashion” as a term was first coined by Kate Fletcher from Centre for Sustainable Fashion (UK) in 2007, who borrows the term from the aforementioned Slow Food Movement (Ertekin and Atik, 2014). Many designers have taken now slow and more sustainable approach to designing and making clothes. Fletcher (2007) states that Slow fashion does not mean only slowing down the consumption and production processes, but also protecting the well-being of workers, communities and the environment as well a shift in consumers' mindsets from quantity to quality (Clark 2008; Fletcher 2007).

Slow fashion is a vision of the fashion sector built from a different starting point (Fletcher, 2010). There is a different view of the world with distinct economic logic and business
models, not to mention values and processes, between slow and fast fashion (Fletcher, 2010). Slow fashion movement emphasises on a balanced approach to fashion production, which promotes long-term relationships with suppliers, raises local production, and focuses on transparency (Ertekin and Atik, 2014). In slow fashion, the consumer is included in the supply chain as co-producer since the movement emphasises on interactions and stronger bonds between designers, producers, garments and users (Fletcher 2007; Ertekin and Atik, 2014).

The slow fashion brands implement sustainable, environmental and ethical practices into their design and select production methods that emphasise quality and craftsmanship of production, rather than quantity and pace. Also, the brands are making an effort to educate consumers so they could make informed and conscious decisions when choosing an apparel (Figure 1) (Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013).

Jung and Jin (2014) in their study "Theoretical investigation to slow fashion", developed Consumer Orientation to Slow Fashion scale by identifying slow fashion's dimensions to understand the concept. As a result of analysing the open ended surveys, five dimensions of slow fashion orientation were identified: equity, authenticity, functionality, localism and exclusivity (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slow fashion orientation</th>
<th>What it means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Slow fashion products should be equally assessable to everyone through fair trade (Jung and Jin, 2014). Producers of the garments/fabrics should be respected meaning that they should be freed from excessive workload and be provided with better working conditions in the production system. Also, compensation for their work should be according to their contribution (Jung and Jin, 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 Slow fashion consumer

There is an increasing interest by consumers in sustainability. Trend forecasting and analytics company World Global Style Network (WGSN) brings out in their "Future consumer 2018" report that more people are making conscious decisions which mean that they are paying more attention to the quality, style and long lasting design of the garment (WGSN, 2015). According to the report, 38% of American adults believe green products and services are the new standard and required expectation for consumers.

In an article from the New York Times, trend experts and style leaders indicate that trends are losing their influence. Thanks to the Internet, consumers have access to different information regarding style that instead of imitating the trends, they have started to interpret and have confidence in their own tastes. This has indicated a possibility that consumers will start demanding higher quality items which have more individuality (LeBlanc, 2012). Moreover, one of the world's most famous trend forecaster Lidewij Edelkoort believes that this is the end of a system called fashion, and it will be taken over by the economy of clothes. She states that people are now concentrating on clothes which as a result brings back couture (high-end fashion that is constructed by hand). Edelkoort predicts that the comeback will also bring new ideas how to handle the clothes (Fairs, 2015).

Watson and Yan (2013) in their research "An exploratory study of the decision processes of fast versus slow fashion consumers" stress that slow fashion and fast fashion consumers differ from each other with the view of the self image. Opposite to trend following fast fashion consumers, slow fashion consumers align their self image with their style through their clothing purchase (Watson and Yan, 2013). The results of the study indicate that consumers use slow fashion clothing because of its high quality and versatile nature (Watson and Yan, 2013). This also confirms the slow fashion philosophy emphasises on creating timeless pieces that embrace the simplicity of form, and focus on detail (Zoica Matei, 2009; Watson and Yan,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authenticity</th>
<th>Emphasises on the highly skilled and craft based production.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Localism</td>
<td>Support of local businesses and using local resources, as well preferring domestic brands to global apparel brands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusivity</td>
<td>Producing in small quantities which make the products more unique and diverse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functionality</td>
<td>This dimension is closely related to post-purchase stage. The study found that people buy high quality and wear it longer, more often and in multiple ways.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Five dimensions of slow fashion orientation (Jung and Jin, 2014).
2013). Also, Jung and Jin (2014) confirmed the finding from their literature review that the slow fashion consumers care about buying garments which they can wear for long period of time, and which are not driven by fashion trends (Jung and Jin, 2014).

Pookulangara and Shephard (2012) from the University of North Texas conducted an exploratory study where they analysed consumers' perception of purchasing slow fashion garments. Seven focus groups with total 50 participants were interviewed. The participants of the study were undergraduate students with an average age range of 18-25 years with most of them pursuing a merchandising major. The questions asked of the participants were aiming to gain insight into the topics of defining slow fashion, beliefs about slow fashion, slow fashion attributes, slow fashion consumption behaviour and influence of slow fashion on the retail industry.

Four themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews. The first topic was slow fashion defined. Here, the participants, without knowing the slow fashion concept, described slow fashion as the opposite of fast fashion. After introducing the slow fashion concept, the responses changed to defining it as fashion, which never goes out of style and it is made with care and precision. They also indicated that it took time and care to produce slow fashion garments. Some considered pieces that were handed down to them from their parents and grandparents as slow fashion since the garment presents a greater value that comes from the shared history with family members. This supports the idea of slow fashion garments as being intended to be worn for a longer period of time (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2012).

The second theme that emerged was slow fashion product attributes, where all the participants agreed that slow fashion products were quality products with a higher price than regular merchandise, and would be classic rather than trendy (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2012). The third theme was slow fashion as a lifestyle, where the participants agreed that they would like to follow the lifestyle, but the biggest hindrance is economic considerations (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2012).

The last, fourth theme, was slow fashion into the retail mainstream. Few of the participants indicated that slow fashion was more for their parents’ generation, whereas fast fashion was more appropriated for their generation (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2012). Others indicated that due to the increased focus on sustainability and ethical consumerism, the slow fashion movement is here to stay and will slowly gain popularity worldwide (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2012). Participants agreed that the slow fashion concept has a probability of becoming a highly successful phenomenon (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2012). For this to happen, retailers and manufacturers should market their products more aggressively (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2012). As well put some effort educating their customers about the benefits one contributes with buying slow fashion products. Consumers' demand for slow fashion depends on knowledge and understanding of issues that the fashion world is facing (Moisander et al., 2010). Interviews of the study by Pookulangara and Shephard (2012)
indicated that consumers currently do not hold enough awareness of slow fashion to make purchase decisions.

2.3.1 LOHAS - Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability

LOHAS, the Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability, has also been titled as "Value-Driven Consumers" or "Conscious Capitalism" (Aburdene 2007, Heim 2011). The term LOHAS for consumer group was introduced by Natural Market Institute (NMI). LOHAS differ from other consumer groups with putting health and sustainability in the centre of their life (Heim, 2011). This megatrend has been growing during the last 20 years. Marketing experts find that LOHAS is a promising group of consumers that are opening up markets worth of billion of US dollars.

Even though there is no clear socio-demographic group, that can be considered as LOHAS, they share certain characteristics (Heim, 2011). For example, LOHAS mainly live in urban areas (Willer and Kilcher, 2009 p.168). The professional service firm Ernst & Young found in their study that LOHAS are thinking a lot about how their lifestyle affects other people as well as the environment, while not only thinking about their benefits (Ernst & Young, 2008, p1). LOHAS lifestyle also means that the consumers are in favour of technical developments and are still enjoying the nature. They live self-centered life, but are still thinking about others and are realistic but at the same time open to spiritual ideas (Ray and Anderson, 2000).

One important part of LOHAS is that they do not only act on the consumer side but also want to be part of the production process. Therefore they are so called "co-producers" by steering the producers to more sustainable production processes and products in general (Emerich, 2000, p.1; Paulesich, 2008, p. 154). Many LOHAS, as activists, believe that they can change the production to more sustainable by favouring some products and boycotting others (Willer and Kilcher, 2009 p.168).

2.4 Social media

Social media is considered to be one of the most influential innovations in the twenty-first century. It is a powerful source for companies to promote themselves to their target market as well for consumers to share their generated content and express their opinion (Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman 2015; Strähle and Gräff, 2017). The most known and influential social media tools are social networks like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest. These social networks connect people with similar interests and backgrounds who upload user generated information. Companies use social networks to promote their content to specific target groups (Ka-Yan Ng et al. 2015). Since there is a higher chance for images to be shared than text information, visual social networks like Instagram or Snapchat have become more popular than other before mentioned networks (Strähle and Gräff, 2017).
Social media gives companies ability to communicate with their target market directly when traditional media publishes information to the masses without direct consumer reaction (Reilly and Hynan, 2014). To successfully communicate with their target consumers, companies need to have a great understanding of their consumers. Getting to know your audience gives an ability to create compelling and targeted web content to reach them (Scott, 2015, pp 181). One way to do it is to create personas, which creation will be discussed more in the theory paragraph. Persona is a representative of a particular type of consumer that is interested in the products or services a company provides. American online marketing strategist and author of several marketing related book David Meerman Scott states that building a personas is first and most important step in creating a successful marketing and PR plan (Scott, 2015, pp 183). Usually, a typical press release or social media posts are conducted on what the company wants to say to the buyer rather than what the buyer wants to hear. Doing research on the customer and creating a buyer persona which includes getting to know their interests, goals, problems, media they consume and the language they use gives an insight to a marketer to create content that speaks to the buyer (Scott, 2015, pp190).

3. Theory

Theory chapter of this thesis presents the persona creation theory. The concept of persona personas developed from the fields of practice, therefore there has not been many scientific articles written about the theoretical background of the persona method (Nielsen, 2004). Following is presented literature from various persona concept practitioners and also emergence of the concept is presented, as well its connection to fields like marketing.

Traditional marketing is based on the broadcast model of communication where an organisation decides a message that will persuade targets to purchase their products, also known as push strategy (Barlow-Busch, 2006; Charan, 2015). The message then is delivered to target markets through different marketing channels repeatedly. With his Theory of the Leisure Class (1899) study, Thorstein Veblen predicted the role of modern advertising by analysing the self-advertisement of the leisure class (Tilman, 2006). Also Veblen believed that consumers could be persuaded to buy goods or services they don’t need by putting money on advertising and salesmanship (Tilman, 2006). The traditional model was successful during World War II where the rising desire for consumption generated consumer demand, which was satisfied by mass production and fuelled with mass communication (Barlow-Busch, 2006). Until this day, the concept of goods is used by advertising professionals as bridges to displace meaning. This is also one of the engines of consumption in modern society (McCracken, 1988; Ertekin and Atik, 2014). Through advertising, idealised images are presented of how people should look like, act like, or what they should want to own and what kind of lifestyle they should aspire (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 875).
Over time, people’s cultural values have shifted, and easier access to information have made people more skeptical about advertisements (Barlow-Busch, 2006). Marketing has changed from advertising and selling to actually satisfying customer needs. As a leading management thinker Peter Drucker has stated “The aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous. The aim is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits ... and sells itself” (Drucker, 1973; Kotler, et al., 2005). Today’s marketing role is to engage with the customers because customers are the ones now who own the relationship with companies and decide who they want to engage with. When traditional offline marketing works with push strategy, where the products are pushed to customers by advertisements to make a purchase, today, specially on the web, pull strategy is needed to attract customers by serving useful, relevant and interesting information (Charan, 2015).

The Internet has changed how people communicate and interact with each other. It has also changed how companies communicate with their already existing and potential customers. Gone are the days, where marketing was possible for only big companies with high marketing budgets. Now, interactive media marketing, also known as digital marketing (Parsons, et al., 1998) is offering great and cost efficient opportunities for all the companies to interact with their customers directly (Scott, 2015). The exchange process in the Internet age has become more customer initiated and customer controlled. People who use the Internet, place greater value on information and tend to respond negatively to messages aimed only at selling. Traditional marketing targets a somewhat passive audience. In contrast, e-marketing targets people who actively select which websites they will visit and what marketing information they will receive about which products and under what conditions (Kotler, et al., 2005, pp 138).

The exploding use of social media in the past years, have grown a desire for consumers to express their fashion choices (McKinsey&Company, 2017). Consumers prefer brands that share similar values with them which makes them seek for authenticity from fashion companies that they engage with. To face the consumer needs for authenticity and individuality, companies will start to deliver personalisation to consumers through curated recommendations, communications and storytelling that connects individuals (McKinsey&Company, 2017). Personalisation customises the user’s interaction by providing content to the user that is relevant to her. The aim is to provide the right content, to the right person at the right time (Charan, 2015. pp.415). Providing personalised user experience that online media can offer, is a key advantage on offline media (Charan, 2015. pp.415).

To successfully communicate with consumers, companies need to have a great understanding of their target audience (Giddings, 2010). Getting to know your audience gives an ability to create compelling and targeted content to reach them (Scott, 2015, pp 181). One way to learn customers is through personas. Persona is a representative of a particular type of consumer that is interested in the products or services a company provides.
3.1 Definition of persona

“Personas are archetypal users who embody the goals and aspirations of real users in an easy-to-assimilate and personable form (Haines & Mitchell, 2014).” Personas are not real existing people, they are character profiles that represent a group of actual consumers (Brigham, 2013). Personas are data-based, meaning that they are constructed from data that is gathered through user research, which treat the user as a particular person with emotions, actions and needs (Madsen & Nielsen, 2009). Personas are given names, personal details, behavioural patterns, goals, skills, attitudes and sometimes a picture to make them more realistic.

The concept of persona is widely used by user research practitioners, who have developed processes and practices in the area over several years (Cooper, 1999; Grudin, and Pruitt, 2002; Pruitt and Adlin, 2006; Dong, et al., 2007). The method has also been applied to other research areas such as needs analysis, task analysis and market research (Dong, et al., 2007) and is widely used in relation to the design of user experiences for digital products and services (Haines & Mitchell, 2014). Various literature credit Alan Cooper to use persona concept for the first time as a practical communication and design tool for computer software in the 1980s (Brigham, 2013, Nielsen, 2004). Hains and Mitchell state in their study “Cooper (1999) recognized that software developers often had a poor understanding of the intended users for their products and would make design decisions based on unfounded assumptions about people’s preferences and skills or would revert to making decisions based on people like themselves” (Haines, & Mitchell, 2014). Presenting a persona to design team helped to build a shared understanding of who is the end consumer and the product should be designed for. Cooper’s book “The Inmates Are Running the Asylum” brought the persona concept to masses, which resulted in more development and practices in the field by companies like IBM and Microsoft (Brigham, 2013).

Personas are widely used because they communicate essential and helpful information that the data contains to all the participants in a project (Nielsen, 2012). They give a deeper understanding of a customer beyond what comes from the traditional quantitative market research methods (Barlow-Busch, 2006). They provide information regarding what they do and why they do it, not simply who they are (Giddings, 2010). Personas expose target customers and ways how to connect with them. They also help determine the preferences of their customers which in turn shape the development of certain products, services, events and even tone and manner of marketing messages (Giddings, 2010). Since personas present personal characteristics which makes them encourage empathy and more engaging than other representations of user data (Dorst & Cross, 2001). There are more and more companies using personas to market products or services to their customers including Apple, Ford, Zipcar, Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, et cetera (Brigham, 2013).
3.2 Defining a market

Before the persona concept became widely used by practitioners in user experience and also marketing field, the consumers were studied in more traditional way. Various advertising, marketing and media articles’ author and professor Jack Z. Sissors’ article “What Is a Market?” (1966) is considered to be one of the classics that introduced the concept of user representations to the world of business (Anon, 2006). In his article, Sissors discusses that in order to have a successful product and sales, it is important to know who you are selling to (Sissors, 1966; Anon, 2006). This has been used by many practitioners as a foundation to creating a specific representations of target customers (Anon, 2006).

In his article, Sissors introduced different ways of how to look at markets. The researcher presented an overall view of the term stating that “It is many things related to selling products which meet consumers’ needs and wants” (Sissors, 1966). The author explained that a common way the market was usually identified, was with a generic class of products. Also known as product markets, that are referring to people who have purchased a given class of products, for example apparel market, cigarette market or beer market. The product identification of a market conveys an assumption that the people who will buy a product in the future will be very much like those who have purchased it in the past. According to Sissors, this assumption is usually valid, because purchasers are likely to buy the same product in the future if their wants and needs have been satisfied (Sissors, 1966).

Going further from generic class, the market could also be defined more precisely with a subclass of a product. For example a beer market is often identified by certain kind of beers. The subclass in turn may be identified by a brand name. The purchasers of the market can be described in various ways. Most commonly the market can be outlined by the size of the market, geographical locations of purchasers, demographical descriptions of purchasers, describing more precisely who is the purchaser, or by social-psychological characteristics, outlining how purchasers differ from non-purchasers. Also, reasons why products are purchased, who makes the actual purchases and who influences the purchaser, when purchases are made, and how purchasing is done are ways to describe the market (Sissors, 1966).

After the market is identified and groups described, the market of potential customers can be divided into groups or segments based on different characteristics. This process is called market segmentation. The segments are usually defined by socio-demographic and psychographic variables. Socio-demographic variables are age, gender, income, location and typical psychographic variables include activities, needs, values and personality (Haines & Mitchell, 2014). Therefore, market segmentation is used to identify consumer groups who will be interested in similar products, services or marketing campaigns (Haines & Mitchell, 2014).
Segmentation and personas answer different information needs and should be viewed as complementary tools (Brechin, 2008; Haines & Mitchell, 2014). When segmentation provides valuable demographic and psychographic information about people in the market segment, it doesn’t capture the difference how people use things or what made the customer make a purchase. Nowadays, how the products are used doesn’t only concern design department of the company, but also provides valuable information for sales and marketing department (Barlow-Busch, 2006). Personas are a form of segmentation, they are dividing market according to what are people’s behaviours and needs. In design persona concept, the behaviours, goals and needs are identified in a context of a certain product. In marketing, the persona concept is concerned with predicting behaviours in the context of purchasing a product. Design persona model and marketing persona model complement each other and help to paint more clearer picture of the customer which in turn helps to create more successful strategies for both design and marketing (Barlow-Busch, 2006).

3.3 Practitioners guide to persona creation

There can be different types of personas, depending on what is the goal for the persona. As mentioned before, the method have been applied in various fields, with an aim to communicate and give representations of users/customers, therefore there are different approaches to creating one. Since the purpose of this thesis is to expand knowledge of slow fashion brand customer by creating a persona that communicates the characteristics and aspects that influence purchase decision of a slow fashion customer, in this thesis, I am using a process that is adopted from Revella (2015) buyer persona concept and Pruitt and Adlin (2006) marketing persona concept.

Marketing and buyer personas goal is the same, to reveal the purchase process and to understand what factors influence peoples’s purchase decision. Buyer/marketing persona helps marketers to think about their brand buyers as real people, with real concerns, goals and families. Seeing the picture and knowing all the details of a buyer profile creates a sense of the human connection. The most benefit of buyer persona get the marketers who find it easy to imagine themselves making the decision they want to influence (Revella, 2015, pp. 11).

While creating marketing persona, there are two questions that are guiding the research:
- What is the purchase decision process? (How do people decide what product to purchase?)
- What needs or wants people have that would make a certain product desirable?
Pruitt and Adlin (2006) state that persona creation starts with family planning phase where the reasons for persona creation are clarified and data for persona creation is gathered (Please refer to Figure 2 for an overview of persona development process). To create good quality personas, they should be based on qualitative research (Cooper, 1999). Qualitative research method allows to study people more in-depth than quantitative methods and since personas are created to tell a complete story and presents a richer model of customers (Barlow-Busch, 2006), qualitative research methods should be used.

Buyer personas evolve from authentic stories related by actual buyers (Revella, 2015, pp12). The stories and data, that is used to create a persona, is most commonly gathered through interviews with customers. The questions of the interview are conducted with an aim to get to know the consumer with her own words, what is her lifestyle like, what are their interests, goals, problems, media they consume as well to understand the customer's decision making process and what influences it (Scott, 2015, 190; Revella, 2015, pp 10; Pruitt and Adlin, 2006).

But before the interviews are conducted, categories of consumers should be identified. Those categories are usually defined as sets of characteristics that groups of users share (user segments) (Pruitt and Adlin, 2006). The categories could be identified through customer research of data that already exists in the companies’ database (Revella, 2015). Use of categories ensures that it would be able to express the information found in the clusters of data as personas (Pruitt and Adlin, 2006). Without categories, data would give interesting information, but it would be difficult to use the information to create personas.

When the categories are defined and data gathered, it is time to analyse and organise the data into structure of personas. In this phase, the data is summarised, clustered, and analysed in order to discover themes (Pruitt and Adlin, 2006). Also, during this phase, the number of personas that needs to be created is established (Pruitt and Adlin, 2006). When developing a marketing persona, the decision of how many personas should be made, could be decided based on the buying insights data of the interviewees (Revella, 2015, pp 114). Buying insights
reveal the differences in customers expectations and needs while making a purchase. If the number of personas is set based on buyer profile, the consumers will be grouped based on who they are, not what are their needs or expectations (Revella, 2015, pp 114). For example, if real estate agents would show apartments only based on who people are, there would be much higher chances of peoples expectations not be fulfilled. But when the agent knows what are the needs of the person, she would be able to create a match between the needs of the person and an apartment. Grouping together people who have similar expectations, actionable guidance is provided about how to match companies solutions to their needs.

When the data is analysed, subcategories of customers will be identified based on before established goal of personas (Pruitt and Adlin, 2006). For example with marketing persona the goal is to understand what factors influence peoples’s purchase decision. Therefore if from the data processing appears that people in the same category have different expectations and needs that influence their purchase decision, those customers are put in different sub categories (Pruitt and Adlin, 2006). The sub categories are marked with bulleted lists of distinguishing data points and usually each sub category has one persona.

After identifying sub-categories the categories are prioritised. Marketing persona primary persona is chosen based on who will have the greatest impact on company’s success in a segment of the market (Pruitt and Adlin, 2006). In this study, the category of customers participating in the study were female customers of slow fashion brand who had made a purchase within the past three years (2014-2017). The primary persona of this study is identified based on the data processed with coding method to identify themes that describe aspects that influence customer’s buying decision making process. The themes are created from the similar codes that most repeatedly emerged from the interviews transcriptions and were giving information regarding purchase decision making process. Once the primary persona’s buying insights are identified, the persona is finalised with providing profile data that gives the persona personality and context in order it to come to life (Pruitt and Adlin, 2006).

Final persona consists of buyer profile and buyer insights. Buyer profile describes the persona, using demographic and psychographic data (Revella, 2015, pp.10). Demographics data that is used to build the buyer profile covers information like the age of the consumer, its gender, occupation and level of education. Psychographic data, also known as information regarding lifestyle, is gathered through analysis of consumer's activities, interests and opinions. This gives an insight into consumer's lifestyle and patterns of behaviour that also could affect consumer's buying behaviour and decision-making process. However, buyer profile does not give the marketer an ability to think like the buyer but assume what the buyer might think. Therefore, also buying insights, that describes the "when", "how" and "why" aspects of customer's decision to make a purchase are revealed(Revella, 2015, pp12).
4. Methodology

The following chapter describes the research process and contains explanation of methods that were used in this study to answer the previously specified research questions. The paragraph starts with presenting the design and method of this study. Then goes through sample selection process and description of the methods for the data collection. This methodology part ends with specifying how the data was analysed. Also, reliability and validity criteria are presented together with limitations of this study.

4.1 Research design and method

The purpose of this thesis is to expand knowledge of slow fashion brand customer by creating a persona that communicates the characteristics and aspects that influence her purchase decision. Since research method is defined by what the research purpose is (Silverman, 2005), qualitative method was chosen for this study. Qualitative research aims to understand customer's attitudes, values, behaviour, beliefs, experiences or interactions and this through non-numerical data (Gibson et al., 2004). As mentioned previously, slow fashion consumer concept is qualitatively unexplored area, therefore qualitative research strategy approach was chosen for this thesis, with aim to gather in-depth data about slow fashion brand customer. Therefore quantitative research methods seemed not suitable for this since the topic has to be discussed in-depth and statistical tools cannot provide those depths of expressions (Jobber, 2010, pp.231).

As in the usual case with qualitative studies, the view on the relationship between theory and research is an inductive approach where theory is generated out of the research (Bryman and Bell, pp.386). However, like Bryman and Bell (2011) has stated: "To a large extent, deductive and inductive strategies are possibly better thought of as tendencies rather than as a hard-and-fast distinction", so it is with this study. The view between theory and research in this study is not entirely inductive since the outcome of the study is a descriptive narrative of a slow fashion brand buyer persona which can be seen as empirical generalisation rather than a theory.

According to Bryman and Bell (2011, pp.40), a research design is a "framework for the collection and analysis of data". It connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusions (Yin, 2009). To expand the knowledge of slow fashion brand customer, two research questions have been formulated for this study. The first question is in search of how the current slow fashion brand consumer’s profile be described? Consumer profile constructs the part of persona which describes who is the slow fashion brand customer persona. But in order to understand what are the expectations and needs while
purchasing, second research question is looking more into what influences the slow fashion brand customer buying process.

This study’s aim is to discover rather than to confirm, which can be seen as nature of a case study (Burns, 2000). American social scientist Robert K. Yin, who is known for his work on case study research, states that case studies are preferred when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2003, pp.1). To address the research questions of this study, a single case study using representative case is going to be used. Single case study involves the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp.59). Cases should be based on the anticipation of the opportunity to learn (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp.60), which in this study is to learn more in depth about slow fashion brand customers. Representative or typical case's objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation (Yin, 2003, pp.41). The lessons learned from the case is assumed to be informative about the experiences of the average person or institution (Yin, 2003, pp.41). Within this study, case study represents a Swedish slow fashion company MASKA. The empirical data is gathered through interviewing this one brand’s online consumers.

4.2 Sample selection

The sampling method for this study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling, which means that the participants were not sampled on a random basis (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp.442). The purpose of purposive sampling is to sample participants strategically so that the ones that are sampled are relevant to the research questions being posed (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp.442).

Therefore, to study slow fashion consumers, first, a company that follows slow fashion philosophy was selected. Prior this study, I had a possibility to do my field study in a Sweden based slow fashion company MASKA, who kindly accepted to participate in the study. The brand emphasises offering female quality garments made of natural fibres that transcend seasons and are produced in a sustainable and ethical way. Maska's sustainability efforts include many dimensions. The brand does not only pay attention to the ethical and sustainable way of garment production but also very carefully selects its yarns and fabrics used for the products. They emphasise the importance of the lifecycle of the garment, choosing materials that "age with grace and are long-lasting (MASKA, 2017)". The material choice is also made keeping in mind the usage and washing of the garment by favouring materials that seldom need laundering and require lower washing temperature (MASKA, 2017).
Part of persona development process is a step, where category of customers needs to be identified based on defined characteristics that the group shares. In order to answer research questions, empirical data was gathered from customers who belong in the category of slow fashion brand customers (please refer to figure 3).

Figure 3: Define categories - first step of persona development process

This category group also represents sample group of this study. The sample group for this study was put together of online consumers of MASKA, who are all females. The available customers' data was examined, and sample group was put together of online customers who had been making a purchase within the last three years (2014-2017). Also, customers with more frequent purchases were preferred since they can be counted as loyal slow fashion brand users. 120 emails to the customers were sent out with an invitation to participate in the in-depth interview. Five respondents (Table 2) showed their interest in participating in the interview and further information regarding the time and place as well the nature of the interview with interview guide (Appendix 1) was provided to them via email. The participants were promised to maintain their anonymity meaning that names of the participants is not revealed. In table 2, short introduction of each interview participant is presented, showing their nationality, occupation and age.
Table 2. Slow fashion brand customers, who participated in the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slow Fashion Consumers</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer 1</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Project manager in international relations</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer 2</td>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>Designer and brand founder</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer 3</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Works with designers, illustrators and artists as a consultant</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer 4</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Runs a company in a field of brand development and brand strategy</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer 5</td>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>Freelance graphic designer and web editor</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Data collection procedure

One of the essential sources of case study information is the interview which will be guided conversations rather than structures queries (Yin, 2003, pp.89). Since the research has an aim to get a deeper understanding of female slow fashion consumers than the previous researchers have stated, semi-structured interviews were conducted with online consumers of slow fashion brand MASKA. Also, various personas development literature states that since personas evolve from authentic stories that are related to customers, the data should be gathered through interviews with customers (Scott, 2015, 190; Revella, 2015, pp 10; Pruitt and Adlin, 2006). Data gathering is also a second step of persona development process. Please refer to figure 4.

Figure 4: Data gathering - second step of persona development process
Semi-structured interview type was chosen among structured and unstructured interviews since there is already some knowledge about the topics or issues under investigation, but further details are still needed to build the slow fashion buyer persona (Wilson, 2013, pp.24). A semi-structured interview is a combination of structured interview and unstructured interview, meaning that throughout interview there will be asked predefined questions and questions that arise during the interview, which increases the depth of the interview and the discussion (Wilson, 2013, pp.24). Researchers who use semi-structured interviews to gather data, follow a document called interview guide. Interview guide introduces the purpose and topic of the interview and contains a list of interview questions on a fairly specific topic to be covered (Wilson, 2013, pp. 24). In this study, interview guide consisted of a list of questions on the themes related to demographics, psychographics and buying insight (Appendix 1). The topics and interview questions were formed in relation to fulfill the purpose of this study, which is to expand a knowledge of slow fashion brand customer by creating a persona that communicates the characteristics and aspects that influence her purchase decisions. The interview guide was not exposed to the interviewees beforehand with an aim to get answers that first come to their mind and not being able to prepare answers that might not have given reliable input. However, they were introduced to the topic as a thesis research on slow fashion brand consumers in the email with an invitation to participate in the interview.

The interview with an online slow fashion consumer started with a request to the person to tell me something about herself. During this question, the respondent usually covered all the demographic and personal background related information, like what is her occupation, where does she live, family status, education. Then followed psychographic related questions relating to the activities and interests of the respondent. Here also emerged respondent's opinions on different things like fashion, brands and clothes. The last topic was covering questions related to buying behaviour where the respondent addressed her buying behaviour and what does she value and assess during the decision making. Also, aspects that influence the buying process came up. During the answering period, notes were taken to manage the order of the questions or create new ones to get as much valuable information as possible.

Interviewees had an ability to answer every question the way she interpreted it and the questions asked of the participants, did not follow exactly the order of the interview guide. The interviews were rather a dialog than question-answer based interviews. Even though new questions were emerging during the interview, the questions were asked with similar wording from interviewee to interviewee. The interview process was rather flexible, and the emphasis on the interview was to encourage the interviewee to reveal as much as possible about her profile and buying insights.
The semi-structured interviews with slow fashion brand consumers were all conducted between 12th of May and 12th of June. Since the researcher and interviewees were situated in different countries, interviews were done through video chat software Skype. According to Bryman and Bell (2015, p.675) Skype interviews give more flexibility for example of the last minute adjustments as well saves time and cost, specially when the interviewee and interviewer are situated in different countries. Doing the interview through Skype also gave the interviewee an ability to choose a place where she would feels most comfortable, which most of the cases was a home environment. Participants were notified beforehand that the interview might take an hour of their time, but every interview took approximately 45 minutes. All five interviews were entirely recorded with a permission of interviewee. After the interview, the recording was transcribed.

4.4 Data analysis

Once the data is gathered for persona creation, it is time to analyse and organise the data into structure of personas (Figure 5). The data analysis aim is to discover themes related to the goal of the persona creation and establish how many personas needs to be created (Figure 5).

![Figure 5. Data analysis step of the persona development process](image)

The data was segmented and divide into meaningful units (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, pp. 10). To analyse the qualitative content gathered through semi-structured interviews, a coding approach was used in this thesis. Coding starts with reviewing the transcripts and giving labels to parts of the text that seem to have a theoretical significance or to have an importance in the social worlds of those being studied (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp.578). Coding method was chosen for analysing interview transcriptions of this study because it enables to "recognise and re-contextualize data, allowing a fresh view of what is there through reading" and rereading the transcriptions to make selections relatable to the phenomena (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, pp.46).

There is a significant difference between coding quantitative and qualitative data. Coding quantitative data means more or less a way of managing the content whereas analysing
qualitative data through coding is more tentative and data analysis tends to be in a constant state of potential revision and fluidity (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp.578). In qualitative data, a code is a word or a short phrase that represents a summative, prominent, essence-capturing and evocative attribute for a part of language based data (Saldaña, 2013, pp 4). The coding in this study was done with a help of Dedoose coding program. The process started with reading through transcribed interviews one by one and marking parts of the texts as codes that seemed accurate for answering the research question. Hence, transcription parts that gave any insight into the buyer's demographic, psychographic or buying insight were seen as a valuable piece of information.

All the transcribed interviews were coded with the help of a computer program Dedoose. The program made coding and later code segmenting into themes easy to manage and comprehend. Data display is considered to be a key element of the analysis process. Presenting the data parts that relate to a particular code or category together gives the researcher ability to explore the composition of each coded set more easily (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, pp.46). Interpretation of the set of codes which presented a certain theme was used as the building parts of the persona in this study.

The coding process started after all the interviews were conducted and transcribed instead of initiating the coding during the transcribing process. This mainly for a personal preference to get a big picture of all the transcriptions together since the topics describing slow fashion buyer persona emerged from similar codes across all the interviews. Since the purpose of this thesis is to provide knowledge about who slow fashion brand customer is and what factors influences her purchasing decisions, the data was coded looking for information that reflects the profile of a customer and aspects that influence her purchase. Codes that repeated were gathered into themes. The aim of the constructed persona is to mainly communicate what aspects influence her purchase decision. If in the category of the participants in this study have different expectations and needs that influence their purchase decision, those customers information are put in sub categories. The sub-categories are marked with bulleted lists of data points that distinguished them from the other sub-categories. Then the sub-categories are prioritised based on who will have the greatest impact on company’s success. In this study, only one persona, primary persona is created. The primary persona of this study (slow fashion brand buyer persona) is the goal of this study and she is identified based on the interview data processed with coding method to identify themes that describe aspects that influence customer’s buying decision making process. The themes are created from the similar codes that most repeatedly emerged from the interviews transcriptions and were giving information regarding purchase decision making process. Once the primary persona's buying insights are identified, the persona is finalised with providing profile data that gives the persona personality and context in order it to come to life (Pruitt and Adlin, 2006).
4.5 Evaluation of research quality

Reliability and validity are important criteria evaluating a quality of the research (Bryman, 2015, pp.383). Reliability evaluates a degree to which a study can be replicated, which is quite difficult criteria to meet in qualitative research (Bryman, 2015, pp.383. This because of the change in social and consumer trends which can differ the answers of the interviewees (Bryman, 2015, pp.383). However, to enable replicable analysis of the data, interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Furthermore, to ensure the reliability of the study, it is important to give as much information as possible about the research strategy and data analysis methods of the study (Silverman, 2011, pp. 360). Research strategy and data analysis method of this study is explained in detail in the methodology paragraph above. Also as detailed information as possible of participants of the study is presented. Countries of where the interviewees are from are presented in order to have a possibility to repeat the study with the participants from the same area.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the conclusions that were generated in the research, validity criteria is evaluated (Bryman, 2015, pp.384). In the study, the interviewees were customers of a slow fashion brand which was confirmed by getting access to a slow fashion company's online store's database, where the purchase details were seen and evaluated. Also the chosen slow fashion brand's philosophy and actions matched with the theoretical proposition of the slow fashion concept presented in the literature review. However, external validity, which evaluates if the findings could be generalised across social settings is usually problematic for qualitative research, because of their tendency to use case studies and small samples. As it is with this thesis. Using case study method with rather small sample group makes it difficult to generalise the findings across social settings (Bryman, 2015, pp.383). However, companies with similar values and customers from the same countries could apply the knowledge while making a marketing strategy.

Credibility evaluation refers to show if the researcher has understood the topic related to the study (Bryman, 2015, pp.385). To provide credibility of this study, researcher thoroughly studied the topic by reading relevant literature and previous studies. Another way to ensure credibility, is through triangulation process which refers to using more than one method or sources of data in the study (Bryman, 2015, pp.385). Within this study, triangulation is not apparent since data from previous literature and data from conducted interviews were used.

The concept of confirmability evaluates if the findings of study are based on the research participants’ narratives and words rather than researcher biases. In this study, the interpretations made during research, were based on data. Often the data was illustrated by using quotation from the interviews which represent actual words the participant had said and shows the truth status of a respondent's account (Silverman, 2011, pp. 369).
4.6 Limitations

Certain limitations were set during the research process. To gather data for the research process, there was made an agreement with a slow fashion brand MASKA that they allow to send an invitation email to 120 of their customer who had purchased within the past three years (2014-2017) from their online store. From those 120 customers, 5 agreed to participate in the interview. Therefore the slow fashion persona created in this study could be used by companies similar to MASKA, for example offering similar style as the brand.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Current study’s aim is to provide knowledge about slow fashion brand consumers. This means that in order to fulfil the purpose of the study, people were included in the process which makes it important to take ethical issues into consideration (Bryman, 2015, pp.132).

Data for this research was gathered through semi-structured interviews that were conducted with customers of a slow fashion company. During the data collection process no participants were harmed in any way by the research. To selected customers of the slow fashion brand, an invitation was sent via email to ask them to participate in the study. The email stated that the information provided through interview would be anonymous and only be used to conduct a master’s thesis. Five people from the selected customers voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. After their positive response to the participation email, the participants received more detailed email where the approximate time of the interview was stated and time was set for the interview. In the beginning of every interview, the researcher introduced herself and asked permission to record the dialogue. At the end of the interview, interviewees were able to ask any questions related to the research. As promised to the interviewees, all the data presented in this study regarding the customers is anonymised and the interviewees’ names were changed so they could not be identified.

5. Findings and analysis

This chapter provides an overview of the findings of the empirical research and provides an analysis of the main themes that emerged from the coding process of slow fashion brand customers interviews. The following themes describes the slow fashion buyer and what influences her buying decision. The interviewees are referred in the text as consumers.

The purpose of this study is to develop a slow fashion customer persona that communicates the characteristics and aspects that influence purchase decisions of slow fashion customer. Therefore, the interview transcriptions were processed using coding method. The emerged codes that gave information regarding customer’s demographic, psychographic, behavioural
information or aspects related to buying process were gathered. Further, the themes are created from most repetitive codes that emerged from the interviews transcriptions and were giving information regarding purchase decision making process based on what primary persona was identified and descriptive themes to provide information of who the persona is. Below there is interview data analysed under each theme. Quotes from the participants are used to describe the theme. Including quotes from the research participants also improves the confirmability of this thesis and reduces researcher biases (Silverman, 2011, pp. 369).

It has to be noted, that the aim of this study was to give a representation of slow fashion brand customer, therefore, the study did not prove or disapprove any theories related to slow fashion consumer that were presented in the literature review.

5.1 Themes that describe who is the slow fashion brand customer

Figure 2 illustrates themes that emerged from the participants interview’s coding process. Those themes describe demographic, psychographic and behavioural information that emerged most frequently form the interviews and later contribute to building a persona profile.

![Figure 2: Themes describing the slow fashion brand customer](image)

5.1.1 Creative mind

What emerged from analysing the interview transcripts, is that the slow fashion consumers who were interviewed are all working in a rather creative field like graphic design, garment design, brand and communication, art consultancy or international relations. The field of work is closely related to their interests and education. All of the participants are highly educated in universities with various fields like photography and graphic design, communication and advertising psychology, garment design, language and cultures. Besides getting a degree from a university, the consumers are interested in finding ways to keep on learning new things like
taking courses abroad about different languages, mask creation or becoming a yoga teacher. The other way to keep on exploring new things is through reading which they are very fond of. Some of them are part of a book circle where different books regarding fiction from all over the world and philosophy are handled, some just read to keep the mind fresh and open to new ideas.

5.1.2 Globetrotter and explorer

One of the dominating characteristics that emerged from the interviews was the interest in travelling and living abroad. Living abroad has been part of all of the consumers' lives. They mainly left the home country first to study abroad that later evolved to working in different countries. Apart from their country of origin Sweden, Estonia and Germany, the consumers have been living in Russia, Germany, France, the United States, South Africa and Wales. As a result of being part of different cultures, these consumers also understand and talk different languages like English, French, Spanish, Turkish, German and Africans.

Travelling and living abroad has changed various aspects of the lives of consumers. One of the examples is Consumer 2, who is dividing her life between home country Estonia and France. She admits that over the years that she has spent abroad, her way of thinking of life has changed from following the rules to taking life more easily: "The optimistic state of mind of people in Paris has also changed me a lot. They are taking life easily and finding time to enjoy good food as well life itself. Comparing to the life I had before where I was strict and very into doing things according to rules, the years I have spent in Paris have made me a more relaxed person, and I feel now I am taking it easy and find time to enjoy life more (Consumer 2)." Being away from home countries have been an eye opening experience in finding and improving herself as well learning through adapting with different cultures. This has also made the consumer's value experiences over things. Investing in the experience of travelling to new places is often preferred over buying new things.

Also, the mindset of consumption has been affected by travelling to different places. Often the mindset is influenced by having personal negative experience seeing people and nature suffering because of the mass consumption culture that has been created. Consumer 3 had an eye opening trip to Asia that made her want to contribute to a good cause and therefore after her trip, she joined non-governmental environmental organisation Greenpeace. First starting as a volunteer and over the years continued her work as a full-time employee. From that time, sustainability has become a very important question for her. This also reflects on her choices which are done in the sustainability point of view to leave as little ecological footprint as possible. Other ways how travelling have changed the mindset and raised awareness in different areas, including the issues within clothing industry, are also reflected in further paragraphs across all the themes that emerged from the analysis of interview transcripts.
5.1.3 Fondness of nature

All the consumers are spending their everyday life with working and living in the city. However, whenever they get a chance, they prefer being in nature to rest from the daily life and find balance within themselves. Consumer 1 enjoys hiking, which she often does in her home country Germany, but also likes to go to the Alps in Italy and Austria by train. Consumer 5 uses a chance to get away from the city life every possible weekend with visiting her parents in the countryside and using the time to relax with a good book or just rest her mind with staying outside as much as possible. Likewise to consumer 1, who as well uses weekends to go for a longer run or a walk in the woods.

Consumer 4, whose interest in sailing has been given to her by her family, enjoys sailing to Mediterranean or prefers going on trips where she can enjoy nature in general. She also brings out that after having the experience of living in the metropolitan areas like New York, she feels that she belongs to nature: "Apart from living in town and I have lived in the major metropolitan areas most of my grown up life, i have always had the urge to not be in the urban environment but be of the nature, because that's what i feel where i belong (Consumer 4)." Nature for the consumers is seen as a place to rest the mind through hiking, sailing or just enjoying quietness in the woods: "You get more inspiration in Paris, it's vibrant and creative environment, but in the meantime in Estonia it's nice to visit the family and friends and go to the woods to rest from the big city noise (Consumer 2)."
5.2 Themes that describe what influences slow fashion brand customer’s decision making

Themes presented in Figure 3 describe what factors that influence slow fashion customer purchasing decisions emerged most frequently from the interviews demographic, psychographic and behavioural information that emerged most frequently form the interviews. Later these themes are used to create the primary persona of slow fashion brand customer.

Figure 3: Themes describing what influences the slow fashion brand customer purchase decision

5.2.1 Conscious consumer

The experiences and knowledge the consumers have gathered through travelling, exploring new books and trying out new things have an affect on their consumption practices. One way or another, conscious choices are part of these slow fashion consumers' lifestyle. The interest in trying to leave as little ecological footprint to the environment and taking care of their health expresses from their behaviour differently.

When it comes to food and cooking, all of the participants enjoy making good food, as well consuming quality food. Going to a farmers market is their traditional activity and when cooking, most of the ingredients are consciously chosen as organic for the sake of their health: "With food also, i like cooking, and i use mainly organic stuff like eggs and milk and bread and sugar and vegetables are organic, but some things are not organic of course. I buy it for my health, it's very egoistic. (Consumer 3)" Also skin care products and cosmetics the consumers use, are required to be eco-friendly and natural. This is mainly to avoid using bad ingredients that irritate the skin or affect health. The products are often purchased from a pharmacy or from certain stores that offer ecological brands that are certified and controlled.
It can be concluded from the interviews that if a consumer has knowledge that the products from the store are certified and controlled builds a trust of the consumer which expresses through their loyalty to the store. Therefore, the trust a consumer has in store also can affect an image and the trust of a brand that the store sells in a positive way.

Most of the consumers consciously do not own their own car because of not having a need for it as well its contribution to environmental pollution. Instead, public transportation or a bike is used to get from one place to another. One of the consumers is part of carpool and mentioned that if she had a car, it would be Tesla, because of its environmental and energy contribution as well its lifestyle concept. Consumer 3 has one car per family, and this is consciously chosen to run with eco gas.

The habit of making a conscious decision with an aim to leave little footprint to the environment can be influenced by family members. Consumer 4 comes from a family where consciously deciding how to spend resources and take care of things was part, and still is part of her everyday life. Whenever she purchases something, like a garment, she uses it for a long period of time and takes good care of it. When she feels she does not need the garment anymore, she first presents them to her mother or friends, and if none of them wants it, she donates her clothes or makes something new out of it herself. Therefore she contributes to sustainability also when discarding the clothes, with not just throwing them away, but finding an alternative to the not needed item. Also, consumer 1 has her own way of handling clothes she does not want anymore. Two years ago, she started to avoid stores like H&M and Zara and instead consciously started consuming items that are produced ethically correct. It was caused by becoming overwhelmed by all the things she had in her apartment and by the awareness she got from the news, regarding issues in the third world factories. This made her change her lifestyle to more minimalistic. Now, when deciding to buy something new for herself, she has a rule: "I have a rule, for example, if i get bored of a pair of shoes or some trousers are not that comfortable for me anymore, before buying a new item, i have to sell the previous one. I try to sell it because at the moment you can easily do it. So a number of my clothes never become more (Consumer 1)."

There are also brands that the consumers consciously are avoiding. The reason of avoidance can be related to a bad reputation in the sustainability field or simply garment brands that would make the person look dull or make her into something she does not want to be. Consumer 2 hopes she never buys anything from H&M because sees them as hypocritical with their conscious collection: “This is so apparent marketing, they are just fooling people, i don’t like this. I think they just see it as a place to cut profit from (Consumer 2).” This shows that slow fashion consumers do not believe everything they hear or read and can critically evaluate the fashion brands that claim to contribute to more sustainable fashion industry. A brand consumer 1 never sees herself buying things from anymore is Primark: “I would never
buy Primark. T-shirt can’t cost only 3 euros. At least i don’t want to believe that it only costs 3 euro (Consumer 1). Apparently, too low costs of a garment and awareness that has been raised through media have made the consumers questioning how is it possible for a t-shirt to cost so little and affect their purchase decisions.

Even though making conscious decisions is part of the daily lives of slow fashion consumers, there still can be purchases that does not make one feel good because her choice does not contribute to anything good. Being all the time conscious about one's purchase decisions can be time and energy consuming since consciousness is being aware of the product and its background which often is achieved through research about a product or a brand. Consumer 4 sees from her behavior that this kind of behavior comes along when she is lacking time or chooses not to see the whole picture: "I think for me it could be a lack of time or you choose not to see the whole picture sometimes and as soon as you remind what you are really doing or really contributing you feel really really bad. I think most people to stay alive and not go insane, choose not to see the whole truth. Even if we are contributing to it, but we see ourselves as not important part of the process, even if we are (Consumer 4)."

5.2.2 Preferring quality to quantity

As stated in previous paragraphs, the consumers are very conscious about the products they use and the same goes with garments. They see themselves as very picky consumers. For them, an item has to give value with a design, beautiful craftsmanship and with a high quality of materials. Sustainability aspect of the garment is a bonus, not the main thing. They would never buy something just because it is sustainable: "The item has to be beautiful for me to buy this. The fact that it is made of organic fabric, it's really nice, but it is a bonus, not the main thing (Consumer 2)." And with “beautiful” they mean that the garment has to fit her style and have a good quality of craftsmanship as well material selection.

The design of the garment is preferred to be rather basic, but at the same time interesting, meaning that the garment could be combined with other pieces and could be worn over seasons. Therefore the design of the slow of fashion consumers garments does not reflect mainstream trends, but rather their personal style. The colour palette of clothes is often monochrome consisting of neutral colours like black, grey, dark blue or white this also with a purpose to mix the garments with each other as much as possible. Good quality of the clothing provides longer lifespan of the garment which the consumer considers important.: "I have seventeen items from MASKA. And they are soo good because you can use them even if you wash them and use them many times, they are in the same good quality (Consumer 3)."

As with consumer 3 whose views were changed with a trip to Asia, having negative personal experience also affected consumer behaviour for consumer 2. She started to value quality over quantity after becoming aware of the problems in clothing industry and mass productions in
combination the experience she got when travelling to New York: "Through media started to come more and more news regarding the problems with factories that produce garments for fast fashion chains and i started to think about this more and get more interested about this. Especially while travelling in New York and seeing these piles of clothes and the smell of plastic in Forever 21 and other big franchises. I started to think where does it all go and where did it all come from or from what cost. So the more i knew and thought about it, the less i visited these stores and started to invest more in quality. (Consumer 2)"

5.2.3 Shoppers of small boutiques

When purchasing new clothes, it is usually for a reason not because of an impulsive state of mind. As stated above, ability to mix the purchased clothes with already existing ones, is considered to be one requirement of making a purchase for slow fashion consumers: "I don't like purchasing clothes without any reason, and I haven't bought myself clothes that i would have only worn once or that i actually wouldn't need. When purchasing something, i always think what else could i wear it with (Consumer 5)."

However, their purchase decision-making journey starts with liking the design of the garment: "It starts with a design, I'm very conscious of what i am wearing, so i am very picky, so it has to be me (Consumer 4)." As discussed above, the slow fashion consumers are very picky when it comes to investing in new wardrobe. The garment has to fit their style rather than reflect trends, and the important role of the decision making also plays the material selection, quality of the garment as well the background of its production. They never buy garments because of the brand name. Brand names just help them navigate from where they most likely find clothing that is suitable to their style.

For buying new clothes, they prefer small sized boutique shops to big shopping malls. Malls are places they rather avoid because shopping there does not provide any experience and often the clothes in these stores have a smell of plastic which they find disturbing. Also, they do not want to be part of the quantity oriented shopping culture that malls are encouraging: "I hate this shopping culture, so i buy as little as i can because i hate this spending, wearing throwing away. I try to stay out of this hysterical shopping places because i don't want to be part (Consumer 4)." The brands and stores to purchase from, they usually find when travelling. The reason for that is slow fashion brand selection in different countries may be bigger compared to their home countries. Some of them are also shopping online, but this when the brand is not reachable from stores nearby. However, they prefer going to a store and try on the garment and feel the material. From certain countries, the accessibility to sustainable brands is limited, also than online purchasing is used.
The brand's list that the consumers mainly consume is rather different from each other, this because of the different residence locations and brand accessibility. Consumer 1, who is from Germany, does most of her shopping online since the brands she likes, are not accessible from the city she lives in. From her closet can be found brands like Acne and Maska for example. Also, consumers from Sweden are making a purchase mainly from Swedish brands like Tiger of Sweden, Nudie Jeans, Hope, Maska, Whyred, Acne, Weekday. Consumer 4 considers herself little interested in fashion and thinks it is also a reason why the brands that have found a way to her wardrobe are the ones she sees around her. Consumer 3 consciously uses the brands because she is already aware of their background and knows that the clothes she gets from those stores meet her standards.

Consumer 2 who is from Estonia and lives part time in Paris, wears a lot of her own brand. She started the brand because of having lack of local brands from where she could find clothes suitable to her very minimalistic style. Besides that, she is a loyal designer brands consumer. From her wardrobe can be found names like Joseph, Christophe Lemaire, Baserange. She stated that she is buying designer's creations because it is more expensive but at the same time with greater quality, therefore the garment has a higher value for her, and she takes care of it more. From the other Estonian, consumer 5, closet can be found Estonian brands along with unknown ones that she has purchased during her travels and few pieces from Zara as well from H&M.

5.2.4 Gain their trust to win them over

The consumers are very knowledgeable about the characteristics of materials they prefer and what is the background of the garment production. One way it is achieved is with asking questions regarding the products from the store staff: "I am asking when I'm in shops. I'm the generation that is not very comfortable with buying things from the Internet. I am going to the store because i want to try them on (Consumer 3)." They are also paying attention to the labels or information from the online store to find out the fabric compositions. Transparency about the production and materials is preferred and is one of the ways to build trust between the brand and the consumer: "But if i go to the website of the brand and i can see clearly how is the production, what are the materials, where does it come from. If it's really really clear for me, then it's really nice to see. If i am clicking on the sweater and i have the size and the whole information about the production, then i read it. It should be clear how are they producing this and how they get this stuff. I like the transparency (Consumer 1). " Consequently, the more brand gives information regarding its supply chain to a consumer and also to store staff, can influence the purchase decision of the consumer. Educating the customer and providing them information can be considered a way to build trust between the brand and a consumer.
Before starting to consume slow fashion, the consumer 1 purchased clothes from Europe’s biggest online retail store Zalando. After changing to slow fashion, she prefers purchasing clothes from the brand’s online stores: “I used to buy a lot from Zalando, but since I am avoiding fast fashion, I have started to use online shops of the brands (Consumer 1). Now when she comes across to new ethical online brands from shopping in online retailer store, she always goes to the found brand's web page whether they have online shop or not. She does that to find more information regarding the products as well to see if they have bigger selection of things. She also states that for her it is more trustworthy to purchase from a brand's web page / online store rather than from a general online retailer. As Zalando is one of the most known online retail platforms, people feel confident making purchases from the site. Since online retailers who offer slow fashion products are not that known yet and also do not promote themselves as strongly as Zalando does, the confidence of providing them credit card information and making a purchase from a site can affect purchase decision of the consumer.

The consumer 1 also buys her skin care products always from the same store. She knows that the store strictly controls the brands they sell to really be organic so she can make purchases there without having to make an effort for further research about the products herself. The same point comes out from a statement from consumer 4, where she emphasises the need for legislations by government or stores that she can trust to strictly sell stuff that is done without any ethical or sustainable harm. This could save time and energy of the consumers. “Sustainability and slow fashion things should be like natural, it should be given. Why make things that are bad for people and environment, it doesn't feel good in the stomach if you do. I think that is something that we should legislation around. It has to meet certain standards, then the consumers don't have to make all these choices, every time you make a choice, you buy something, you have to be so active, and most of us don't have that time, we want the decision to be made for us. I want to know that when I go to a food shop, I want to know that everything I buy there is produced in a way that is sustainable for the planet and the people. That's how I wish it were (Consumer 4).” Perhaps retails stores that state and communicate their strict policy in choosing only sustainable and slow fashion brands is the key to success for both online and physical retail stores. As a result of the interviews, slow fashion consumers would become loyal customers of the store knowing that they can make their purchases from the store with good conscious.

5.2.5 "It's important that you are attracting those kinds of people just looking for beauty."

When it comes to fashion communication through social media, the most heavily used platform by the consumers is Instagram. It is used mainly to keep track on their friend's doings, but also follow accounts and get inspiration related to things of their interest. The
style of the accounts they follow in general has to raise interest and be beautiful. They enjoy following accounts where photography is displayed interestingly and nicely.

Consumer 1 who is interested in fashion, follows accounts of makeup artists, people related to fashion and brands that she likes but not necessarily consumes. Instagram is also a place for her to discover new similar brands to the ones that she already finds interesting: "Usually, for example, if you are following Maska, Instagram is suggesting other brands which are also ethically correct. So i am checking the profile, and if i like the style, i am following this (Consumer 1).” The account she finds interesting should be a mixture of nice products and a presentation of how they are doing these nice products since she values transparency of brands actions.

Consumer 2, as a person who is working in the fashion industry, uses Instagram to follow different brands and bloggers. She selects brands she follows based on the visuals of the brand. When following brands, she says that the story behind the brand affects her interest to it. One of her favourites is Maria Van Nguyen whose account she finds beautiful and stylish. The account also reflects consumer's own style which she describes as simple and minimal. The brand selection that she states as few of her favourites are Shaina Mote, Kowtow, Aeron and Clo.

Consumer 3 who works with people in art industry, also follows accounts related to this field. For example, first account that pops to her mind is Museum of Modern Art. She follows it to get the latest news regarding exhibitions that are presented there. She consciously does not follow any particular brands because she is not interested in advertisements that are presented in their accounts. However, she believes that the brands who are doing things with taking into consideration sustainability should attract people who are just looking for beauty. Sustainability aspect is just a bonus for the great design.

Consumer 5, who works as a freelance graphic and web designer and full-time web editor, follows very few accounts related to her interests and more her friends' accounts. For example from her followings list can be found Graphic Design Blog as well one fashion brand August.

Consumer 4 who runs a brand consultancy agency, is also very interested in interior design and one of her favourite accounts is an interior stylist from Sweden who owns an interior design boutique Kvart in Gothenburg. She also follows fashion brands, but this with a perspective of the brands she works with not by her personal interest. She is using her personal Instagram account to practice her photography skills: “I like to try and use my design and layout skills to present my life in a way that looks good (Consumer 4).”
When it comes to fashion brands and their communication, she thinks fast fashion companies are better at communication because they tend to be bigger and seen everywhere, when they are doing a sustainably conscious collection, they are better at making a big deal out of it: "I think maybe the fast fashion companies are better at communication because they tend to be bigger, which also goes to their collection, they are better at making a big deal out of it. So they are better at communication, and it's more in your face. They are communicating as if they are the savers of the world." Slow fashion brand approach, however, feels more personal, which she thinks should also stay that way: "Whereas slow fashion companies usually come from ground and up, which means that they are smaller and they don't have resources for communication, and it's more personal. You can really feel that, and i think it has got a value to it. Today you have such a big arena brands shouting at you all the time, you have a tendency to lead towards the brands that are more personal meaning that they communicate with you not everybody even if they do, so i think a lot of slow fashion brands are trying to be big, but i think they have something to win if they still allow themselves to be still personal (Consumer 4)." Slow fashion brands communicate more the values their products give to a person, not so much their contribution to saving the world. From previously mentioned brand's Instagram accounts can be seen that their posts describe the material selection of the garment and display it is simple and minimal design, this informs and educates the customer and perhaps raises trust toward the brand.

The consumers also use Facebook, but seldom and only to get information regarding different events and maybe read articles related to their interests. Also, Pinterest is used for finding inspiration regarding interests and LinkedIn for professional reasons. Few of them keep an eye on different bloggers but admit that they would do it more if they were reminded daily to take a look.
6. Discussion

The findings and analysis chapter of this thesis presented the themes that emerged through the coding process of the interview transcripts. Now, these themes are used to construct a slow fashion brand buyer persona. As a result, both of the research questions regarding slow fashion consumer profile and buying insights are answered, and slow fashion buyer persona is created. Also, relation to previous research in the field of slow fashion consumers is combined with the persona creation.

The concept of slow fashion persona is put together through data analyzation of interviews gathered from five slow fashion brand consumers from Sweden, Germany, Estonia. However, as a result of the interview transcripts' analysis, it became aware that the consumers, if not now, then previously have shared their life between different countries which also has affected their world views and decision making. Therefore in this buyer persona creation, it is not stated one certain country where the consumer may be from because it could not be further generalised to people for one certain country. Below is presented slow fashion persona description first presenting the profile of slow fashion buyer which describes the persona (an answer to research question 1) as well her lifestyle and social media usage. Later the buying insights of the persona are revealed which gives an understanding what aspects are influencing the persona's buying decision making and also answers to research question 2.

6.1 Slow fashion consumer profile - an answer to RQ 1

The slow fashion persona is a female with higher education in a rather creative field like design and communication. Her occupation is closely related to her interests and education. Therefore she works in the area of brand communications which requires knowledge of different cultures and design. She always keeps educating herself in the field of her interests, like taking training to become a yoga teacher or learning a new language. She is also fond of keeping her mind fresh and open to new ideas through reading books regarding philosophy and fiction.

Book author of “In Praise of Slow” (2009), Carl Honore states that slow movement philosophy is about finding balance between the two opposites of slow and fast. This mindset also reflects from the lifestyle of slow fashion persona. Spending her everyday life in the city, she often escapes to the nature to rest her mind from the city life through hiking or just enjoying silence. Her fondness for nature also reflects on the selection of her travel locations. When travelling, she is an explorer and rarely goes back to places she has explored before, unless it is related to her work or friends visiting. She prefers investing in new experiences she gets through travelling over buying new things for herself.
Slow fashion persona could also be part of group called LOHAS- Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability followers who are also known as value-driven consumers (Aburdene 2007, Heim 2011). They are thinking a lot about how their lifestyle affects other people as well the environment and do not only think about their benefits. The same is with the slow fashion persona, frequent travelling and living abroad has changed her views on life and decision making a lot. With her activities and consumption practices, she tries to leave as little footprint as possible to the environment and people because of the awareness of environmental problems. She values quality and is a picky consumer. For example, a garment she purchases has to give value with a good design that also fits with her minimal and simple style. Since she has good knowledge about materials, beautiful craftsmanship and quality materials that last long and does not reflect trends but could be used over seasons, are preferred. Also ethical and sustainable production practises of her garments are something she values and prefers. This also emerged from the report by WGSN of Future Consumers (2015), where was stated that more and more people are paying attention to the quality, style and long lasting design of the garment. Taking good care of her garments is usual process for her. When feeling like discarding anything, she never throws away the garment to garbage, but offers them to her closest friends and family or makes something new out of it.

Previously mentioned LOHAS also have their health in the mind when deciding to consume something (Heim, 2011). The same goes with slow fashion persona. From her beauty and skin care products' selection can be found products that are natural and does not irritate her skin. For that, she has certain stores she trusts that sell certified natural products. Also when cooking, most of the raw food is organic. Taking time to make good food from organic products is important to her. On the weekend she spends time with friends, often at the restaurant or a cafe enjoying good culinary.

When it comes to media usage, the consumer uses Instagram to keep track on her friends' doings, and she also follows accounts and gets inspiration related to her interests like interior design, museums and fashion brands. She uses Instagram to present her own life in taking creative photographs out of it. The interior design accounts she follows reflect the Scandinavian style of interior she likes also followed fashion brands reflect her own style, but not necessarily what she consumes. As well, magazines related to interests are read or skimmed through when having a chance. However, they are purchased only when travelling somewhere and having the opportunity to purchase international ones from the airport. Fashion magazines are skimmed through often out of the interest to keep track what are the current and upcoming trends. The consumer also uses Facebook, but this to get information regarding different events and read articles related to their interests and not so much to follow brands.
As presented in the literature review, participants of slow fashion perception study indicated that slow fashion movement is here to stay and will slowly gain popularity (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2012), so does think the slow fashion consumer. Especially because of the increasing focus on sustainability and ethical consumerism which has also been spread to consumers through showing what is going on behind the curtains of fast fashion. The slow fashion persona has certain brands she does not see herself consuming. Not only because of their bad sustainability contributions, but also lack of quality of the garments. As one of the world's most famous trend forecaster Lidewij Edelkoort predicts, the importance of garment quality and concentration of clothing not so much on trends or fashion as we know it will bring back couture.

6.2 Buying Insights - an answer to RQ 2

There are certain aspects that influence the slow fashion persona on her purchase decision. If a slow fashion consumer had to choose between two brands that offer same design, she would choose the one that offers the design with better quality and material, even if it is more expensive. The sustainable and ethical production of the garment is also considered as important aspect but rather seen as bonus, not priority. Also, previous research on slow fashion consumers consumes slow fashion because of its high quality and versatile nature (Watson and Yan, 2013). The persona expects the garment to sustain its quality and design for a long time and maintain its quality after long period of usage. This, however, requires good craftsmanship and quality material usage when producing the garment.

The consumers avoid brands that offer garments that does not go together with their style or image. Also, brands, which have a negative reputation in their mind are not finding their way in slow fashion persona's closet. Often the reputation in her mind has turned into negative because of the unethical and sustainable aspects of the production process or presenting false information, therefore, abuse their trust. The high conscious level also means that the consumers have an awareness of previously mentioned aspects. Therefore, they can critically analyse if the company are genuine presenting their sustainability actions, or is it just to fool people and use it as marketing tool.

The first thing that the consumer is evaluating while making a decision to make a purchase is a design of the garment. The design has to be interesting, but at the same time simple and have a monochrome colour palette. It is also important that the design of the garment fits the style of the person and could be combined with other items from her closet. If the consumer is happy with the design, she starts to evaluate the craftsmanship and quality of materials. It is essential for her to invest into garments that last long and are made of materials that feel good on her skin. Then comes the production aspect. Garments that are produced sustainably and
ethically are preferred. Which means that it is important to present information regarding production practices to the consumer, otherwise she might decide to pick another brand.

It is not often that she makes impulse purchases. This might happen if she accidentally finds something that she really feels reflects her style. The buyer's journey of slow fashion consumer starts from discovering the need of something. The shopping process also does not involve shopping malls, but rather small boutiques are preferred. There are certain brands that the buyer knows could trust regarding good design, high quality and sustainability aspects. If the product selection does not provide what is needed, further research is being done. The consumer seeks experience from the shopping which means, that also one of the reasons she prefers shopping from bricks and mortar stores rather doing it online. Trying on the garments and feeling the material is important for her during decision making. However, online store is used when the brand selection nearby does not provide what is needed. When shopping online, she often does it from a brand's own online store than general online retailer because feeling more secure doing it from the brand's page.

7. Conclusion

This chapter will present the conclusions of the study and future research suggestions are proposed.

The reason for the emergence of this thesis topic was to focus an attention to slow fashion brand female customers who have bought from a slow fashion brand. Since slow fashion concept promotes slow culture and values in fashion, providing knowledge about the what aspects influence their purchasing decisions together with customer profile, would benefit the fashion industry to contribute to more sustainable approach. Also insights to future research on slow fashion buyer concept as well persona concept could be used from this study.

In order to expand knowledge of slow fashion brand customer, a persona that communicates the characteristics and aspects that influence purchase decisions of slow fashion buyer was developed with this study. To answer the research questions and develop persona, five female slow fashion brand buyers were interviewed. Answering the research questions provided 8 different themes that emerged from the interview transcripts and made up slow fashion brand buyer persona, which fulfilled the purpose. The emerged themes were describing who slow fashion brand buyer persona is: 1) creative mind; 2) globetrotter and explorer; 3) fond of nature, and themes that described what influences the slow fashion buyer: 4) consciousness; 5) quality over quantity; 6) shoppers of small boutiques; 7) trust; 8) esthetics.

This study did not come to a firm conclusion, but rather aimed to provide more in-depth knowledge about slow fashion brand buyer and point out implications to further study the slow fashion consumer.
Also contribution to methodology was provided with this study. To the knowledge of the researcher, persona creation method had not been undertaken before in the field of fashion consumer studies. Therefore, this study provided contribution also to methodology, exploring how persona creation concept could be used in fashion consumer related studies. Persona approach, to represent user or a buyer, is mainly used in consumer centric design research. In this study the persona creation concept was used to develop a slow fashion brand customer persona with an aim to communicate in-depth knowledge about customers of slow fashion brand.

7.1 Research limitations and future research

Like any other research, also this study has its limitations that establish possibilities for future research. One of the limitation was that due to agreement with the participating slow fashion brand, only certain amount of their customers were allowed to ask permission to participate in the study. This resulted in sending an invitation email to 120 of their main customers of whom 5 agreed to participate in this study with giving an interview. Therefore future research could a larger sample size from different countries could be used to be able to further generalise the results to a wider audience and build different personas.

Furthermore, only interview data was used to build the persona in this study, but in today’s world, data-mining and performance measuring tools like Google Analytics and AdWords could be used to give extra contribution to the research.

Also, in this study the slow fashion brand customer persona was developed, but in the future research with a longer time limitation, it would be interesting to investigate the whole process of developing a persona to applying the persona to marketing and communication strategies.
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9.0 Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Demographic/Personal background
Please tell me about yourself.
Where do you live?
Family - married, cohabitant, single, kids, how many?
Profession mentioned in the survey, but do they work full time / part time?
Key responsibilities at work
Education?
What languages do you speak?

Psychographic
What are your hobbies or activities that you enjoy on regular basis? How do you spend your time?
What are you interested in? - for example architecture, food, fashion, interior design - Why?
Do you follow any brands related to your interests in social media?
What do you like about their communication? Why do you follow the brands? Perhaps you remember how did you find the brands?

What other brands do you like / consume, apart from fashion, for example what kind of skin products do you use? Or is there any specific coffee you like to drink? Why?
Do you follow the brands in social media? Why? Do you like how they communicate to their customers? Dislike?
Name a brand that you would never buy? Why?
What are the brands you consumer most frequently?

Buying behavior
Can you please describe your last garment purchase. Did you buy the garment because you liked it or because you needed it?
How do you find new clothing brands?
Where do you buy most of your clothes? From online store or physical store?
How often do you purchase a new clothing?
What do you take into consideration when you purchase a new garment?