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CONSUMERS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS FASHION AND THE EFFECT OF DIGITALIZATION ON THEIR FASHION CONSUMPTION

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Consumption is a process of consumers selecting and using goods and services. It is influenced by external elements such as cultural, social and economic factors, but also a consumer’s own internal preferences, values and motivation. In the past decades, rapidly accelerated globalization and technological evolvement, among other major changes in societies, have developed the overall consumer behavior. In this thesis consumption is considered especially from the point of view of fashion.

The thesis examines the attitudes and meanings consumers have towards fashion and how the developing digitalization effects on their fashion experience. In this thesis, fashion consuming is pictured as an ongoing process which is triggered by all the time developing new trends. The fashion experience is seen highly affected by digital solutions. As a theoretical framework, there is used a modified version of EKB decision model. The empirical research of this thesis is conducted with a qualitative research method and all together seven Finnish consumers were interviewed.

Fashion has evolved along consumption and today it takes a large portion of the topic. Fashion is more than just a clothing as it represents a sociological phenomenon which concerns several consumers. Over the last centuries and decades fashion has transformed from slowly changing dresses into fast phased garments. From today’s fashion types, fast fashion stands as the most purchased one, however, due to its bad quality and unethicality, it is also the most unvalued. The meaning of fashion depends on the interest consumers have towards it. In this thesis, three types of fashion consumers were considered; 1) fashion forerunners, 2) fashion followers and 3) consumers with no interest in fashion. In the research all the mentioned fashion consumers are represented. The major differences between these fashion consumers were the extent fashion was followed and the frequency new clothing was purchased.

Digitalization is a big part of fashion consumers’ everyday lives. Online shopping has become beside the traditional brick-and-mortar shopping, and it has grown its popularity. The most valued benefit of online shopping is convenience, whereas brick-and-mortar stores offer face-to-face service and physicality. Digitalization overall has changed the fashion shopping experience but it also effects on consumers’ way to follow fashion, which has turned into more social media centered.

Keywords
consumer behavior, fashion, digitalization
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1 INTRODUCTION

Consumption is a process which is developed through different stages and situations in consumers’ lives. Consumption is dependent on various actors, such as consumers’ needs and motivation, values, situations, and involved emotional processes, which is why, it is difficult to answer unambiguously why people are consuming. (Solomon et al. 2002: 6, 119). Consumer’s needs are viewed differently today as they were even in the last decades. Even if the biological viewpoint suggests that the basic needs for humans are food, shelter and safety (Norris & Williams 2016), societies and the environment we live in have changed. Griskevicius and Kenrick (2013) point out that as the surroundings have become more complex, the decision-making motivation is the same even if the necessities might have changed.

Fashion has no mutual agreed definition, and according to Crane and Bovone (2006), fashion is viewed differently by consumers and academics. The term fashion can be implied into music, literature, art, business practices, etc. however, generally when discussed, it is considered as clothing (Aspers & Godart 2013, Solomon 2006, 589; Crane & Bovone 2006). Even so, the ideology behind fashion is more than just a dress; it is a sociological phenomenon. Fashion has changed radically over the last centuries, even over decades, from slowly changing dresses into fast phased garments.

One critical developer of recent fashion is digitalization. Information and telecommunication started to change the world in 1970s (Perez 2007) by creating a significant base for the Internet which in the long run has become so important part of societies that people don’t know how to live without it. Technological improvements and digitalization have made online shopping possible and by its part changed consumers’ attitudes towards the retail industry. The change started to emerge just before the turn of the century (Chiang & Dholakia 2003) and developed consumer behavior also in the fashion business. Since the millennium e-commerce has been steadily increasing creating new ways for consumers to acquire information, and purchase items and services. According to The Statista Inc (2017) in 2018 there will be 1.79 billion online buyers worldwide and B2C (business-to-consumer) online sales are estimated to reach USD 2,356 billion.
Even though, online shopping has challenged the whole retail industry, brick-and-mortar stores are still an important channel for consumers. Where online shopping is suitable for consumers who look for convenience, the advantages of brick-and-mortar stores are physicality, face-to-face customer service, and an extremely important factor when considering clothing; the ability to fit the garment. Of course, generally online stores provide the possibility for an easy return, however, this can still be an obstacle for some consumers not to order online. For this reason and several others, some consumers don’t feel comfortable to purchase online, however, they still use the Internet in their buying process. This indicates that even if the Internet is not used for the actual purchase situation, it has been accepted as a part of the whole buying process. In addition, some consumers might seek the product they want from physical store and later buy it online. Agnihotri (2015) considers the usage of both channels, brick-and-mortar and online, as multichannel, which is an increasing phenomenon, even everyday life, for consumers and retailers. Multichannel behavior is a crucial part of today’s fashion business, and it will be also considered in the thesis.

Digitalization has brought markets closer to consumers. Through online it is possible to follow fashion in real-time all over the world and order the latest trends with just few clicks. This, on the other hand, has fostered competition among retailers. It is self-evident that digitalization has changed the way consumers think and act when forming their needs and wants, comparing alternatives and making the actual purchase decisions on products and services. It has also transformed the way consumers observe their surroundings and how they share opinions of fashion by introducing different digital solutions such as social media. In addition, the change continues grows.

1.1 The research gap and research questions

Fashion as a research topic has been devaluated and the definition of fashion is still not unambiguous containing several meanings. (Aspers & Godart 2013). In addition, fashion overall has changed, and if fashion history is compared to fashion today, the difference is huge. In today’s fast paced fashion rhythm, the values and ideologies fashion represents seem far away from the message fashion has been sending in the previous decades and centuries. As fashion overall has changed, also consumers and their attitudes must have some sort of differences. The previous literature focuses on
fashion development, however, neglects or only briefly examines consumers’ personal and individual opinions and attitudes fashion represents today (e.g. Stevenson 2011, Watt 2012). In addition, the literature is more focusing on fashion as a type clothing expressing the dominant situations and values rather than considering consumers’ differing attitudes. In this thesis, these differing opinions are considered important.

What is also a major difference compared to the past; the overall fashion experience has changed. Not only this matter is affected by the accelerating pace of new fashions, but also digitalization has brought new solutions for consumers to use. Of course, digitalization and its effects on consuming has been researched quite a lot in the past decade (e.g. Chiang & Dholakia 2003, Danaher et al. 2003, Perez 2004), however, there can be identified a research gap in combining the overall fashion consuming experience, which would consider also the consumers as individual fashion users. The need is to combine the current state of fashion consuming containing the elements of fashion attitude and digitalization’s effects on their fashion consumption.

Based on the available literature, fashion can be considered in a global perspective as a great interest of researchers nowadays. Even so, fashion in Finland has not been quite popular topic to research, however, the empirical part of the research is conducted among Finnish consumers. Considering the type of topic this thesis introduces, Finland is quite underresearched and there is only little academic information about Finnish fashion consuming. Because there is lack of academic literature of Finnish fashion consumers, it is definitely considered as a major research gap. It is curious to find out what fashion actually means to ordinary Finnish consumers, and how progressed they are in online shopping when it comes to clothing.

Based on these thoughts there has been drawn two research questions:

*RQ1: What does fashion mean to consumers?*

*RQ2: How do consumers experience digitalization affecting their fashion behavior?*

By answering the research questions through the empirical analysis, the aim is to bring valuable information about Finnish fashion consuming. The empirical research of the
thesis focuses especially on the consumer behavior in fashion and the current state of the attitudes consumers have towards today’s clothing industry. Through these feelings, the research questions are answered by bringing forth different opinions and developing the overall idea of Finnish fashion consumers. At this point of the research, the overall assumption of the Finnish fashion consuming is that the general attitude the nation has towards fashion is dilute and their way of dressing is dull. I also believe that fashion shares opinions and not all have an interest to the topic, which indicates that it means different thing to different people, and fashion attitude should not be generalized.

The thesis takes the consumer perspective and examines the attitudes and feelings fashion arises in them, which makes this particular approach to the topic quite unique. The empirical research is complimented by the theoretical part which researches consumption and fashion development, and creates a timeline from the fashion history till this moment in order to understand the changes better. In this way, the path of the consumer centered view of fashion development becomes whole. Fashion history and assumptions of fashion today has been research separately, however, the combination of the way this research presents is exquisite.

The theoretical framework of this study is presented as a modified model of Darley’s et al. (2010) version of the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB). The EKB decision process considers decision process from a general level without any specific product or service line which makes it extremely abstract. Darley’s et al. (2010) modified EKB model takes online shopping point of view, thus considers the decision making suitable for modern purchasing process. This model has a lot of potential to suit this particular study, however, it lacks the point of view of fashion consuming, which is why it needs to be further developed. Most relevant issues concerning today’s fashion consumption are added to the model to compliment this particular study. In addition, the model has been simplified in order to note only the most important factors which effect on consumers’ decision making in fashion.

The purpose of the theoretical background is to build a suitable framework to complement the research. In the theoretical part consumer behavior in fashion is examined from the historical perspectives and consuming overall. This research is data
driven and the theoretical framework is loose and its purpose is to direct the researcher to the empirical research of what kind of behavior fashion consuming represents today; how consumers view fashion overall, how has technology developed their buying and how do they evaluate online shopping as an option for purchasing.

To get a deep understanding of consumers’ habits and personal experiences, this research will be conducted as a qualitative research and there will be done altogether seven interviews for Finnish consumers. All respondents are aged from 24 to 30 years old, as this age group has personally experienced the development of the e-commerce, thus have possibility to compare the two ways of buying. The respondents selected to this research have all different backgrounds in their fashion consuming, in their attitudes towards fashion and the channels they use to acquire information or purchase clothing. Afterwards said, it is interesting to see that there are quite different respondents in this research which indicates a lot of different consumer experiences.

As this is a qualitative research, the purpose is specifically to get more knowledge on why consumers act as they do, what are their motivations and what is their behavior like (Barnham 2014). The research questions will be answered through the primary data which will be gathered from interviews. The interviews are going to be semi-structured, and planned to follow the theoretical framework and the research literature. The interviews will be interpreted through fact based viewpoint and the answers will be coded and organized into themes, which will be presented later in the Methodology chapter.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of theoretical part and the actual empirical research which are followed by conclusions of the thesis. Together these parts aim to give a holistic understanding of consumers’ attitudes towards fashion and how they experience the topic during the digitalization era. In this section the main themes are introduced and explained which issues they will cover.

In the theoretical framework the history of consuming and fashion are examined in order to get a solid base for today’s views and the starting point for the change.
In addition, consumer behavior is introduced; which factors influence on consumer behavior, and on the other hand, which factors influence on consumers, and lastly, why are people consuming. After these issues, the theoretical framework continues with a short introduction to digitalization and considers the differences of brick-and-mortar stores and online shopping from consumers’ perspective; what kind of decision-making process do each possess and what are the factors which influences on the selection of the consumer. In the end of the theoretical part a repeat of the previously covered theoretical topics is offered and based on these a modified model of Darley’s et al. (2010) version of the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) is introduced.

After the theoretical framework is examined, the thesis continues with presenting the methodology and the analyzing process; the possible research methods will be considered, and it will be also explained why qualitative research method was chosen. In the empirical part, the analysis of the empirical data will be introduced, in which the respondents and the answers of the semi-structured interviews will be analyzed. In addition, the answers are going to discuss with the theoretical framework of this research.

The last chapter of the thesis introduces the main conclusions and discussion. In the chapter there are presented the main findings and the results of the empirical research will further discuss with the theoretical framework. In addition, the limitations of the study are mentioned and future researches topics suggested.
2 CONSUMPTION AND FASHION IN SOCIETY

Due to globalization and technological developments, among other major changes in societies, over the decades the behavior of consumers has evolved rapidly. Consumption changes and it is affected by several factors, such as consumer’s values, attitudes and lifestyle. Consumption is a process which includes cultural, social and economic factors of selecting goods and services (Zukin & Maguire 2004). As concept, it has two plausible roots: the first arose in the 18th century from political economy in which the term was used to depict the market relationships and separate consumers from producers, and the second root comes from Latin and implies destroying or wasting (Warde 2015). As a study, consumption has various institutional areas (Zukin & Maguire 2004), however, the thesis focuses on consumption especially from the social science perspective, which views the topic from such angles as material culture and differences in the consumers’ social stratification.

In the thesis consumption is examined from the point of view of fashion which has risen as a significant part of consumption. In the course of time, clothing has developed from body protection from nature to a form of expressing oneself; characteristics, values, affection and wealth (Stevenson 2011: 6-7). Over the last centuries, fashion has transformed from being a privilege of elitists to a right of every social class. Fashion has always had the nature of acting restless; to create something totally new or present old patterns in an unseen way. In the fashion history the speed of fashion development has been extremely long, however, already in the 20th century fashion has taken faster tempo which has gotten even quicker. Today it can be hard to identify only one fashion as the speed and movement is so prompt.

In the first section of the theoretical part, the path of fashion development is examined; what has influenced on fashion over time and how fashion appears today. In addition, the technological developments and their effects on fashion are explored. However, at first, the chapter focuses on the development of consumption; how has consumption evolved, and how do sociologists consider the topic.
2.1 The development of social studies of consumption

Consumption is a big part of people’s everyday lives and routines. It can be considered as a process of selecting goods and services which indicates that consumption covers a major portion of consumers’ everyday practices. Consumption has increased rapidly since the middle 20th century and it stands as a significant link between the economy and the sociology of culture. In modern life, even bigger portion of public culture is affected by all the time developing services, goods and advertising (Zukin & Maguire 2004, Warde 2015.) Major technological revolutions modify societies and people, the institutional context and even cultures (Perez 2007, Perez 2010) which indicates that technological developments are closely associated with new consumption habits. Technological developments, mass media, and popular culture, which will be later on discussed further, have accelerated consumption and created possibilities for modern lifestyles.

Even if consumption is as old as human society itself, only recently sociologists have started to pay more attention to the topic. Consumption overlaps with many institutional areas which is why there is no possibility to result only one analytic framework comprising the historical and theoretical perspectives or influences. (Zukin & Maguire 2004.) As interdisciplinary topic, consumption has contributed e.g. marketing and economics, however, the sub discipline of sociology is still quite undeveloped. The sociology of consumption argues with the common assumptions of consuming and considers issues such as inequality, self- and social identity distinction, social division, and material culture, among others. (Warde 2015.) To a large extent sociological studies of consumption are focusing on the economy, societies’ mass culture, infrastructure, and in addition, consumer culture, and individuals’ evolving values and behavior (Zukin & Maguire 2004). The sociology of consumption started to emerge gradually and its development can be set into three periods: 1) before the 1980s there can be identified some distant origins from the field, 2) the most influential period for the emergence of the sociology of consumption can be identified between the 1980s and the middle of 2000s, and finally 3) the cultural turn which took place in the middle of 2000s with political queries and new theoretical perspectives (Warde 2015).
Nevertheless, in the 20th century the investigation of sociological studies of consumption has been limited, and classical theorists of sociology of the time have not offered empirical demonstrations to support their ideas (Zukin & Maguire 2004, Warde 2015). They paid less attention on consumption and emphasized more other social life regions such as production which was distinctive economic function of the time (Zukin & Maguire 2004). The theorists, such as Simmel and Weblen, commented consumption only little when researching other topics, such as reputation and status (Warde 2015). Consumption has been by large extent depreciated and taken for granted. For example, Marx considered that social needs are causing capitalism, dressing up can be compared to “animal functions”, and having is bringing faulty happiness. (Belk 1988, Zukin & Maguire 2004.)

The further societies have developed, the more consumption has been on interest. The interest towards social study of consumption increased only when mass production bloomed and people started to purchase more volume. This was noted as an economic growth, increasing incomes and altogether as a chancing quality of life. At the same time, consumer behavior as a discipline was growing. (Warde 2015.) The overall mind of consumption started to change around 1980s as consumers became to appear more as individuals and the class location was not anymore the evident baseline for the chances of material life (Campbell 1995). Consumption was no longer encompassed as a collective norm, however, rather more towards a consumer’s private choice (Warde 2015). These issues built a baseline for the emergence of sociology of consumption which took an economic and material point of view to the topic. (Campbell 1995.) The emergence of the sociology of consumption, however, required also other factors such as cultural (Warde 2015) and psychological studies (Campbell 1995). Cultural and psychological perspectives had their origins in traditional culture theory, in modern mass culture and consumer culture, containing components of popular culture (Campbell 1995).

Popular culture refers to entertainment, such as music, celebrities and sports, which are consumed by the mass market (Solomon et al. 2002: 14-16). In the 1950s and 1960s this type of mass culture was criticized. Consumer culture overall was seen exploitative, capitalist culture which expressed material values and selfishness. Later,
in the 1970s and 1980s consumer culture was seen more people and culture centered, and researchers of the new generation viewed mass culture as a mixture of micro-cultures and ambitions and concerns of normal people. (Campbell 1995.)

The sociology of consumption became rather autonomous domain of activity which was emphasized by postmodernism, which as a term indicates the dissociation of popular cultural traditions and high modernism culture (Campbell 1995, Warde 2015). Simultaneously, at the later part of 20th century, the sociology of consumption was also influenced by rising feminism. Feminism made a notable contribution in this respect as the dominant assumption at the time was that women were consuming more than men which led central consumption research more towards fashion, shopping, and household. (Campbell 1995.)

Attitude towards consumption has changed over decades and today consuming is considered completely acceptable and even encouraged. As the chapter suggests, consuming has evolved from despised action as an important part of modern life. Campbell (1995) describes contemporary British society as a consumer society, where society has been organized around consumption and people set consumption as a sign of success or happiness. Particularly in the recent decades, due to globalization, there can be identified increased homogeneity especially in the Western cultures (Solomon et al. 2002, 11; Warde 2015). The thesis considers consumption especially from the point of view of fashion, which will be studied next. As fashion is a big part of consumption, there can be identified similar kind of growth path between these two topics.

2.2 Defining fashion

Fashion takes a large portion of consumption. During the past centuries, it has evolved as major business in the modern societies. Fashion contains more than just clothing; it can be interpreted as a wide cultural phenomenon and identified as a matter of music, home decoration, painting, literature, even business practices, among other things (Solomon 2006: 589, Aspers & Godart 2013). However, nowadays fashion is associated mostly to clothing and less to other type of tangible or intangible (Crane & Bovone 2006). Nevertheless, even though, fashion is considerably associated to
clothing, it doesn’t necessarily mean that clothing is fashion. Powell and Gilbert (2009: 1-2) identify clothing as “…the empirical reality of dressed bodies”. According to anthropological and sociological traditions, clothing is a form of material culture and a part of one’s life experience. People don’t necessarily follow fashion or include it to their clothing, however, they still might make choices regarding to their clothes and what they are willing to wear. (Powell & Gilbert 2009: 1-2.) When people dress according to their own preferences, it can be identified as their own style. Style is more lasting phenomenon than fashion, and for example, it can represent a permanent part of a cultural reference. In apparel, style is a certain kind of combination of existing details, fabrics and structures, among others, which can be worn over time. (Aspers & Godart 2013.) Of course, style can be influenced by fashion, however, fashion is not the key when a person has his/her own, personal style.

In academia, fashion has been devaluated, and especially in the past not taken seriously. Although fashion theories have been developed, fashion as a sociological study can be seen incomplete. (Crane & Bovone 2006, Aspers & Godart 2013.) Even if Aspers and Godart (2013) see fashion as a sociological topic, they point out that fashion can be identified to other disciplines as well, e.g. history, economics, cultural studies and philosophy, which, on the other hand, impact on sociology. As fashion operates in many parts of life, it can be researched in several sciences for theorists to gain knowledge from multiple aspects of the topic (Miller et al 1993, Hemphill & Suk 2009). From the economic point of view fashion is strongly considered from the consumption perspective, and on the other hand, social theorist may consider the topic from the social class and social change aspect. Cultural studies view fashion, for example, as a creator of symbolic meanings and values. (Hemphill & Suk 2009.)

Fashion is a wide phenomenon which is reflected by social influences and through those give insights to consumer behavior (Miller et al. 1993).

The definition of fashion is still not unambiguous and as a concept it has several meanings. Fashion is hard to define because the word itself has two different meanings; fashion can imply either a change or a dress (Aspers & Godart 2013). A Change indicates that fashion needs to evolve further which explains new creations replacing old ones. A dress, on the other, implies that the term is used to present clothing as it was already considered in the beginning of this chapter. Aspers and Godart (2013)
state that fashion is an important phenomenon which could be understood and explained better by the already existing theory and research tools. They themselves consider fashion as “…an unplanned process of recurrent change against a backdrop of order in the public realm”. Solomon (2006: 589), on the other hand, define fashion as the following: “Fashion is a process of social diffusion by which a new style is adopted by some group(s) of consumers.” Crane and Bovone (2006), indicate that fashion as term is vague and carries several meanings which are viewed differently by the academics and consumers. Fashion concept illustrates the manner of dissemination of a particular culture form, and the concept varies within different cultures, even within individual consumers. In addition, from the marketers and retailers point of view, fashion as a term is often used to make clothing to sound more attractive to consumers (Crane & Bovone 2006).

According to Miller et al. (1993), fashion theory is not considered formalized structure of concepts and relations, however, rather as a loose array with propositions and principles. Nevertheless, despite the informal theoretical perspective of fashion, there are few fashion related concepts with clear definitions. A fad is a fashion which lasts only a short period of time. It gets a fast acceptance in group, but on the other hand, also becomes forgotten soon. Fads are impossible to forecast. (Solomon 2006: 598, Aspers & Godart 2013.) Trends, on the other hand, are more general than fashion, however, they may forecast the direction the fashion is forwarding. (Aspers & Godart 2013.)

Fashion is a process which influences on the individual level by affecting to one’s behavior, however, at the same time it represents a social phenomenon and has an impact on several people cotemporally. Fashion system is formed by people and organizations who are building and posting symbolic meanings into cultural goods. (Solomon 2006: 589-591.) In the past decades, fashion has been in a major transformation. Developments in societies have influenced the fashion world, such as the internet bringing possibilities to shop online anywhere and anytime, and mass media introducing new ideas for consuming and different lifestyles to pursue. Ma et al. (2012) claim that goods consumption, such as fashion, has started to reshape people’s identities. Furthermore, in conformity-centered model consumers’ choices
are strongly influenced by the media or other kind of social pressures which by its part can push consumers to use certain type of fashions (Miller et al. 1993).

One of the most known and powerful fashion theory, trickle-down theory, has its first influences in the 19th century, in The Theory of the Leisure Class by Veblen. Trickle-down theory, by George Simmel, concerns that fashion is adopted by upper classes to separate themselves from lower classes. Later, fashion trickles down to lower social classes as they replicate the upper class. (Hemphill & Suk 2009.) After the lower class has adopted the fashion the upper class moves on to new kind of fashion (Miller et al. 1993). This theory can be identified especially from fashion history as fashion was the privilege of the elitists and even forbidden from the lower class at some point (Stevenson 2011: 6, Watt 2012: 44). Nevertheless, trickle-down theory is not entirely liable at least when looking back few decades as the movement of fashion can be identified also to another way around (Ma et al. 2012). As an alternative theory, trickle-across, or in another term known as mass-market theory, means that fashion is adopted at the same time for all social classes at the same time. This is enabled by mass production and communication. (Miller et al. 1993.)

As it turns out, the term fashion is extremely hard to define. The lack of academic research might be one reason for the absence of mutual agreed definition, however, even if fashion would have been examined more, it is not certain that there would still be a proper answer. This is because fashion as a phenomenon has changed so much; the difficulty excels from the fashion history and its development till this day. To light up this idea, fashion history will be examined next and it is followed by description of today’s fashion.

### 2.3 Historical aspects of fashion

The origins of fashion are extremely controversial and there is no certain information about the period when fashion appeared. Some claim that fashion became a significant part of the society during the European Renaissance, while others consider that it occurred later. There are also sources to insist that the birth of fashion took place earlier. (Aspers & Godart 2013.) According to Watt (2012: 44), fashion as a term was
born in the late Middle Ages as the styles started to change faster and there arose more alternatives.

In the past, the time fashion clothing can be identified to be already existed, fashion garments were intended for upper class only as they were the people who could afford to buy locally produced, long-lasting clothing (Aspers & Godart 2013). The society held strictly on their boundaries and fashion was only for noble; clothing was a sign of who the person was. During the Middle Ages, Sumptuary law defined which colors and materials are propitiate for each class. For lower-class people fashionable clothing was forbidden which even further increased the differences within the social classes. (Stevenson 2011: 6, Watt 2012: 44.) From the philosophic perspective, fashion was a luxury, the privilege of rich, and in the Western world the philosophical discussion concentrated on morality (Aspers & Godart 2013).

In its early years, fashion garments were manufactured by human hands with the help of threads and needles. Not before the 18th century, fashion deserved to be called couture, which is a French word for sewing. The first haute couture, “fine sewing”, house was founded in Paris in the middle on the 19th century by English Charles Fredric Worth, who is thought to be the father of the fine sewing. Haute couture was primarily known in Europe at that time and Paris was the haute couture capital. Other important countries influencing on fine sewing were Italy and Britain. (Waddell 2004: 5.)

Industrial Revolution accelerated change; the population of the world rose and people started to move from countryside to towns and cities. For example, in Britain the population almost tripled in 80 years after 1780 and at the same time income levels doubled. (Watt 2012: 166, Powell 2014.) Due to changing surroundings, such as societies’ industrialization and the rise of income levels, fashion clothing become accessible for the middle and working classes as well (Crane & Bovone 2006). The expansion of the fashion population was influenced also by the huge development in the production methods. Until the late 19th century textiles were produces at homes (Powell 2014). However, as the production skills evolved, fashion changed over time tardily towards even larger groups to be able to acquire fashion clothing (Aspers & Godart 2013). During the Industrial Revolution, the technology developed and enabled
to produce lagers scales of garments leading to emergence of resembling to sweatshops of modern day in Great Britain. Sweatshop indicates garment factories which are unsafe, low waged working places. Even today, sweatshops don’t follow labor laws and are generally considered as displeasing places to work. Already in the first sweatshops child and female labor was common. (Powell 2014.)

Developing traffic communication enabled people to travel and increased trade. As people could move around more they broadened their experiences and at the same time gained new kind of fashion sense. In addition, the spread of fashion was faster due to developing communication systems, such as newspapers, typewriter and photographs, which also made the internationalization of fashion easier. (Watt 2012, 166.) During the same time, in the 18th century, Adam Smith discovered that by imitating the rich, their fashions, individuals showed sympathy by the willingness to relate others and through that taking part to their glory. In the late 19th century Nietzsche suggested that fashion is part of modernity. Moreover, the word fashion, in Latin modus, indicates to manners, however, also to modernity. (Aspers & Godart 2013.)

The beginning of the 20th century was a turning point for fashion and especially for the stand of women (Stevenson 2011: 86). Due to the First World War clothing became simpler. As men were sent to the war, women were hired for their jobs or as volunteers, and thus, started to wear more practical uniforms. (Watt 2012: 222, 238.) After the war economic boom started and the urbanization accelerated even further. Women became to have their own income and mass production offered them the possibility to acquire affordable clothing. In addition, in 1920s women were able to vote both sides of Atlantic. (Stevenson 2011: 86.)

In fashion history royalties and patricians were fashion icons for a long period of time, however, in the 1920s new fashion forerunners were born in Hollywood films. By the 1930s, Hollywood had lift its reputation and became a major fashion influence. Costumers had to see further to the future the upcoming dominant trends in order to make the fashion in films to look up dated when the film was shown in theatres. This accelerated the rise of Hollywood to the top of the fashion industry. (Watt 2012: 222, 306.) Hollywood spread fashion phenomena fast, such as little black dress or blue
jeans, and at the same time dispersed the mystery of fashion world (Stevenson 2011: 108, 161, 168).

Fashion is reflected by the time and represents existing circumstances. During the Second World War, skirts got shorter because there was lack of material and thus Britain started to control clothing by the law. (Stevenson 2011: 108.) British fashion was affected by the war to a large extent and adults in the country received coupons to purchase only essential clothes. During that time, British fashion was conservative and straight-lined while United States, on the other hand, didn’t seem to be affected as much from the Second World War. Even after the war Britain still continued regulating clothing for a while. (Olds 2001.)

Shortly after the war the consumption started to rise again. The 1950s and 1960s can be remembered as the Golden Age when there took place positive growth in societies (Perez 2004). The creation of new textiles and the development of technology was fastened and the rationing law set for Britain was reversed. Among same time mass production was started which accelerated the selection expansion of fashion clothing. (Watt 2012: 334.)

After the Second World War, women were bored to wear masculine clothing and dull fashion. Even though, these clothes were comfortable, women wanted to look feminine again. French designer, Christian Dior, launched New Look in 1947, which brought back the long wanted feminine style and there were no more regulations in fabrics, as one skirt required at least 10 war time skirts. New Look was criticized for being wasteful and excessive, and caused a lot of debates in both sides of the Atlantic. Even so, majority of women started to wear the new type of fashion as it brought hope and symbolized saving. The popularity of the New Look accelerated the emergence of ready-to-wear clothes. (Olds 2001.) Prêt à porter, ready-to-wear, increased its significance and pushed further away haute couture (Waddell 2004: 14, Reinach 2005). Haute couture divided consumers into hierarchical classes, whereas prêt à porter concentrated on consumers’ tastes and styles, and new kind of fashion culture started to emerge (Reinach 2005). This is extremely important change in fashion history as it gave a direction to future fashion in modern society.
Still in the middle of the 20th century, fashion was intended for adults and had the type of sophistication in its style. Youngsters were dressed in the same way as their parents, or otherwise, as a little girls and boys. (Waddell 2004, 14.) The Cold War made the people of the world feel insecure about their safety and future. As a counterblow youth started to create their own culture and wanted their own type of fashion clothing. They took the influence on popular culture such as music and movies. (Watt 2012: 314, 366.) There were signs of teenagers’ emergence already before the 1950s, however, the rise of the teenage culture took place in 1960s. Teenagers started to rebel against their parents and the system of society, they wanted to be free affecting to fashion as well. Fashion had changed for good as it kept on concentrating on young consumers even in the later decades. (Stevenson 2011: 172-173, 202.)

Hippie movement is a great example of ideology harmonizing with clothing. Hippie culture was originally born in San Francisco in 1967, however, it spread soon after across the world. Hippies were spreading the word of peace, love and freedom and movement organized protests against wars. Their aim was to dress individually by buying and modifying used clothing. The clothing had ethnic influence, psychedelic patterns and the fabrics were preferable nature material. Hippies highlighted unisexism in clothing. (Watt 2011: 374.)

In the 1970s the fashion borders between the countries softened as travelling increased even further its popularity and fashion shows became global (Stevenson 2011: 202). Fashion reporters and buyers started to visit twice a year in the fashion capitals’ fashion shows; Milan, Paris, New York and London to get familiar with the next season’s fashion (Watt 2011: 386). The first fashion shows can be identified to the 19th century when Charles Fredric Worth invited his customers to a salon show at the beginning of the season where models presented the haute couture dresses on the floor in front of the customers. At the beginning of the 20th century fashion shown became more up-to-date presentations in department stores. Fashion shows at the time were mainly intended for upper-class women who were loyal customers. (Skov et al. 2009.)

When starting to approach, the millennium the importance of fashion designers and brands increased. Consumers wanted to know the designers as persons. For some designers, their personal name was such an essential part of the design that it became
a synonym with the cloth. Some designers who started their career in the 20th century were so successful that their names are important part of the fashion world even today. The fame of branding, on the other hand, accelerated through hip hop culture which arose in the 1990s. (Watt 2012: 386, 256.) In the 1990s supermodels became essential part of the fashion world. Before this phenomenon there had been only few since the 1960s, such as Twiggy. Supermodels became celebrities and vital parts of the fashion shows, which had turned into major spectacles, and fashion was officially important part of pop culture. (Watt 2012: 409, Stevenson 2011: 246.)

2.4 Today’s fashion

Technological developments influence fashion by enabling communication and constant evolving with rapid pace. When observing the history of fashion, it can be noted that the further the technology has developed, the faster fashion has changed. (Stevenson 2011: 236.) Fashion is a sum of many coincidences, and trends are spreading today with extremely fast pace through Internet, television, magazines and celebrity culture in which media is selling image for average consumers to replicate. In the 21st century fashion has evolved into a global industry of profiting billions every year. (Watt 2011: 415.)

Today’s fashion has evolved into rapid paced garments, known as fast fashion, which is a typical phenomenon in modern societies and revolutionized the fashion industry (McNeil & Moore 2015). Fast fashion has two possible meanings. Generally speaking, the phenomenon is characterized as low cost and speed to market clothing (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010) by worldwide leading retailers, such as Zara and Hennes & Mauritz. This type of fast fashion is going to be the main focus in this thesis. On the other hand, fast fashion can also imply small Chinese companies which manufacture fakes on purpose, as an example, copies of particular items or brands. The typical fast fashion consumers are young females who have a high demand for fresh fashion garments and are not familiar with the social impact these clothes cause (McNeill & Moore 2015). In addition, according to Crane and Bovone (2006) typical fast fashion consumers don’t concern the quality of the garment nor have strong brand loyalty.
Fast fashion is a strategy for retailers to keep up and respond quickly to all the time changing trends (Choi et al. 2010) by using real-time information to understand the consumers’ needs and wants. In fast fashion, retailers keep collections small which increases consumer visits in stores which by its part, on the other hand, shortens cloths’ life cycles, decrease mark downs, and increase profit margins. To stay compatible retailers are forced to be flexible in their designs and deliveries, however, also with quality, which can generally be considered poorer. (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010.) The fast fashion industry is led by European retailers, such as Zara, Mango, Hennes & Mauritz, among others (Choi et al. 2010). Fast fashion is often copied by the fast fashion retailers, or at least greatly influenced by prêt à porter, ready-to-wear clothing. (Reinach 2005.) According to Reinach (2005) fast fashion spots and copies the most fortunate trends from ready-to-wear fashion shows and produces them in fast speed to get to the markets immediately. Choi et al. (2010) further explains that for example Zara, is able to function in Europe within 15 days lead time or even less. Compared to the fashion history and only few decades ago the change is major – in the 1980s ready-to-wear clothing was forecasted long before they actually appeared on markets.

Fast fashion is not a new phenomenon, even though, it has only recently become apparent. During the past 20 years, fashion branch has taken a major leap which has partly been caused by the changing dynamics and expanding boundaries of the fashion industry. Fashion industry itself has been shaken by multiple factors, such as decreasing mass production, the growing number of fashion seasons and new kind of structure of supply chains. (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010.)

Fast fashion studies can be divided into consumer-driven and supplier-driven approaches. In the supplier-driven literature the concentration has mainly been in the supply chain management, competitiveness, and considered fast fashion as a new business model. The supplier-driven approach does not consider consumer perspective nor the consumption habits, even though, it proposes that the business model of fast fashion has emerged as a response to consumers’ changed needs. (Gabrielli et al. 2012.) In this thesis, however, the concentration is on consumer-driven view as the purpose is to find out consumers’ attitudes and experiences in fashion. Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) propose that consumption patterns have evolved and consumers have become to a large extent more demanding. In the last years, fast fashion studies have
been focusing on the consumer-driven approach, even if it is still considered underresearched (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). The consumer-driven approach suggests that the changes in consumers’ lifestyles and in their consuming habits have accelerated the evolvement of fashion industry (Gabrielli et al. 2012). The demands of today’s consumers can be partly explained by the evolving societies; the development of the technology enables information flows and trends to spread even faster, and allows more options for consumers. In addition, sociocultural factors have changed lifestyles and consumers are seeking uniqueness in their way of dressing. (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010).

Another important fashion phenomenon today is luxury fashion. Luxury fashion is a pioneer of mass fashion and it represents couture and ready-to-wear (Fionda & Moore 2008), nevertheless, in the course of time, luxury has evolved and it is no longer the same as it was in the beginning of the 20th century. Globalization and internationalization have forwarded the trend of luxury fashion by advancing standards of living and wealth which indicates that nowadays luxury is intended for ordinary consumers as well and not just for upper class or wealthy (Chen et al. 2016). In the research of Giovannini et al. (2014) luxury markets overall in the United States have increased by 32% in the past decade. The growth is explained by the new consumers in the market which are known as the generation Y. Generation Y consists of people born between 1977 and 1994. These consumers are special in the markets as they have started their luxury consuming with less age than the earlier generation, baby boomers. Moreover, even emerging markets are increasing their purchasing power overall and in luxury brands (Chen et al. 2016).

Solomon (2007) separate consumers in three groups according to their stand towards luxury products: 1) luxury is functional, 2) luxury is a reward, and 3) luxury is indulgence. The first group considers luxury as an investment to something that will last long and has a good quality, and retains its value. They make decisions based on logic. The second group thinks luxury as a motivation and overall seeks success. The last group considers owning luxury as self-indulgent and seeks others’ notice of their possessions. This group makes decisions based on emotions and tend to make impulse purchases.
If age groups, for example the two generations already mentioned, are compared in the luxury market, there can be found differences in the consumer behavior. For baby boomers, luxury is pictured as nobility and expensive, however, generation Y considers luxury as a right. When these two generations are further compared, it is suggested that generation Y feels more comfortable to spend money on luxury rather than baby boomers. Generation Y scores high in materialism and is status and brand conscious, nevertheless, not necessary brand loyal. In addition, this age group is ready to invest in quality which they consider that luxury represents. (Giovannini et al. 2014.)

Overall luxury is a significant part of consumption and it can be divided into several categories, such as fashion and accessories, cosmetics and fragrances, alcohol, or jewelry, among other material. The product lines in luxury fashion reaches several assortments, such as from underwear to evening gowns and business suiting. The market of the type of the goods is significant due to the market value, however also, due to continuing growth rate. According to several studies luxury brands are the most respected ones among consumer brands. In order to raise public awareness and brand status, luxury brands have a type of strategy where they evolve their global reputation and presence. To increase these, luxury brands exploit events, PR, and celebrities as brand ambassadors. Brands’ own fashion stores and fashion shows in four major fashion capitals, London, Milan, Paris and New York, are important parts of luxury brands’ fashion statuses as well. (Fionda & Moore 2008.)

Luxury usually stands for a brand and it is recognized bringing psychological value. Even if there is no mutual decision related to the definition of luxury brand, it is often associated with attributes such as quality and image, originality, and premium price. High price is not a requirement for luxury, however, a common characteristic to separate luxury from other products in the category. In addition, it is general that luxury brands carry some key products which are signatures of the brands representing their creators. Another important notion is that several luxury brands go far back in history enhancing originality and the heritage of the brand. (Fionda & Moore 2008.) Brands are considered as having their own personalities, and consumers search the type of brands they can relate to; such brands which share their values, personalities and lifestyles (Giovannini 2014).
Luxury can be seen as a significant part of business, nevertheless, it has been neglected in academic literature although branding overall has increased its coverage (Fionda & Moore 2008). Even so, luxury has been as a discussion topic quite a while. According to Chen et al. (2016) Veblen (1899) has researched luxury before the 20th century by being one of the firsts to identify the topic. Veblen posited that luxury products were used by upper class who were able to show social status and wealth. Today luxury can still be interpreted as a sign of social status.

2.4.1 Sustainable fashion

Not just fashion consumption, but consumption overall has increased rapidly over decades. Without any doubt, fast fashion is not healthy for the environment due to its fast phase and poor quality. Nor can fast fashion respect human rights of the factory workers as the wages are minimum and working conditions are poor. As a resistance to fast fashion, slow and sustainable fashion has risen to promote ethicality, fashion production reduction and quality clothing (Henninger et al. 2016). Overall, sustainable fashion intervenes such issues as animal rights, environment and workers’ conditions. Sustainable fashion is not a newcomer as it has emerged decades ago. As an example, in the 1980s there were first anti-fur campaigns which were followed sweatshop resistances in the 1990s. (Lundblad & Davies 2016.)

As an objection to fast fashion, sustainable fashion has increased its appearance in the fashion markets, which demand shares several opinions. According to several researches, ethical consumption is important for consumers, and related to buying behavior, consumers have been showing increasing concern towards ethical issues in fashion (Chen et al. 2016, Lundblad & Davies 2016). Moreover, Lundblad & Davies (2016) claim that consumers’ willingness for more ethical and sustainable clothing has forced retailers and designers to act towards more responsible future. As an opposition, McNeill and Moore (2015) explain that in fashion particular consumers seek to build their individual identity and are keener on such attributes as price, trends, value and brand image than ethical issues. Despite the differing discussion, fast fashion retailers have reacted for the demand of sustainable fashion by launching sustainable fashion lines, increasing the use of organic materials, recycling materials and giving a chance for consumers to bring their used clothing in stores. However, fast fashion companies’
sustainable fashion has been questioned and accused of greenwashing, implying that companies report positively of being ethical but in reality, they act in a poor way towards these promises. The claim is supported by simple factors which are typical to fast fashion, such as price competition and demanding supply chain which makes it difficult for companies to act sustainable, sell fast fashion and at the same time be competitive. In addition, consumers can’t argue whether the company is sustainable because they are not able to verify if the company’s claims are true or false. (Henninger et al. 2016.)

Consumers themselves can also act responsible when it comes to disposing their cloths. Cloth disposal is a current topic for each consumer at some point of a cloth’s lifecycle. Depending on how important an item has become, disposing it might feel difficult. There are two reasons why consumers get rid of items; they either are not functional anymore, i.e. broken, or they don’t fulfil the purpose for the owner anymore. In clothing, this indicates that the clothes to be disposed are either unwearable because they are broken or the user might feel that they are out of style, or a new cloth is wanted to replace the old one. (Solomon & Rabolt 2009: 483-484.) Disposing cloths, or any material what so ever, is not environmentally healthy as there is too much waste for the world to handle. However, getting rid of clothing can also happen in a sustainable way. When a consumer is thinking of throwing away something still functional, he/she can either put is in a trash, or to be more sustainable, it can be also recycled to have new owner, by either giving it away, selling it, or trading it. By this, consumers can reuse these materials and spare environment even little. (Solomon & Rabolt 2009: 485-486.)

2.5 The development of technology and its effect on fashion

People’s consumption habits and overall fashion consuming are to a large extent shaped by the occurrences and changes in societies, such as economical phenomena or technological developments. Technological developments, such as a major technical change has a great influence worldwide, nevertheless, not just as an engineering phenomenon or as a single invention. The worldwide change occurs after a complex social process with several interactions and broad spread, including technical, economic, institutional and social factors. (Perez 2007.) Technical changes come
across to several actors in the field, such as production, suppliers, and consumers. For example, related to garment business; as synthetic fibers were invented, every societal actor had to adopt the new situation. (Perez 2004.)

The birth of new innovations does not occur randomly, but more likely technologies connect and take place near other innovations. Innovation is a new type of commercial product or new combination from previous invention. Innovations are generally collective processes, and if they are adequate radical enough, they might shape the whole industry. New type of technology may develop the business space and foster economic growth, however, in addition, it is capable to change even the institutional context and culture, and finally, substitute old ideas. (Perez 2007, Perez 2010.)

A major innovation and further development of information and telecommunication started in the 1970s (Perez 2007) created a significant base for radical innovation of the Internet. A radical innovation introduces a whole new process or product. This type of innovation is extremely important part of growing and making a structural change in the economy. (Perez 2004.) In the long run the type of innovation has become so important that people in today’s modern society don’t know how to live without it. In addition, digitalization and fast communication has given a great chance e.g. for popular culture to spread all over the world, and therefore unified markets. As popular culture evolves, there are totally new kinds of mixtures born which are influenced by styles and ideas all over the world unifying tastes internationally, for example in fashion and music, especially among young consumers. (Solomon et al. 2002: 552.)

Just before entering the 21st century, first social network sites, i.e. social media sites, started to appear, and quickly after the turn of the century spread rapidly. Social network sites are web-based services where people make their own profiles and connect with other users. (Boyd & Ellison 2007.) There are several different kinds of social medias, which all have similarities and differences in their actions. What is curious in social media, though, is that users create their own content. Today social media is used all over the world and it is an important channel for marketers and already everyday life for consumers. Considering this, the best part from fashion’s point of view is that the content is by increasing amounts shared by pictures indicating that new trends are seen around the world in realtime.
When considering fashion and consumers’ purchasing behavior, the influence of the media is undisputed. Crane and Bovone (2006) indicate that media and its meaning may create symbolic value to clothing and it is as powerful as the dress itself. Media and companies themselves through advertisements, blogs, magazines etc. shift ideas and meanings to consumers. Fashion is extremely interesting topic in media overall, but also in social media, where the discussion is mostly created by the consumers themselves. Most consumers receive fashion knowledge firstly from mass media and secondly from their social network members (Sun & Guo 2014).

As the popularity of social media has risen, also word-of-mouth in digital space has emerged. Word-of-mouth, WOM, means people spreading their positive or negative experiences of a company or a product. WOM is recognized to be the most reliable communication channel which has an effect of consumers’ purchasing decisions. (Wolny & Mueller 2013.) WOM has existed for ages but electronic word-of-mouth, eWOM, has only appeared along the technological developments. Wolny and Mueller (2013) explain that eWOM brings several new elements to WOM, such as the speed the information spreads, the volume the information reaches and the limitless geographical space. The forms of eWOM can appear in several ways such as likes on Facebook, or retweets on Twitter. Otherwise, eWOM can be comments or product reviews on social media or social networks.

Fashion is considered to contain high involvement products, which indicates that it either carries high social or other type of risks, is closely related to personal identity, or contains expensive or infrequently purchased items. This type of high involvement product tends to raise substantially online conversations. (Wolny & Mueller 2013.) Fashion can be taken extremely personally and as part of one’s own identity. Wolny and Mueller (2013) explain that fashion stays as an interesting topic to social audience due to its nature of being surprising, new and all the time changing. In social media, users feel comfortable to share their trend ideas with others and wait feedback from their peers. This they can do with consumers all over the world in real time with same kind of ideal-real dissonance as the speed of the media development has faded out the national boundaries (Sun & Guo 2014).
The fashion world is part of social creation and how people see themselves or what is considered as a beauty image, and this, on the other hand, is encouraged by the mass media effecting consumers. In this way, fashion can create great amount of pressure when trying to pursue the standards. In addition, fashion exposures to social comparison; comparing oneself with others. According to theory of Festinger (1954) people are in need for self-evaluation and compare themselves with people who are similar to them. This, on the other hand, may have either positive or negative effect on person’s own self-esteem, creating such thoughts that the person feels to be not good enough, or on the contrary, better than others. If genders are compared, women take more into account what other people think of them than men. (Sun & Guo 2014.)

2.6 Chapter summary

In this first chapter of the theoretical part, consuming and fashion in general were examined. What we learned was how the development of both topics has occurred, and on the other hand, what type of base it creates for the present state. Both of these concepts are multi-dimensional and there are several components in each to consider.

By examining the history, it turns out that fashion is a sort of an instrument of the time and it represent people’s ideology of the specific era. On the other hand, fashion history is to a large extent centered in certain fashion capitals, Milan, Paris, London and New York, nevertheless, there is only a little specific information about other parts of the world, such as Finland. Due to colorful and meaningful fashion history these capitals own, their devotion to fashion can still be seen today, however, it is self-evident that this type of interest is not the same in other countries because the society, culture and individuals are different. From the history of fashion, it can also be noted that fashion has slowly been accepted as a part of societies, and what is notable, is that during time, the turnover of fashion cycles has become more prompt. The fashion history gives perspective of the starting point of fashion, however, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the current state of fashion from the consumer perspective.

The fashion types which are examined in this thesis are fast fashion, luxury and sustainable fashion. Almost as opposite types of fashions, fast fashion and luxury are familiar to many consumers. For several consumers the benefit of fast fashion is
definitely its cheap price and fast change of assortments, whereas luxury can be seen for example either as a guarantee of a good quality or as a reward. In fashion, the type of class division has faded, or at least it is not the same as used to be e.g. before in the 20th century and earlier, indicating that same consumers can possess both types of fashions; cheap fast fashion and expensive luxury. As a general opinion and by comparing the academic references, it seems that fast fashion is considered more in a negative light than luxury. It is self-evident that fast fashion’s poor quality and cheap prices can’t be good for the environment nor the garment factory workers because the factories and retailers must receive their profits somewhere. Sustainable fashion is in a way a statement against fast fashion and these environmental and ethical issues, and it has been a part of consumers’ interests for a while now.

The last topic discussed in this theory section was about the technological developments and its effect on fashion industry and consuming. The accelerating pace of fashion can be explained through these technological evolutions, and especially later on appeared digitalization. From consumers’ perspective, the information of new fashions is received fast and the fashion following can be done in real time through professional and social media. In addition, as popular culture has risen, the overall assumption of fashion and trends has become more unified than ever. Of course, there are still national and individual differences how consumers view the topic, however, the markets, especially in the western countries, can be considered rather equal.

In the next chapter fashion consumption will be examined from more individual point of view in order to get a totally consumer centered view to the topic; what are the factors which influence the behavior of a consumer and what type of fashion consumers there actually are.
3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN FASHION

Consumer behavior is still quite fresh field of study even if there has been consumers for a long time (Solomon et al. 2002, 23). Consuming is more than just an actual buying situation – it is a process of a larger scale which is influenced by multiple factors and includes several acts; selection of a product or a service, purchase and use, maintenance or repair, and finally disposal. In addition, consumption can be direct or indirect. (Campbell 1995, Solomon et al. 2002: 6, 119.) Michael Solomon et al. (2002: 5) defines consumer behavior as the following: “... it is a study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.” On the other hand, Schiffman and Kanuk (2007: 3) determine consumer behavior in a much equivalent way: “... the behavior that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs.”

Consumption habits are also shaped by culture which has a major influence on people as it defines the attitudes they have towards products and services, and how these should be prioritized. Solomon et al. (2002: 442) define culture as “… the collective memory of a society”. Culture covers both abstract ideas and psychical objectives and evolves continuously; old ideas are developing along new ones, and there are new subcultures born within the main one. Cultures don’t necessarily go hand in hand with national borders and there might be multiple different cultures inside a country. On the other hand, the same culture can reach several countries having either a large or a small group of people involved. (Solomon et al. 2002: 12-13, 443.)

Cultural history researches achievements, such as religion, art and science, which are exceptional for a specific society. Material culture is closely connected to cultural history as it reveals the object-based angle of cultural study. Prown (1982) defines material culture as “… the study through artifacts of the beliefs [...] of a particular community or society at a given time.” In the context of material culture, material refers to objects which are made or modified by people. Through these items material culture illustrates the beliefs of the society of the time. Beliefs indicate people’s values, their attitudes and assumption, or ideas. To be more specific, values are people
preferring some situation over another one and it is an important factor in people’s consumptions habits. Purchasing specific products or services indicates that consumers want to maintain the value-related goal which they possess. (Solomon 2006: 136.)

The factors impacting on the process of consuming are examined in this chapter such as motivation, values and materialism. These factors are chosen to the thesis because they are crucial factors influencing on fashion as well. Each of the factors are explored especially from the point of view of fashion and clothing. In addition to these factors, also different fashion groups are presented. This chapter ends to a short summary of the topics discussed.

3.1 Motivation

There is no simple answer to the question why are we consuming as it is dependent on so many other factors, such as the consumers themselves, their needs and motivation, the situation and the context, and emotional processes involved. Psychological perspective suggests that at first there is a strong need or a want, which stands for the combination of personal and cultural factors. These are followed by motivation, a process resulting people’s actions, and finally the end goal. (Solomon et al. 2002: 6, 93, 119.)

Motivation is a crucial factor in consumers’ behavior. It is a long-studied subject to determine the factors which influence on behavior of consumers in their decision-making process (Diaconu 2015). Motivation appears when a consumer has a need or a want which he/she is going to fulfil. Motivation can also explain the ambition a consumer has towards accomplishing the objective. Explaining motivation is done through theories, such as drive theory or expectancy theory. In drive theory, motivation is considered as driver for satisfying the arousal of displeasing conditions brought by our biological needs, such as hunger. The objective in drive theory is to get dispose bad feeling and reach a balance, homeostasis. Expectancy theory, on the other hand, concentrates on cognitive factors by expecting to accomplish desired result. As an example, in expectancy theory a consumer might prefer some product over another
one because his/her expectation is that it leads to a better result. (Solomon & Rabolt 2009: 120-121.)

Separating needs and wants is extremely difficult nowadays. What does a need stand for today? Solomon et al. (2002: 95-96) claim that there are two kinds of basic needs; those which are inborn, biogenic, such as food and water, and those which are associated with people belonging to certain culture, psychogenic, e.g. power and status. These types of needs change depending on the culture the person is included. From the biological point of view, basic needs are food, shelter and safety as they are enough to keep a human alive (Norris & Williams 2016). However, as the societies have evolved and technologized, it might be hard to determine if the needs are as same as they were for example 200 years ago, 60 years ago, or even 10 years ago. If a need is seen as a necessity which people feel they cannot live without, then the rules have changed. Compared to the previous decades and centuries, also the environment and society have grown more diverse, which can imply that even if the needs have become more complicated, it doesn’t mean the motivation towards decision making would be any distinct (Griskevicius & Kenrick 2013).

Another point which affects determining the line between a need and a want is the aspect of people viewing their necessities differently. One might consider that only the basic elements of survival, such as food, is something they couldn’t live without, but on the other hand, other one sees a smart phone as an essential necessity. Considering a same object, let’s say a smartphone, can be thought as a necessity or a luxury depending on the consumer and the society he/she is living in. The way consumers prioritize their resources tells a lot whether they see an item as a need or a want (Griskevicius & Kenrick 2013). In fashion shopping, a need or a want are considered as the basic motivations to shop new clothing. Wanting to shop indicates that the shopping process overall is enjoyable; searching and fitting clothes gives pleasure. On the other hand, if shopping is done purely for an actual need and there is not any type of hedonic experience, these consumers might come across a conflict. (Tatzel 1982.)

Even if motivation drives consumers into reaching a goal, it doesn’t necessarily mean that the goal is positive. The goal can as likely be an avoidance of a negative result, which motivates a consumer to behave in a way he/she does. (Solomon & Rabolt 2009:
As an example, a consumer appreciates sustainability, however, still buys fast fashion for several reasons, such as cheap price, or pressures from outside, even if he/she knows that it is not sustainable. In cases like this, a consumer can have a motivational conflict, which indicates that motives in a specific situation are conflicted with each other. In Figure 1 (below) there are three types of motivational conflicts presented. The first one, and most desired one is approach-approach where a consumer identifies two wanted options. In the second option, approach-avoidance conflict, takes place when there are both positive and negative feeling related to the behavior, such as feeling guilt for buying something even if it is needed or wanted. In the last conflict, avoidance-avoidance, a consumer has two unwanted options. (Solomon & Rabolt 2009: 123.)

![Figure 1. Three Types of Motivational Conflicts (Solomon & Rabolt 2009: 122).](image)

From the perspective of the types of fashion which were presented in the previous chapter; fast fashion, luxury and sustainable fashion, they each possess certain characteristics which might indicate some kind of avoidance conflicts in consumers. First of all, even if fast fashion is trendy and cheap, poor quality and ethical issues seem types of negative things consumers might ponder when they make purchases. In luxury, on the other hand, status and good quality are most likely the qualities which consumers pursue, however, it comes with a high price. Finally, sustainable fashion can be seen as responsive choice, nevertheless, the price might get high and compared
to fast fashion the likeliness of sustainable fashion being as trendy, is doubtful. Consuming is all about making choices and when consumer make these choices, in addition to driving motivation, they ponder their values; which are values they want to represent with their clothing? These are examined next.

3.2 Values

Values are born in society and culture. They represent wide cultural principles and guide the behavior of individuals. There are different values, such as power, security, achievement, self-direction, and tradition, and the adaptation of them is affected, for example, by the distinctive culture. (Workman & Lee 2011.) Generally, values are considered as relatively steady and generated through socialization. Nevertheless, in academia the studies of values are minor which indicates that there cannot be found consensus of the definitions or interpretations. In sociology, values are discussed in general as cultural ideas, rather than in the individual level states of being and personal values. (Crane & Bovone 2006.) Values have been researched over time, however, their study can be considered to some extent being neglected. Richins and Dawson (1992) present that in consumer behavior research there has only been less than percent of the studies concerning values and beliefs between the years 1950 and 1981. Also after, between 1984 and 1991 concentration on values has been little.

Fashion may be considered as a wide phenomenon, as a part of material culture, of individuals or groups expressing their values through their clothing. From this perspective fashion is combined with the sociology of consumption. Due to its diversity as a phenomenon, fashion can be placed into various social organization levels and there are several plausible perspectives and theoretical approaches to study fashion as a part of material culture within the field. From one perspective, in the study of cultural sociology and meaning-making processes, clothing as a part of material culture can signify a type of visual text, expressing social identities and values of a specific group and the change over time. On the other hand, in the study of national differences and transnational cultures, it is suggested that the symbolic values of clothing are much dependent of the cultural and political history the nation has and fashion system itself. (Crane & Bovone 2006.)
Values which are represented by fashion types of the present time, might be different than decades ago as the overall lifestyle has changed. Which values can be considered from today’s fashion types? In sustainable fashion there is definitely ethicality, responsiveness, environmental wellbeing, etc. which stems from the bad quality and poor working conditions of the factory workers in fast fashion business. Fast fashion also carries values which are respected by consumers, such as cheap price and trendy clothing. Luxury, on the other hand, offers quality, which can be interpreted as valuing the environment, and status, which connects with material (Richins & Dawson 1992).

To continue the journey of making a proper framework for this study, values and motivation are next going to be discussed from a certain point of view; materialism. Materialism can be connected strongly on fashion interest, and to compliment this, there will be presented fashion groups, which act in an important role in the empirical research.

3.3 Materialism and fashion groups

Belk (1984) describes materialism as reflecting “... the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possession”. Richins and Dawson (1992), on the other hand, define materialism in a much equivalent way: “... set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one’s life”. Consuming has evolved a lot over the past century, and consumption itself has become accepted instrument in order to accomplish a good life, success and happiness (Workman & Lee 2011).

Materialism indicates a mind-set of spending and getting items. On the other hand, a materialist is collecting worldly possessions and considering it as a social goal and a way of life. Materialists set more value on their belongings than other actions in their life. (Richins & Dawson 1992.) Already in the 1980s goods were symbols of lifestyles and consumption was thought to be as a signal of one’s self-identity (Warde 2015). Solomon (2007: 473) argues that people are comparing themselves, their professional accomplishments, and wealth and welfare to others, which leads it to great motivation for purchasing and products becoming status symbols. Already in the 19th century, Veblen developed conspicuous consumption model when he noticed people have psychological need for showing off which acts as a motive to their consumption
behavior (Ma et al. 2012). The model indicates that people want to flaunt their status and wealth with possessions, and it has been adopted to the fashion field (Ma et al. 2012; Miller et al. 1993).

Materialistic people put their possessions at the center of their lives and consider material bringing happiness and social status. In addition, they measure own and others’ success in possessions. (Richins & Dawson 1992.) According to Sartre (1943), possessions are extremely important part of who consumers are. Having is vital part of being and the sense of being can be examined and expressed through possessions. Contrariwise, the loss of one’s possessions may feel even a loss of one’s self. For some consumers material can be an ego extension and interfering with one’s own items can feel like violating the person themselves. (Belk 1988.)

In materialism people are attached to material objects and these objects have a great influence on their value systems (Solomon 2006: 143). Belk (1988) introduces extended self in which he suggests that consumers become attached to their possessions and either intentionally or unintentionally consider external possessions as parts of themselves. In other words, consumers are what they have. Extended self implies to me as the self and to mine, containing such things as external objects and possession, persons, places and body parts. The more consumers have power on their possessions the more they tend to attach to the objects.

From the value perspective materialism is examined through the importance of a person acquiring and having possessions, and the way of the implementation to reach the wanted end state. Seeing materialism as a value can indicate such matters as possessions being a source of happiness, considering things as religions, and organizing life through material and creating it as a lifestyle. (Richins & Dawson 1992.) Based on this, materialistic people are considered to act differently than those who don’t value possessions highly, and associated with certain type of personal traits, such as possessiveness, nongenerosity and envy (Belk 1984, Richins & Dawson 1992).

The concern of materialism is contradictory. Richins and Dawson (1992) present two types of materialism; instrumental materialism and terminal materialism. Instrumental materialism is seen innocent as the act itself is supporting person’s own values and life
goals. Terminal materialism, on the other hand, means that people are trying to achieve admiration and jealousy through their possessions and is considered harmful for people. Nevertheless, the problem is that these types of materialisms can be hard to separate from each other.

Materialistic people are argued to be more concerned of their appearance and status (Solomon 2006, 146). Workman and Lee (2011) introduces different types of fashion consumer groups: fashion change agents (e.g. fashion innovators, fashion opinion leaders, and innovative communicators), and fashion followers. In their research, they compare the fashion groups and their relationship towards materialism. Fashion innovators are the firsts to wear new fashion, fashion opinion leaders persuade others to wear new fashions, and innovative communicators are taking part for both acts. These types of fashion consumer, fashion change agents, are concerned with their status and absorb values of self-enchantment, e.g. power and creativity, and values related to change, such as excitement. Fashion followers, on the other hand, wear fashion clothing only when it is totally accepted by others. Their desire is to keep the status quo by seeking security and traditions and to use less money on clothing rather than fashion change agents. (Workman & Lee 2011.)

An addition to these two fashion groups, consumers with no interest towards fashion, has to be considered as well. As stated in the previous chapter, there are consumers who mind what they wear, however, don’t have interest in fashion. (Powell & Gilbert 2009: 1–2). On the other hand, there are also consumers who have absolutely no interest neither in clothing and who don’t mind what they wear.

According to Workman and Lee (2011) materialism had a positive influence on clothing. In their study, materialistic people had high interest in clothing and considered purchases of clothing important. In addition, these respondents appreciated the symbolic value of clothing. Based on the description by Workman and Lee (2011) and by Solomon (2006, 146), it can be assumed that fashion change agents tend to be more materialistic than fashion followers.

Consuming can be either problem solving, utilitarian, or entertainment, hedonic. Utilitarian is considered as more practical and functional solution for satisfying the
need, and consumers possessing utilitarian motivation want to manage the purchase in an effective way without annoyance. In contrast to utilitarian consumers, hedonistic consumers seek entertainment, emotions and experience, and they see consuming, such as shopping, as a fun activity and bringing pleasure. (Childers et al. 2001, Zhou et al. 2007.) According to Workman and Lee (2011) fashion change agents relate more to hedonistic motivation in fashion buying than fashion followers. The problem recognition style for fashion change agents is want-based, and on the contrast, fashion followers have need-based problem recognition style towards fashion clothing.

3.4 Chapter summary

As it turns out, consumer behavior is a multi-dimensional topic which is influenced by several factors. This thesis considers consumer behavior and fashion behavior especially from the viewpoints of motivation, values and materialism, which all from their part bring contribution to the theoretical framework.

Through motivation, needs and wants, also the attitude towards fashion can be pondered. First of all, is a consumer purchasing fashion or clothing because there is an actual need, or does he/she recognize the purchase as a want? The stand of an actual need for consumers changes quite a lot today in Western world, where big portion of the people possess necessities for their survival and possibility to live everyday lives. Second, whether or not a consumer feels motivational conflict when buying fashion, or even a certain type of fashion, such as fast fashion, tells a lot about his/her mind, even values. As values are born within cultures and societies, they can overall explain the differences among nations’ interest towards fashion. On the other hand, even within cultures there are different values especially in today’s global world, where cultures can be at least to some extent consider to be mixed or homogenized. This indicates that despite the culture, people with different values follow different fashions, which can be considered relatively easy nowadays.

Materialism is considered to influence on the level of interest in clothing and fashion. This chapter suggests that materialistic people value their possessions, mind what kind of status they carry and how they appear. In the theoretical references there were presented two fashion groups; fashion change agents, which in this thesis are called as
fashion forerunners, and fashion followers. As my own contribution, I added a third group, consumers with no interest towards fashion, which was inspired by Powell and Gilbert (2009: 1-2).

Through the topics presented in the first two theoretical chapters, the framework for the first research question is built and will be presented later in the wrap-up of the theoretical framework. In the next chapter, the experience of consumers’ fashion behavior is examined from the digitalization and channel choice perspective, which focuses especially to the second research question.
4 THE ROLES BETWEEN ONLINE STORE AND BRICK-AND-MORTAR STORE

Even though, traditional shopping may be considered as a social activity and bringing enjoyment for consumers (Motwani 2016), physical shopping in brick-and-mortar stores cannot be considered a self-evident choice anymore. For today’s consumers, shopping is no longer purely visiting physically stores as the new technology and digitalization have changed consumers’ behavior (Chiang & Dholakia 2003, Danaher et al. 2003). Online shopping means shopping behavior of customers who buy goods or services from web stores intended for online purchasing (Li & Huang 2009). Online shopping has revolutionized retailing; it has created a whole new market space and changed the shopping habits of consumers. (Chiang & Dholakia 2003.) Nevertheless, consumer research suggests that people react in a different way to a same kind of stimuli (Schramm-Klein et al. 2007), in this case meaning that it is obvious that people don’t react alike for shopping transferring to online environment. Overall change might be difficult for people. Even if the change is understood, however, the previous experiences are considered good, the change might occur slowly (Perez 2004).

Internet consumer behavior has been researched and according to previous studies the focus has been on the influence of shopping motives, customers’ needs and wants; do the consumers prefer to shop online and what are the most essential driving forces for this type shopping behavior. In addition, comparing customer bases in e-commerce and traditional brick-and-mortar stores several researches suggest that there are differences, such as customers’ demographic or psychological characteristics. (Schramm-Klein et al. 2007.)

Even if, consumers’ preferences of online shopping are not equal, e-commerce has been steadily increasing since the millennium and it has changed consumer behavior overall. Ever since the rise of World Wide Web in the 1990s, the Internet has increased its importance (Li & Huang 2009). Developments of the Internet and World Wide Web have not just changed people’s everyday lives, however, reshaped commerce by bringing new marketplace for everyone to reach. E-commerce consists of altogether three different modes: B2B (business-to-business), B2C (business-to-consumer) and C2C (consumer-to-consumer), nevertheless, the e-business markets are mainly led by
the modes focusing to the customer-centered view (Hsieh & Tsao 2014). The Statistic Portal estimates that B2C (business-to-consumer) worldwide e-commerce sales will reach USD 2,356 billion in 2018. In 2012 the sales were USD 1,058 billion. (The Statista Inc 2017.) On the other hand, it is estimated that there will be 1,79 billion digital buyers worldwide in 2018 (The Statista Inc 2017).

Figure 2. B2C e-commerce sales worldwide from 2012 to 2018 (in billion U.S. dollars) (The Statista Inc 2017).

The thesis concentrates to a large extent on today’s consumers’ fashion behavior; how they experience their fashion consuming, or how they observe and buy clothing. The overall change is evident; online shopping is here to stay, however, it depends on the consumer how it is accepted on the personal level. To compliment this topic of the thesis, in this chapter e-commerce and brick-and-mortar will be examined and compared from the consumer perspective; what are the benefits of each and which benefits the channels carry for modern consumer. In addition, this chapter considers multichannel behavior, meaning both traditional brick-and-mortar shopping and online shopping; to what extent consumers are using multichannel and how they are benefiting from it. Even if, the master’s thesis is focusing on consumer perspective, these topics are considered slightly from the retailer’s perspective as well.
4.1 The benefits of brick-and-mortar and online stores

Overall, when consumers choose retail channels, online environment or brick-and-mortar, they evaluate the quality of the channels by using different criteria. Customers’ needs and wants are in a crucial role when they are selecting retail channels and it is generally assumed that these shopping motives differ. Shopping motives are an important factor when consumer behavior in the Internet environment is researched. (Schramm-Klein et al. 2007.)

Every individual considers from one’s own point of view, which factors he/she highlights when choosing a channel and which are the most important benefits suitable for his/her lifestyle, one’s characteristic, situation, etc. Nevertheless, generally assumed and according to several researches, the benefit of traditional shopping is being physically in the store which offers the possibility for face-to-face customer service and the ability to touch and the feel the products. Neither of these can be served in online environment. For e-commerce, consumers generally consider as benefits, for example, convenience, accessibility to information, possibility to price comparison and large selection (Childers et al. 2001, Zhou et al. 2007). While brick-and-mortar offers the physical presence, shopping in the digital world is an efficient way to seek, compare and purchase goods.

Brick-and-mortar stores may offer face-to-face customer service which is hard, if even impossible, to enable in the online environment. Of course, online environment serves various kinds of interaction and connection possibilities, nevertheless, the personal and real face-to-face connection cannot be fulfilled. Especially in the field of luxury fashion, customer service is crucial as the experience overall is such in a vital role of the product. Luxury fashion stores overall are built in a way that they represent the luxurious feeling and enhance the consumption experience. (Fionda & Moore 2008.) Face-to-face customer service stays still as a competitive advantage for brick-and-mortar stores and entices consumers who appreciate the type of assistance.

Brick-and-mortar stores offer access to touch and feel tangible products before purchasing them. It is a common remark that touch is an important influence in consumer behavior, even though, there is a little scientific proof of this. There can be
different reasons for the need of touching a product, such as feeling more comfortable to touch the item before making a purchase decision, or touching the item just for fun. In clothing, especially, consumers seek to touch the pieces to get familiar with its feel. (Solomon 2006: 57-58.)

The product type has a major influence on whether consumers order it online or rather buy it from brick-and-mortar stores (Chiang & Dholakia 2003). Products can be divided in two categories; search goods and experience goods. Search goods are the type of products which consumers know what they are like already before the purchase, and experience goods, on the other hand, need to be experienced directly. Based on this it can be assumed that service goods are more likely to be purchased from the Internet rather than experience goods because experience goods require personal exploration, such as touching and feeling. (Chiang & Dholakia 2003.) Clothing is a type of product which can be classified as an experience good. Even though, online shopping in the fashion business has increased rapidly, from many perspectives clothes can be considered difficult to buy based on the possible picture and information. Consumers are not able to try on the clothes, and can’t know the correct sizes nor feel the fabrics.

Several sources indicate that convenience is the most effective reason for consumers choosing online shopping (e.g. Childers et al. 2001, Chiang & Dholakia 2003, Zhou et al. 2007), such as when shopping online there are less irritants which consumers might come across in the traditional brick-and-mortar, e.g. finding a parking slot or the lines at the check-out (Ahuja et al. 2003), indicating that online shopping saves consumer’s time. Consumers in the online environment have the possibility to shop anytime and anywhere (Childers et al. 2001), whereas in traditional brick-and-mortar there are limitations in the shops’ opening hours according to which operate. Punj (2011) has made a research concerning consumer characteristics and consumption values in the United States. In his research, he argues that in today’s society an average consumer has less free time to spend compared to modern history. The statement supports the benefit of time saving appealed in online shopping. On the other hand, purely online-based retailers are not able to offer the purchased product straight away after buying, but more likely there is going to be a time lag between the order and receiving the goods. (Schramm-Klein et al. 2007.) This indicates that if a consumer does not need
the ordered product straight away, he/she can favor online stores, however, if the product is in a hurry, it depends on the consumer, whether or not, he/she is willing to take a risk that the product will arrive on time. All in all, the time of arriving is dependent more than just the retailer, as there are other actors between as well, such as transporting company.

For price-oriented consumers, online environment offers a great tool to compare product costs since the Internet offers possibilities search several alternatives with only few clicks as the Internet is more transparent than brick-and-mortar environment. While browsing through different websites is fast on the Internet, in traditional brick-and-mortar concept, on the other hand, consumer rarely visit physically several stores to compare prices. (Childers et al. 2001, Schramm-Klein et al. 2007.) What they might do, though, is to fit the product in brick-and-mortar and the find the cheapest store from online. Nevertheless, online shopping can also become more expensive in case there are high shipping fees (Ahuja et al. 2003).

Online shopping has transformed the retail business, as already noted, and retailers should be able to adopt the situation with their businesses. From retailers’ perspective online store brings lots of benefits to minimize costs and increase their assortments. Online retailers have the possibility to keep the shop open around the day and they may offer extremely wide selection and information about the products (Motwani 2016), which also benefits the consumers. Even among one website there can be offered a major variety of products as there is almost limitless amount of space to offer products (Agnihotri 2015). This can be done with less costs compared to brick-and-mortar stores because there are no rental fees of the property nor wages of the sales personnel. Technology overall, brings benefits for retailers with several tools to examine customers’ behavior. For retailers, it is crucial to understand, how beliefs and consumption values, such as shopping enjoyment and product comparison, effect on consumers’ purchasing behavior as with the knowledge they can create more value for their customers and thus reduce price sensitivity and optimize the margins. (Punj 2011.)

On the other hand, even though, e-tail is beneficial for retailers, there are also challenges. In the Internet, there are enormous amounts of retailers, which is why
online shopping serves extremely wide selection of goods to compare and brings markets together from all over the world, however, at the same time increases competition. Consumers are able to compare products and prices with less time and effort, which can make price competition extremely tight. In addition, due to large the amount of information and busy lifestyles, consumers demand more with less effort (Motwani 2016).

4.2 Channel choice

Under the previous subtitle, it was suggested that consumer’ channel choice is affected by their shopping motives, needs and wants. Nevertheless, Lett (2012) suggests that the channel choice is also influenced by channel attributes (such as convenience or risk), previous experience and spillover effects. Channel experience effect means the growth of utilizing the same channel again, whereas spillover effects indicate that when using some channel in one stage increases the use of the same channel in another stage as well. Spillover effects have some amount of impact on channel choice. Online buying behavior is to a large extent driven by consumers searching information from the Internet, however, Gensler et al. (2012) further explains that this type of behavior has a positive effect on purchasing from the same channel.

Channel attribute may differ in every buying stage, prepurchase, purchase and postpurchase stages, and is dependent on consumers’ goals in each stage. Previous researches suggest that channel attributes are in a central role when choosing and utilizing a channel. Some general channel attributes include e.g. convenience, price, quality and risk. In the first stage, the search stage, consumers are searching for information which requires, for example, the channel to have good perceived quality to fulfil consumers’ needs. The second stage, purchase stage, the aim for a consumer is to get the lowest price possible for the product, or other product related objective. In case the lowest price is the goal of the consumer, he/she chooses the channel which can offer the minimum price for the product. In addition, several studies suggest that consumers appreciate speed and ease in the buying process and these features have positive impact on consumers’ channel choices. (Gensler et al. 2012.)
Consumers also want perceived risks to be as low as possible, such as the fear of losing their money or making a wrong kind of purchase. This attribute is identified mostly in the purchase and postpurchase stages. (Gensler et al. 2012.) Even though, there are multiple advantages in online shopping compared to traditional brick-and-mortar shopping, according to previous researches, purchasing from non-store channels tend to carry higher perceived risk than from traditional shopping channel (Li & Huang 2009). This may have an impact on their attitude towards online shopping and to the online purchasing behavior. Risks in online shopping include e.g. financial, psychological, time and product risks (Hsieh & Tsao 2014). Considering product quality, consumers who purchase online are more likely going to return the product, rather than those who buy from physical store (Dholakia et al. 2005). In brick-and-mortar stores the risk is reduced with the ability to inspect the good and the quality, and to form a personal relationship with the sales personnel. Online shoppers, on the other hand, tend to be more quality-oriented, such as brand conscious, because quality is considered as a signal of trust. (Schramm-Klein et al. 2007.) Buying a known brand online, or buying from a known retailer, are effective ways to reduce perceived risk.

Experience effects play a significant part when considering consumers’ channel choices. Especially if the buying process is performed regularly, the experience effects become even more important as the channel choice might turn into a routine thus rarely change the pattern and try different channel. Customers’ previous history and experience have a major effect on their channel choices. In addition, channel experience effect might be considered as a channel loyalty as using a particular channel increases the likelihood to repeat the same usage in the future. (Gensler et al. 2012.) When purchasing from a multichannel retailer, customers feel loyalty whether they buy online or from a physical store (Dholakia et al. 2005).

Agnihotri (2015) introduces a study made in 2013 according to which over the past 12 years retail shopping in United States has increased with 20%, however, brick-and-mortar retail sales only by 4 percent. The trend indicates that some brick-and-mortar sales have been shifted to online. Nevertheless, even if online shopping and brick-and-mortar shopping possess both several benefits, today’s consumer is no longer using just one channel, but more likely he/she utilizes and mixes both channels and becomes
a cross shopper (Schramm-Klein et al. 2007). Cross shopping, or multichannel buying behavior, will be examined under the following section.

4.2.1 Multichannel behavior

As consumers become familiar with the Internet, their motivation towards online shopping increases, and it can be already noticed that the positive attitudes have grown. This suggests that brick-and-mortar retailers should adopt e-tailing into their strategy. Combination of brick-and-mortar and online retail channels is classified as multichannel. (Agnihotri 2015.) Multichannel retailing is considered as an effective strategy. In addition to a brick-and-mortar store, an online store brings more value by increasing the existing brand, servicing cross shoppers, and fostering customer loyalty by offering more shopping options to support e.g. customers’ willingness to convenience. Multichannel behavior is increasing all the time and retailers have adopted new advantages for consumers in their strategy. Consumers expect services such as returning purchases from online to brick-and-mortar, same customer loyalty channels despite the channel, ordering online and collecting from store, and all in all the shopping experience to be easy across the channels (Dholakia et al. 2005).

Multichannel behavior is a diverse issue which can take place and vary in several occasions, not just the buying situation. Stage-channel and product-channel are highly influencing the decisions made by consumers regarding the choice of the channel. The behavior may occur in a certain stage of the purchasing process where consumers are using the same type of channel, e.g. searching information online. In this case the behavior is called stage-channel associations. (Gensler et al. 2012.) Stage-channel behavior might be furthered as consumers get used to utilize a specific channel during a certain stage of the buying process, such as searching information online and then making the actual purchase in brick-and-mortar store.

On the other hand, the same ideology might apply to product characteristics as well. The product characteristics effect on whether consumers are willing to buy it online or prefer brick-and-mortar stores. Product-channel association occurs when the channel choice happens only with certain type of products and a consumer’s viewpoint which channel to use (Gensler et al. 2012). Such situations might be caused by the category
not being suitable for online selling, such as the product including unknown qualities, or some other attributes which make consumers to rather by it traditionally from a brick-and-mortar (Schramm-Klein et al. 2007). There are also product categories which have been shifted to a large extent to online, such as travelling services. According to Statistics Finland, 35 percent of the Finnish population has bought clothing or shoes online in 2015, which is divided to 28 percent of men and 41 percent of women. The category is in the top four with same percentage as accommodation services, travelling services and ticket to cultural occasions, such as theatre, concerts and movies. (Tilastokeskus 2017.)

4.3 Chapter summary

Overall, during the centuries and decades fashion behavior has been shaped by a lot of influencers of the time. Just like fashion changes, the habits of consuming changes as well; people’s new routines renovate their consuming, and the latest extreme revolution is the rise of information technology.

Before technological developments, brick-and-mortar shopping was considered as a social activity and entertainment in fashion shopping (Motwani 2016), which it still continues to be. Nevertheless, also in the online environment shopping can be made as a fun activity and entertaining (Schramm-Klein et al. 2007), and it is all the time further developing. Even so, both of these channels offer benefits and the channel choice depends on how a consumer views the channel overall. In addition, it is suggested that the choice is dependent whether or not the consumer has any previous experience, but also on the type of product and the stage of the buying process. What is notable though, is that the consumer doesn’t have to choose only one channel to use and especially nowadays, it is almost impossible to picture consumers to even do so. More likely, consumers use increasingly multichannel, mixing these channels, either according to the product type, such as type of the cloth which needs to be fitted, or the stage, such as using the Internet when comparing prices.

Consumers have various paths to experience fashion consuming and a major difference that technology has brought is the channel choice which is to a large extent dependent on consumers and their attitudes. In the three theory chapters, there has now been
provided frames which are needed to be able to for the framework for this thesis. Based on the knowledge provided in the theoretical chapters, the theoretical framework will be built and it is presented in the next chapter. In addition, the next chapter introduces the decision process model, which will be modified to compliment this research.
5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of several components which together give a suitable fundament for the empirical research by building a solid ground for today’s fashion consumption. The research questions divide the thesis into two bigger issues; what does fashion mean to consumers, and how do they experience digitality effecting their fashion behavior. In the first question the attitude towards fashion has been examined, and as an introduction and base for the topic, consumption and fashion history have been undergone. The past of these topics effect majorly on what garment business looks like nowadays and when compared to the present moment, it can be noted just how much both of these areas have separately and mutually changed. As it turns out, consumption is a process of selecting goods which is influenced by economic and social factors, consumer’s culture and own preferences (Zukin & Maguire 2004), thus it can be considered that consuming is a sum of external environment, and internal factors, such as values and motivation. The overall consumption changes as the attitudes in these areas evolve.

Fashion itself is an extremely important part of consuming; all in all, it is a major portion of people’s everyday consumption habits. This hasn’t always been the case, as fashion used to be a privilege of rich people and even a century ago fashion was bought only if one could afford it (Aspers & Godart 2013). Looking back at the history of fashion, it can be noted that the further and faster the development of societies have gone, the same has happened to fashion. If the 19th and the 20th centuries are considered, the speed of fashion development has been extremely slow and there can be identified only small movements. Today, on the other hand, the quickest fast fashion chains can bring new garments from a paper to stores in two weeks (Choi et al. 2010). This represents quite well today’s fashion; fast speed garments, which suffers from poor quality and can be purchased at cheap price.

Not only does today’s fashion consist of fast fashion, but there is also rising interest towards luxury, which is a pioneer of mass fashion (Fionda & Moore 2008). As a phenomenon luxury is an interesting topic; not long ago luxury was intended exclusively for rich, but now due to advanced standards of living, it can be bought by almost every consumer. Another current fashion phenomenon is attacking against fast
fashion’s poor quality by bringing sustainable and ethically manufactured clothing to markets. The demand for sustainable fashion can be still argued, however, what is certain; the interest towards it, is rising.

The loose theoretical framework will pictured as Darley’s et al. (2010) modified EKB model, which is considering decision process and takes into account online store perspective. This model gives a large contribution to this study as it is used as a base when creating a suitable theoretical framework. Darley’s et al. (2010) decision process will be presented next and the modified model after it.

5.1 Decision process

Whether online shopping or brick-and-mortar shopping is considered, in each, there arises a certain type of decision-making process; in which order and which factors influence on the purchase decision of the buyer and do they differ in each channel. Solomon (2007: 8) divides the buying process into three stages; prepurchase, purchase and postpurchase issues. In the first stage, prepurchase, a consumer recognizes a need or a want and seeks information about possible choices. This might include product or product attribute comparison, price comparison, etc. The second stage in which the actual purchase takes place contains issues such as the purchasing experience and what does the item or services purchased tell about the consumer. In the last stage, postpurchase, a consumer considers the purchased product or service; how does it function; and the overall satisfaction.

Darley et al. (2010) have done a literature review over 52 academic articles where they consider the decision process stages of online shoppers. They presents a modified version of the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) model, which is a widely adopted to several consumer behavior journals. The EKB model is a five-step decision-making process, which focuses on the core steps consumers take in purchasing a new product of a service. In the central of Darleys’ et al. (2010) modified model is a decision process, which consists also of five steps similar to inspirer’s model (Figure 4). The journey starts with the first step of problem recognition, and continues to search of the suitable product or service. The third step is alternative evaluation, and the last ones are the actual purchase, which is finally led to outcome. Darley et al. (2010) continues:
“The focus is on the decision process stages, the cognitive (i.e., beliefs), affective (i.e., attitudes), and conative (i.e., intentions) factors underlying alternative evaluation, and the external or environmental influences on the decision process stages.”

In the model there are also external factors, which influence the steps. These factors are separated into sections, such as individual characteristics (e.g. values), social influences (e.g. culture), and situational and economic factors. What is notable, however, is the factor of online environment, and how it influences an online shopper in the purchasing stage. The online environment consists of website quality, interface, experience and satisfaction. (Darley et al. 2010.) This indicates that the website itself has a huge impact on whether or not the consumer feels comfortable to purchase from it and if they can trust the online retailer. Consumers have certain standards what they expect and in online environment they can be particularly sensitive to certain issues, such as clarified information, certain payment methods, or easy navigation.

Figure 3. A modified model of online consumer behavior and decision making. (Darley et al. 2010).
5.1.1 Modified model of EKB

As theoretical framework in this thesis acts a modified, and to some extent simplified, model (Figure 5) of Darley’s et al. (2010) version of the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) model which was presented in the section 4.1 of this thesis. This model is a suitable option to cover both research questions, however, it is lacking the aspect of fashion, which is why it needs to be adjusted for the purpose of this study. The baseline in the modified model is the same. There are five steps, from which the first three; 1) problem recognition, 2) search, and 3) alternative evaluation, are aimed to answer the first research question dealing with fashion’s meaning to consumers. The last steps, 4) purchase, and 5) outcome, illustrate the practical fashion experience especially from the viewpoint of channel behavior.

![Modified model of EKB](image)

**Figure 4. Modified model of Darley’s et al. (2010) version of the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB)**

The first steps of the modified model developed for this thesis considers the meaning of fashion for consumers. This section indicates that the first three steps presented in Darley’s et al. decision process model; problem recognition, search and alternative
evaluation, are in this modified model considered as a continuing process, where there is fashion in the middle acting as engine for the process. Fashion can be considered as a social phenomenon or a process of social diffusion (Solomon et al. 2006: 589) which is accepted and implemented by the mass. As a term, it can indicate a change (Aspers & Godart 2013), signifying that it needs to be evolving forward. By its part, when fashion evolves and consumers actively follow it, new trends create new needs or wants as the old ones go out of style. Fashion following has been through a major change due to technological developments and new solutions have been developed. For fashion to be able to be the huge business, it needs to be talked, and do to its changing characteristics it is always an exciting topic.

When discussing about today’s fashion in the digitalized environment, the information flow is enormous and it is everywhere, which makes it more reasonable to picture the attitude towards fashion as a continuing process. As fashion is all the time developing and changing, its following is ongoing as well. New needs and wants are born, i.e. a problem is recognized, continually while browsing social media, and not even all of them are fulfilled or taken further. But at the same time fresh solutions are searched and alternatives are evaluated, e.g. by visiting a store even if there is no need for anything new, or finding just a perfect dress for a certain occasion from Instagram and forgetting it as soon as the feed is browsed further. The usage of digital solutions is everyday life; different web stores and social media is browsed to find proper alternatives, which can then be evaluated. Of course, also brick-and-mortar stores are still thought as an important channel especially if there is a type of fashion, which needs to be fitted. Each of these steps are influenced by the attitude a consumer has towards fashion and an individual’s characteristics. In this thesis, the characteristics considered are motivation, values and interest towards fashion.

People’s overall consumption habits are influenced by their values and motivation. Through fashion and clothing, individuals or groups are expressing their values and by purchasing these specific items people are retaining their value-related goal (Crane and Bovone 2006, Solomon 2006: 136) whereas based on a need or a want, motivation drives consumers to act in a way that they do (Solomon & Rabolt 2009: 120). When a consumer is solving a problem, he/she faces a motivational conflict, which is not always a positive one. A negative motivational conflict occurs when motives in a
specific situation are conflicted with each other such as there are negative and positive feelings in the behavior, e.g. quilt when buying something that is needed or wanted, or in the whole behavior the consumer has two unwanted options.

Fashion interest is an extremely important issue when considering consumers’ fashion behavior. For some people, clothing doesn’t necessary mean fashion, but rather, it is only garments, and in addition, even if consumer minds his/her garments, they might not make the choices according to fashion. Consumers who have extremely strong passion for fashion, are divided into two major groups in this thesis, fashion forerunners, who wear new fashions first and are concerned with their status which is brought by the fashion, and fashion followers who wear fashion clothing but only when it is generally accepted. This type of fashion interest can have an impact on consumer’s material level. Materialistic people are research to have more interest on fashion than those, who are considered not to be materialistic (Workman & Lee 2011).

In addition to the individual characteristics, the modified model considers the influence of media because the power it has on consumers is undeniable. Media spreads fashion every day like a virus in various kinds of forms and beauty icons such as celebrities act as ambassadors. As an evolvement to the past, nowadays new technologies allow also consumers to share fashion news and opinions faster than ever. Due to social media, fashion knowledge is always up to date even across the world. On the other hand, as media sprays fashion ideology and type of beauty image, which engenders along, it can be questioned, if consumers start to feel they should fit some type of form and start to feel pressures about their appearance.

The last two steps of the modified model examine how fashion is practically experienced by consumers when they purchase clothing. To be more specific, these two steps consider the actual channels which affect fashion consumption today in the purchase situation to achieve the final outcome. As presented earlier, channel attributes, previous experience and spillover effects have a great impact on the choice of the channel consumers prefer to use when they purchase items (Gensler et al. 2012). Consuming overall has never been developing the speed it is developing now and one of the major game changers is digitalization. Of course, there are several types of other phenomena, such as economic or society related developments, however, this thesis
considers the topic especially from the point of view of information technology evolvement.

In the recent decades technology has been in a huge transformation creating totally new ways to consume, such as possibility to shop clothing online. As consumer get more familiar with certain channels, they may turn into routines, meaning that the channel choice is to a large extent effected by previous experiences and consumer’s history. Not only the does the experience matter but moreover, online stores bring channel attributes, such as convenience, easy price comparison, which allure consumers to purchase items online. Nevertheless, even if online stores have been increasing significantly, brick-and-mortar stores still holds some key characters, such as physicality and personal service, which is hard to perform on the Internet. Of course, these two channels don’t disqualify each other, as there is a possibility for multichannel behavior; combining the two mentioned channels.

The theoretical framework introduced in this chapter will act as guidance, and to be able to perform the empirical part of this research, this framework will be followed. Based on this modified model there has been designed a process to gather data in order to answer the research questions. The research methods and the overall process of data gathering and analysing will be presented in the next chapter.
6 METHODOLOGY

In a research, there is a need or a want to acquire new knowledge. Kothari (2004: 1) presents research as an academic activity, which tries to determine new or already described problems. He further continues that these problems are tried to be solved by suggesting hypothesis or solutions with the gathered data, and after proper conclusions have been formulized, the hypothesis already presented can be further tested. Overall, research could be described as a destination to unknown or discovering something new. Methodology leads the research process by focusing on the question of how the research problem can be answered. It concentrates on the certain manner, i.e. methods, of how the research is implemented. Research methods, on the other hand, indicate the methods used in the data collection and in the data analysis (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 16-17.) This chapter gets absorbed in the research process of this thesis. In this section, there is a presentation of the selected research approach and the used research methods. In addition, in this chapter the process of acquiring and analyzing the data is introduced.

6.1 Qualitative research

The two types of research approaches, qualitative and quantitative approach, each have specific characteristics. Qualitative approach seeks perception of behaviors and attitudes, whereas quantitative approach examines and presents the data in numerical form. (Kothari 2004: 5.) Qualitative research is used when deep understanding is wanted and the focus is more on attitudes, motivation or consumers’ behavior. Generally speaking, qualitative research tries to find an answer to question of why, e.g. why has something happened. Quantitative research approach, on the other hand, focuses more on fact based results which are collected through numbers and percentages. It prefers what questions, such as what percentage of something or how many pieces. (Barnham 2014.) Typical for this approach is to select randomly respondents, which represents a universe in which the results should apply. Quantitative research has been in the dominant position for a while now, and it was absorbed as the main method of modern empirical sociology in the late 1950s (Alasuutari 1994: 22, 27), and on the other hand, under the heading qualitative
Research, this research form started to raise awareness in the 1960s to differ from quantitative research (Hammersley 2013: 10).

Qualitative research posits the research situation into the most natural environment as possible. Where quantitative research focuses more on numerical results, qualitative research views the words, experiences and contents (Chesebro & Brisoff 2007). In qualitative research analysis, the aim is to examine the material as an entirety. It is unnecessary to have several research singulars such as individual interviewees as the aim is to explain separate chain of events and not even to consider that the answer would represent some general phenomenon. (Alasuutari 1994: 28-30.) Choosing a qualitative research to this study feels quite natural. The aim of this research is to find out respondents’ opinions of large, social phenomenon of fashion, their behavior of their consuming habits and the possible changes which have occurred in the past decade, their attitude towards online shopping, and finally the experiences they possess of the topic. In this research, it is important to get to the bottom of these consumers’ experiences and the reasons behind their sentiments.

To carry out a study, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 11, 22-24) present two social science research models, which indicate what is the logic between theory and empirical research and how are they connected to each other. The first model, induction, represents an idea of conducting empirical research prior and afterwards building a theoretical framework. The second model, deduction, considers empirical research and theory other way around than induction. Deduction forms assumptions based on theory by regarding theory as a primary source through which hypothesis are formed and then continued to empirical study. When considering inductive and deductive research models to this study, they both felt incomplete. First of all, induction was out of the question, because this research required theoretical assumption before the empirical research was able to be conducted. On the other hand, the theoretical framework is so loose that deduction is not natural. The loose theoretical framework is sense giving, which directs the researcher’s view. The research, however, is data driven. For these reasons; abductive reasoning can be considered rather suitable for this study. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 24) further suggest abduction as an alternative when induction or deduction is not suitable for the research. Abduction is a combination of the two mentioned and is “the logic of exploratory data analysis”.
6.2 Gathering the data

The research method indicates techniques or tools the data is collected (Given 2004: 516), such as interviews, observations or focus groups, i.e. research methods lists all the methods which help the researcher to solve his/her research problem. The empirical primary data for the thesis was collected through personal interviews. (Kothari 2004, 8.) There were altogether seven respondent who all contributed valuable information for this research. The respondents of this research represent Finnish consumers, and they have been selected to stand for different ideas of fashion overall. This decision was done on purpose in order to get a holistic view of Finnish consumers. In this research, all the respondents were aged from 24 to 30 years old, from which six of them were female and one was male. The respondents have different educational backgrounds and they are all living in different parts of Finland, however, mostly in the capital area. Each of these interviews were conducted as single interviews during July and August 2017 in the capital area of Finland. Before the actual interview appointment, the respondents received the questions for them to be able to think the subjects on their own and prepare their answers, however, no notes were allowed to take to the actual interview situation. Each interview took approximately 25 to 35 minutes.

When using personal interviewing as a research method, qualitative research relies on respondents and their experiences in order to collect particular data of a specific phenomenon examined. Kothari (2004: 7) further explains that in personal interview, as the interview technique, there is to use open or closed questions. Knox and Burkard (2009) have studied qualitative research method from the viewpoint of qualitative research interviews. In their research, they present three possible ways to conduct an interview to compliment this method; unstructured interview, semi-structured interview and standardized interview. In unstructured interview, the answers may vary extremely much and turn into totally impossible to compare with other cases, as the respondents may not answer the same questions. In extreme cases, there is only asked the topic-introducing question. As a totally opposite to unstructured interviews, standardized interviews keep strictly in script in order to keep the interview experience as the same as possible with other cases. The only difference to occur is due to respondents. In unstructured interviews there are open-ended questions, whereas in
standardized interviews the questions are extremely regulated with closed questions. (Knox & Burkard 2009.)

Semi-structured interview, on the other hand, can be describe as flexible and comparable with other cases. In semi-structured interview, the interviewer asks each question, however, leaves possibility to ask more in order the get deeper understanding of the area. This way the data has the specific information and is capable to be compared, but in addition, gives an opportunity for the interviewee to tell more specifically about the experience. (Knox & Bukard 2009.) Knox and Bukard (2009) continue that semi-structured interviews are like a foundation for the interview to be built in a flexible and creative way. The interviews in this research were all semi-structured. To be able to get a holistic view of the attitudes and behaviors the respondents possesses, there had to be possibility to compare the responses to each other, and to find similarities or differences in the respondents’ experiences. On the other hand, it was also important to get a deeper picture of the motives behind the choices the consumers make. There were altogether 25 questions and in each interview these same questions were asked, however, not necessary using the exact same words or the same order. The questions allowed open-ended answers, and the structure of the interview let room for possible additional questions and experiences.

Given (2004: 518) explains that in qualitative research questions the behavior; its factors and meanings, the context of those meanings and behaviors, and the possible change are examined. In this thesis, the interview questions were formed in a way that the respondent would imagine his/her past experiences and current attitudes towards certain themes, but also to observe the environment around and consider the feeling it arouses. The major themes in the interview questions were their own consideration of fashion and how they see themselves as fashion consumers, their opinion on material overall, and how they experience both, online shopping and brick-and-mortar-shopping. At the end of the interview, the respondents were asked to predict the future of their fashion consuming. The interview questions are presented at the end of the thesis in English.

All interviews were conducted in-person. Depending on the topic to be discussed the interview can be sensitive and nervous moment for both; the researcher and the
respondent. The relationship between the two is crucial matter in order to success in a qualitative research. To be able to receive deep understanding, there should be mutual trust between the persons involved. In-person interviews creates an authentic situation. When the interviewer and the respondent are face-to-face, they are in the same room and are able to observe others’ nonverbal data, such as facial expressions, and form a concord for the respondent to feel more comfortable in the situation. In-person interviews may help to uphold the respondent’s involvement. (Knox & Burkard 2009.)

6.3 Analyzing the data

The interviews have been interpreted through fact based viewpoint. This interpretation is interested in the real behavior, motives and opinions of the respondent, which felt quite natural to suit to this research. Fact based viewpoint is the kind of aspect to the material in which the truthfulness of the received information is considered. The consideration can be hard, as there is no certainty whether or not the respondent is being truthful of his/her experiences and attitudes, or being somewhat too positive in his/her telling. Fact based viewpoint also considers the spoken words, and the way of expressing oneself, such as the way the respondent tells his/her story, is not taken into account. (Alasuutari 1994: 80-82.)

After the interviews were made, the analyzing process started with first transcribing the recorded interviews as a text. One interview took approximately from six to nine pages of written text. When observing the material, only the important factors related to the research’s theoretical framework, presented in chapter 5.1.1. Modified model of EKB, and the research questions were considered (Alasuutari 1994: 31). These factors, then, were combined into similar kind of observations and transformed into specific themes. The starting point for theming the observations is that there are similar kinds of examples of the phenomenon. As the interviews were semi-structured and there was were specific questions (see Appendix 1 and 2) asked from each respondent, there were no bigger issues when finding similar themes. However, Alasuutari (1994: 33-34) explains that in qualitative research analysis an average rule is not searched. This means that whenever there is a diverse in the data, it dismisses the former rule and may lead to rethinking the theoretical framework or at least the viewpoint. Mediocre idea doesn’t really matter in qualitative research unless the number of respondents is so
large that it can be though to represent some kind of general opinion. On the other hand, the diverse answers can lead to another rule. These differences in between people are important in qualitative research because in one way or another, each individual is different. Even if, there were found similar themes in the research, of course, the diverse answers increased the amount of the themes and codes.

By analyzing the interview answers, all together 42 codes were found. These were further categorized into six major themes which are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 5. Codes categorized under themes.

The six major themes are: 1) fashion attitude, 2) brand, 3) Values, 4) materialism, 5) motivation, and 6) channel behavior. Themes one to five aim to answer the first research question which asks what does fashion mean to consumers, and the theme six examines the second research question of how consumers experience fashion consuming. The first theme, fashion attitude, contains codes fashion concept and fashion draft. Fashion draft is further divided into forerunner, follower, own style, mass, personality, pressure and social media. The second theme is brand, which includes fast fashion, luxury, sustainable fashion and loyalty. Values contains quality, responsibility, special occasion and future, whereas materialism explains purchase frequency, other product ranges and importance of material, which is divided into expressed feelings of happiness, sadness and envy, and status. The fifth theme, motivation, indicates needs and wants. Finally, channel behavior includes the biggest amount of codes. Under channel behavior there purchase decision, intentional
purchase, shopping for fun, sales and then three types of channels; online shopping, brick-and-mortar shopping and multichannel, which each contained codes considered suitable for these topics. Online-shopping includes convenience, information search, price comparison, selection and return. Brick-and-mortar shopping, on the other hand, contains service, physicality, personnel and experience. All of the themes presented followed the theoretical framework, which was adequate considering the research questions.
7 FASHION ATTITUDE AND CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCE

In the analysis part there will be introduced and analyzed the preliminary data of this research which consists of the seven interviews conducted to the respondents. The primary data presented in this section, has been designed to follow the theoretical framework of this research, the modified model of EKB, and to answer the research questions. Regarding these research questions, the findings have been separated under two subtitles; findings related to fashion and findings related to online and brick-and-mortar shopping. In addition, in this part the theoretical framework will also discuss with the empirical data.

Under the first section of the chapter, the first research question; what does fashion mean to consumers, will be examined through the respondents’ answers. This covers e.g. how consumers view fashion, or how they view themselves as fashion users, and how much they actually consume clothing. The answers are purely consumers own self-evaluation which might bring contradictions to how they might appear to others. Nevertheless, as the aim is to find out what does fashion mean to them and how do they consider their own fashion consuming, it feels only natural to rely only consumers’ own judgment. The second section considers the respondents’ answers from the point of view of the second research question; how do consumers experience digitalization effecting their fashion behavior. Just by observing the consuming environment, it can be noticed that digitalization has increased as a significant part of fashion consuming, and for example, social media is to a large extent centered in fashion by one way or another. This subtitle focuses on the purchase process and fashion following in the digitalized world. The objective of this analysis is to find out which channels consumers use to acquire fashion inspiration and clothing, and in addition, how each of the channels is experienced.

7.1 Respondents’ attitudes towards fashion and their consuming habits

To make it easier for the reader to follow the first part of the analysis, the issues concerned here are further divided into two parts; attitudes towards fashion and consuming habits. In the first part the respondents consider how the see themselves as fashion consumers and the feelings which emerge through fashion. In the latter part,
consuming habits, there is a discussion about consumers’ habits related to fashion consuming, however, in addition the consumption overall is considered, for example from the point of view of materialism.

7.1.1 Attitudes towards fashion

The way the interviewees define fashion has a lot of similarities, however, also contains some different views. The overall impression of fashion is that it is a positive phenomenon, such as fashion was described as an empowering strength and making people happy. As noticed in the theoretical part, fashion is mostly connected to clothing (Crane & Bovone 2006), and to support this claim, almost all respondents identified fashion only as clothes. Only one person of the respondents said that fashion is also some other aspect which leads life, such as currently running fitness boom. Most consider fashion as an inspiration and a way masses dress at the specific time; as a trailblazer which type of clothing people use. One respondent mentions: “Fashion is a current phenomenon implemented by the mass” (respondent 27 years). On the other hand, few of the respondents mentioned that fashion is also totally opposite; an opportunity to adduce own personality and to show external self: “Fashion is clothing and an expression, bringing your own personality forth” (respondent 28 years). These two identifications create a contradiction; if fashion is implemented by the mass, then how can it be a way differ from it? As already explained in the theoretical part, fashion is a difficult phenomenon to define. It is influenced by many factors around it from people’s own assumptions to major societies’ changing technical developments. Nevertheless, as Solomon (2006: 589-591) explains, the fashion process effects on consumers’ behavior as a social phenomenon, but also on the individual level. In addition, as fashion as term means change (Aspers & Godart 2013), it needs to be moving all the time forward. For fashion to be able to evolve, the old patterns are replaced with new ones, and for this to happen, there needs to be fashion forerunners who want to be different and separate themselves from the mass so that new fashions can be born. It is difficult to imagine that fashion would be born only from a sketch of designer as because it needs to be worn by a large group of consumers.

On the other hand, the term fashion may also be misused these days, such as one respondent said: “For me, fashion is a synonym of trend” (respondent 24 years). In
the theoretical part, trend was identified as a general way of dressing, however, also it can reveal the direction where fashion is going (Aspers & Godart 2013). Even so, if we look at the fashion history, today’s fashion is not nearly the same type as it used to be; just for starters the fashion cycle has changed into a fast turnover. Today the term fashion is used to attract consumers (Crane & Bovone 2006), which might indicate that clothing is called fashion from an old habit. So, could it be that when we are talking about today’s fast paced fashions, we are actually talking about passing trends?

Because today’s fashion is turning over so fast, there are several different trends on markets at the same time, which indicates that consumers have various alternatives to choose from. This, on the other hand, may affect the way consumers see their dressing. As already mentioned, in this research every respondent evaluates their own fashion behavior; how they feel about the phenomenon overall, and how they consider themselves as fashion consumers. In the interview consumers were asked whether their dressing up is based on fashion, or do they have their own style. None of the respondents said that their dressing up is drawn only by fashion or felt that they were requiring the latest fashion, but more likely, everyone had their own style which is more or less influenced by the current trends. When the respondents were asked to describe their style, most of them said that it is kind of basic or classic, however, with few different variables. Five out of seven were following fashion on some level and the rest two felt that they are not interested in fashion more than they have to be. These two respondents feel that they are exposed to fashion in stores and they have to mind a little bit of fashion to dare to walk on the streets. They described their way of dressing as basic, plain and not exceptional from the mass. One respondent commented his/her fashion use: “At some level fashion has a meaning for me that I dare to be part of the street picture and I am not going out wearing just anything” (respondent 25 years). Three out of seven of the respondents follow fashion regularly, even feel passionately towards it, nevertheless, they consider that they are not forerunners in fashion, but rather fashion followers. This group considers having their own style which is to a large extent influenced by fashion seen in media or on the streets. These three fashion followers considered themselves as late accepters in fashion and only considers wearing the trends after already been accepted by others (Workman & Lee 2011).
Only one respondent considers to be, at least at some level, fashion forerunner, such as fashion change agent, especially in Finland. He/she considers that fashion is 50% of his/her dressing and the other half is own, brave style to separate from the mass. The respondent was extremely interested in fashion and follows it in media, sees yearly runway shows abroad and reads articles from certain fashion inspirers. He/she also buys big part of the clothing and accessories abroad as the selection in Finland is small.

In addition to these already mentioned respondents, there was also one respondent who couldn’t decide whether to describe oneself as a fashion follower or forerunner. He/she was extremely interested in fashion and felt passionately about it, however, felt more likely to have a strong own way of dressing. By this he/she means that the purpose of the dressing is to be in fashion but at the same time doing it in a much extraordinary and different way. He/she further explained: “I have many cases that, in a way, I follow the general line but I do pretty much different from the mass. But I am kind of in the line...” (respondent 24 years). In addition, this respondent told that fashion is an extremely important discussion topic among his/her friends.

Even if fashion is pictured as a positive phenomenon, to many of the respondents, fashion is causing pressures as well. This was seen for example from the one respondent’s comment presented earlier in this chapter that to be able to dare to walk on the streets, he/she wears to even some extent fashionable clothing. In addition, many of the respondents felt that fashion is extremely important for teen agers especially because at that age there is an extremely strong need to be part of the group and that way may engender pressures. Almost all of the respondents, however, still say that on some level at least they have pressures of how they dress. In addition, almost half of the respondents had been comparing themselves to others in a negative way when they were younger, however, consider that nowadays, as they have grown up, the comparison is minimal. Of course, still today many respondents are discussing and asking fashion tips and opinions from their friends, however, they see it as a positive and more like encouraging rather than pressure. As also discussed in the theory, fashion tends to create pressures because it is a big part of people’s formed beauty image and that fashion overall endanger to social comparison. This, on the other hand, is to large extent spread by the media, and consumers themselves in social media.
7.1.2 Consuming habits

The interviewees’ own fashion consuming, especially when discussed about fast fashion and luxury, seemed to be to somewhat difficult topic. The term premium brand was used by some of the respondents themselves and by that they indicate brands which are at the medium price range compared to fast fashion and luxury. Only one of the respondents didn’t show any dissatisfaction to his/her way of dressing or consuming while all the other six respondents felt that they would change some habits in their current fashion usage. These issues mostly related to displeasure of cheap, bad quality and unethical clothing which they buy. Most of the respondents were able to name favorite or most purchased brands in the interviews, and they all mentioned both; fast fashion brands and premium or luxury brands. Nevertheless, at the moment all respondents have more fast fashion than luxury or premium brands. Let’s look luxury and fast fashion further.

Despite the fact that the respondents would like to purchase and use more luxury and premium brands, most of them don’t necessarily have good quality impression the type of clothing. In other words, most of the respondents don’t think that money undoubtedly means good quality. Only two respondents saw luxury as a guarantee of a good quality, or a guarantee of a great customer service and satisfaction, or at least as a guarantee of a good way of handling reclamations. The shortage of the respondents who appraise luxury as guarantee of quality, is affected to large extent to previous experiences they have of the brands and materials choices used in the clothing, or the fact that some of the luxury brands are made in same factories as fast fashion brands. One respondent comments the following: “You can also find cheap and good quality. If it has 200€ price tag, it doesn’t necessarily mean that it is a lifetime” (respondent 28 years). As it turns out, over half of the respondents are feeling and checking the materials quite precisely before making the purchase decision: “I examine quite carefully the materials nowadays. I won’t buy synthetic fibers” (respondent 25 years).

Almost all of the respondents regard good quality as a value in their way of dressing. This, on the other hand, was the factor which was mostly in contradiction in the respondents’ behavior. Most of the respondents face motivational conflict of approach-avoidance when they buy clothing. From the six dissatisfied respondents presented
earlier, five of them told that if their financial situation let, they would rather buy better quality clothing which would last longer, or clothing from a specific premium or luxury brand. This indicates that these respondents buy cheap fashion, in this case fast fashion, because they are not willing or don’t have the ability to invest more money on clothing, even if they know that it is not good quality. Of course, fast fashion was also bought from other reasons as well; fast fashion shared opinions from its fast-phased cycles. Two respondents mentioned that they prefer certain brands because the clothing lines change fast. These respondents considered themselves as fashion followers and followed fashion regularly. Another two respondents didn’t feel comfortable with the fast-phased rhythm, and they represented the ones who don’t feel any kind of passion for fashion.

Even though, respondents have favorite brands, none of them admitted being loyal to any brand. More likely, if the brand fails or will not offer satisfying models, it will be replaced with another one, such as this citation suggests: “I can’t say that I am loyal to any brand. If I don’t find good, I won’t buy and I will change a brand” (respondent 27 years). Also lack of money was mentioned as a reason for not being a brand loyal.

In addition to motivational conflict of approach-avoidance the respondents face regarding to fast fashion’s bad quality, it can be identified that there are similar thoughts when responsible fashion is considered as well. Supporting responsible fashion is considered to be difficult, however, also as an ideal state. Most of the respondents were not satisfied how their dressing shows their values, especially from the ethical point of view. One respondent comments:

“I think my values can be seen in my dressing and I hope that they would be more visible. I would like to choose responsible clothing which would last long, even a lifetime for me” (respondent 25 years).

Almost every respondent said that their values are responsibility and ethicality, such as environmental issues and would hope better conditions for the workers is fashion factories. Nevertheless, even if these are the values, they see contradictions in their buying behavior, especially in fast fashion because they buy it. Fast fashion overall seems evoke conflicts in the respondents’ feelings, especially in responsible point of view.
view, and on the other hand, the quality issues as mentioned earlier. For example, one respondent told that he/she favors ethically manufactured clothing with good quality, however, consciously prefers to buy fast fashion in trendy clothing. In classic and more time lasting models he/she wanted to buy better quality. He/she further explains:

“I try to favor ethically manufactured clothing, however, sometimes it is extremely difficult because if I see a really nice-looking cloth which is not ethically manufactured, I will still buy it” (respondent 27 years).

Nevertheless, even if most of the respondents were concerned about their responsiveness in their fashion and cloth usage, the respondents said that they dispose their clothing environment friendly. The most used disposing ways are second-hand stores and recycling centers. In addition, almost everyone offers the clothing first to near family and friends.

The respondents who felt most passionately about fashion bought new clothing monthly, on the other hand, the persons who had neutral position towards fashion purchased cloths only once in two months or even more seldom. Most respondents saw that many occasions they acquire new clothing for a want. The motives mentioned related to want were discounts and cheap prices, and saturation for old clothing. One of the respondents told: “If I am being honest, seldom there is anything broken. But if there is a want, it usually becomes a need. You decide that you want a bomber jacket, you buy a bomber jacket” (respondent 27 years). Only two respondents said that they buy new clothing in most cases only when there is a need. They didn’t have any passion for fashion. Of course, others also purchased new clothes when they had a need, which they described as a special occasion, work clothes, or the previous ones have been broken or worn out. Nevertheless, what an actual need stands for, was questioned by one of the respondents:

“Usually the reason is a need. But a need for a cloth that I already have but for some reason I think it is not suitable for some occasion... So, on the other hand, the need is combined with a want that there is something wrong with the previous cloth” (respondent 25 years).
The definition of a need was also pondered in the theoretical part. As Griskevicius and Kenrick (2013) consider, needs are highly influenced by the aspect of how people actually view them, meaning that people consider their needs differently even when talking about a same object. This, on the other hand, makes it impossible to decide, whether or not the respondents are right or wrong when they describe the motivation behind their purchases. For one consumer a need arises when he/she is bored with an old cloth, and for other the need is only after a cloth is broken.

When the respondents buy new item, whether it is a fashion product or other type of purchase, all of them feel positive, and the most used adjective to describe the feeling is happiness. However, there were also other types of feelings as well, such as satisfaction, proud, and dreadfulness. Two respondents identified also negative feelings when they faced a motivational conflict of approach-avoidance, which was in most cases related to high prices of good quality or luxury fashion, or compulsory to buy cheap and bad quality clothing. Considering the joy new material brought to the respondents is connected to Richins and Dawson’s (1992) description of materialism, and materialistic people are thought to concern more on their appearance and to be more interested in fashion. In addition to happiness, Richins and Dawson (1992) present that materialism contains ideas of possessions being as symbol social status. This claim was agreed by the respondents; all respondents think that material overall is a sign of status or some sort of accomplishment. Even so, few of them also point out that today material doesn’t necessarily represent status the same level anymore because, e.g. luxury products are available for everyone. In addition, even though, material is seen as a status symbol, none of the respondents admits that they would personally shore up their own ego with it. Four out of seven respondents told that they feel envy, which can also indicate to materialism, when some relative or friend buys something they would want. This, however, the respondents see as fast passing feeling or as a positive envy such as admiration. The respondents who identify even a little bit of envy are the ones who feel most passionately about fashion; fashion forerunners and followers who have strong willingness explore fashion world, nevertheless, jealousy was also admitted by one of the respondent who didn’t identify him/herself as a fashion follower. More than feeling envy, others’ purchases acted as a motivator for almost all respondents to acquire the products they wanted also themselves.
Considering product ranges, it was interesting to find out that most of the respondents don’t regularly buy other material than fashion. Other type of material is usually bought when there is an actual need, such as electronics or home related products. Only material some respondents mentioned to buy regularly are cosmetics and other beauty related products, and presents for other people. There cannot be found any connection with these respondents and fashion groups as the ones who bought cosmetics or presents regularly represented all types of consumers attended to this study; those with no interest towards fashion, fashion followers and also pioneers.

In the interview, the respondents were asked to classify the importance of their most important material, and the answers were quite different. There were altogether three different answers, which all had approximately same amount of responses: 1) even the most important products are not important because they can be replaced and they are not people, 2) the favorite products are important, though the respondents can live without them, but they make life easier, and 3) the products which are connected to some kind of important event or people, or otherwise have emotional bond are in an important role, such as this respondent: “For example this bracelet, it is my grandma’s old and these cannot be purchased anywhere. I once lost it and I almost wept tears of blood afterwards. Luckily I found it again” (woman 28 years). In the theory, there was introduced extended self, in which an owner attaches to his/her possession. In other words, possessions become so important that they are considered as part of the owner. (Belk 1988). This by its part also increases the level of materialism and influence on person’s value system.

When asked to consider whether or not the fashion purchasing has changed, most of the respondents agree that their purchasing behavior has become more mature, meaning that there are no longer impulse purchases as much as earlier. In addition, they are observing the materials more carefully and buying better quality. The respondents thought that the change is due to growing up and actually starting to appreciate other types of things than material. Few respondents felt that when they were teenagers they had a tendency for shopping addiction, however, nowadays they value more experiences such as restaurants or travelling. In addition, almost every respondent considered that the turning point was when they moved first time to their own apartment and noticed just how much belonging they had.
The future target for consuming and shopping was seen similar as the changes already occurred so far. The following citation continues: “It (purchasing behavior) will be pretty much the same but I wish that I would invest more to quality than buying some cloth with good price” (respondent 28 years). Almost all of the respondents felt that they would want to use more money in the future for clothing which would actually last and be more sustainable.

Following the theoretical framework and the modified model of EKB, fashion stands as the base and acts as a trigger for consumers to recognize needs or wants by creating new trends and evolving all the time further. Based on the theoretical implications and the empirical data, fashion attitude should more likely be seen as an ongoing process, which is to a large extent effected by the attitudes consumers have towards fashion, and the extent they follow it, i.e. whether they are fashion forerunners, followers or don’t have any interest towards the topic. The extent the person overall concerns with fashion impacts on his/her attitude towards fashion, which launches the problem recognition, and also the intensity the solution is searched. These issues are affected by personal characteristics the consumer owns, such as motivation and values, and influence on the alternative selection. Fashion overall is all the time being evaluated. From the value related perspective, fashion rises many contradictions, such as fast fashion which is cheap but bad for the environment. As it was noted, most respondents get negative motivational conflict before they make the purchase, which indicates that the person’s attitude is not always in line with actions.

7.2 Respondents’ attitudes towards web stores and brick-and-mortar stores

Almost every respondent followed fashion through some channel in order to get influence on their own way of dressing. To get more ideas, fashion is mostly followed in the streets and in social media, also printed magazines were mentioned. Social media is thought to be an excellent channel to follow fashion, trends and find ideas because it is current and there are several apps to choose from. Respondent comments his/her social media use: “I read blogs every day but I don’t know if I follow them because of the fashion or because of lifestyle. It feels that fashion is a side product in many of those” (respondent 27 years). The apps which were mentioned were Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook and blogs. In addition, the respondents feel that fashion
stores overall are to a large extent in charge of which type of clothing they are able to wear. Especially the respondents with no specific interest towards fashion, see this problematic because they were afraid if they can find anything to suit them in case the current fashion don’t please them: “Sometimes it is just really hard, for example, now when I have wanted to find a cool top and there are only tank tops in stores, and I can’t wear those” (woman 28 years).

As a general purchase channel, every respondent uses web stores regardless of the service (such as travelling services) or product type, nevertheless, 70 percent use it less or more for purchasing clothes at least to some extent. Web shopping was seen as an easy purchase alternative, however, the reason for some respondents not to use the channel in clothing purchases was the lack of physical presence, the impossibility to try clothing or feel the materials. These mentioned factors support the theoretical findings as well, as the best features identified of brick-and-mortar stores are related to the physicality especially in clothing in which the fitting is extremely important., and on the other hand, convenience (such as easiness) was the most appraised feature in online shopping. In addition to easiness, in the interviews there were mentioned a lot of positive factors and possibilities online shopping brings, such as the assortments are big with good options of sizes and colors, suitable for people with busy lifestyles, great discounts, and the option to shop anywhere, anytime, and the possibility to do a price comparison. Price comparison was highlighted in the theoretical part, however, only one of the respondents mentioned that after finding a proper product in a brick-and-mortar, he/she has used the Internet to get it cheaper. This means that the price comparison online is usually done before visiting stores.

In order to make the most desired outcome when they purchase items, some respondents also mentioned the possibility to see others’ reviews of the products as a reason they go and buy online. These reviews can be in the online store or shared in some social media channel. Word-of-mouth, and in digital world known as eWOM, is the most reliable channel of communication which impacts of consumers’ decisions (Wolny & Mueller 2013), and by receiving a proper review and acting according to other’s experiences the respondents try to avoid bad purchases.
In brick-and-mortar stores, on the other hand, all respondents saw service and/or physicality as the most important factors it can offer. Service is the main reason why the respondents who normally don’t use brick-and-mortar, visit some occasions physical stores. This was also one major factor why prices were not compared, as explained by one of the respondents:

“Usually if I go to brick-and-mortar store, they are the type of stores where I know that I will have a great service so I am glad to pay more that someone helps me to find the proper shoes or jeans or whatever” (woman 28 years).

The respondents who don’t use online stores, prefer brick-and-mortar because they can touch the cloth and try it on. These respondents are aware of the possibilities to return the online ordered products when unsuitable, however, they see it as a burden, and consider that the process overall is much faster in brick-and-mortar than ordering online. In addition, most of these respondents appreciated the experience they get in physical stores and think that web stores won’t be able to deliver that: “You get all information right away (in brick-and-mortar) and the purchase process is much faster” (respondent 24 years).

Multichannel is identified in each respondent even in a small amount. The theory part of the thesis presents two cases where multichannel behavior is likely to occur. In the first option, a consumer uses multichannel in a specific stage (stage-channel) of the buying process, such as in a prepurchase stage when acquiring information about the product. The other stage is related to the product itself (product-channel) or the product category, indicating that a consumer uses multichannel when he/she is buying a certain product and feel uncomfortable to buy it e.g. from the Internet. (Gensler et al. 2012.) The respondents who normally didn’t buy any products online, may still visit web stores to acquire information about some specific products or find suitable alternatives. For these respondents, in case they were looking for something specific, it was much more likely for them to use multichannel then than in other cases. When they were looking for something special, in general they check online from which brick-and-mortar store they would find proper candidates. Multichannel behavior happened most likely in the order of online stores being used first and brick-and-mortars last. The
most typical case among these respondents was that online stores were the source of information of places the searched product could be found, and the physical store as a place to see it and eventually buy it. One respondent explains: “If I plan to purchase something, I go to online and after to brick-and-mortar” (respondent 24 years).

Multichannel behavior was a good alternative even for those respondents who normally preferred only online shopping, as he/she considers:

“If I go to brick-and-mortar store to buy something, I always Google it beforehand that if I can find the right type of product there. So for me to shop in a brick-and-mortar store is also strongly connected with online stores” (respondent 27 years).

These cases mostly occurred, if the item searched was in a hurry and the respondent felt that he/she didn’t dare to take a risk that the product delivery would for some reason or another to fail or be late.

When the respondents had a planned purchase on their mind and they were looking for something specific, they were more likely with open mind when choosing a channel. In the prepurchase stage they browse Internet in order to find that specific product they were looking for, and afterwards, around half continued the purchasing process online, and the other half search a proper brick-and-mortar store where they could go, fit the cloth, and in the end, buy it. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, even the respondents who normally use online stores, would use in this type of situation brick-and-mortar in case receiving the item was in a hurry. Also, other way around, if the respondent who didn’t normally use online stores for buying, can consider using it, whether the product is not found from brick-and-mortar stores. On the other hand, when the respondents wanted to shop without any specific items on their minds; to shop just for fun, they were stricter to use just one channel. Those who use regularly the Internet for shopping, shop online, and those who prefer brick-and-mortar, always go to physical store. Nevertheless, many respondents who swear to online shopping, use brick-and-mortar stores abroad because they consider that there are better selections, better size ranges and color alternatives than in Finnish markets.
This section is intended particularly to follow the fourth and fifth steps of the modified model of EKB; purchase and outcome. Technology offers a great chance to choose from two alternatives in which channel fashion is experienced or do consumers prefer to use multichanneling. The respondents who use online stores consider it as easy and it is the main reason for them to go online. However, also the respondents who use brick-and-mortar stores think its benefits make the physical channel easy to shop. This indicates that even if the wanted outcome is the same, the process is different, because people overall consider different things suitable for them.

Outcome of the purchase is in an important role when considering if a consumer will increase his/her online purchases. Even if some of the respondents didn’t buy clothing online, they still saw a lot of potential in web stores and predicted that the use will increase in the future: “In the future online shopping will increase – that is for sure. Or at least multichanneling will be stronger and new digital solutions” (respondent 24 years). According to the theoretical part, in case of good previous experiences and spillover effects, online shopping may increase. If the respondent already uses the Internet in the search stage, it is likely that this behavior will increase, and in the end, he/she will use it in the actual purchase as well. In addition, if the respondent receives positive outcomes when purchasing online, he/she is more likely to use the Internet as a shopping channel again. Channel attribute, on the other hand, has also a great impact on the channel choice. One respondent, who didn’t normally buy online, tells in the interview that even if the process of ordering online is already quite easy, it is still not so easy that he/she would like to use it.
8 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In the last chapter the main results of the thesis are introduced. In addition, both research questions will be once again presented and answered with the knowledge received from the empirical findings. Also, the theory is considered in this chapter and the empirical results are either complimented or objected by the theoretical findings. Further on, the research is critically evaluated and two research limitations are presented. Finally, during this study there rose some new questions of the topic so also the future research suggestions are given.

8.1 Main results of the research

Consumption, as a major part of people’s everyday routines, has been revolutionized by developments and changes in societies. Basically, consumption indicates a process of people purchasing and selecting goods. Especially considering the past 20\textsuperscript{th} century, it has taken a huge leap, not only as a phenomenon around people, but also as a research topic. Consumption became as a target of interest only around the time when mass production started and people’s consuming habits changed. (Warde 2015.) Around 1980s consuming was liberated, so to speak, because class didn’t anymore matter when people built their material life (Campbell 1995). In this thesis consumption has been examined especially from the point of view of sociology, which indicates that the topic has been discussed from the perspective of self- and social identity distinction, consumer’s values and behavior, needs and wants, and material culture. (Zukin & Maguire 2004, Warde 2015.)

The first research question of thesis examines what does fashion mean to consumers in today’s society. Fashion is extremely wide and diverse phenomenon, to which all people have different attitude and opinion, which is why the question cannot be answered unequivocally, but more likely, it should be pondered from different aspects. To help to answer the research question, there has been built a framework from the decision process of Darley et al. (2010). Darley’s et al (2010) model is a great starting point for this research, however, it misses certain elements, which need to be discussed among fashion consuming. With respect to fashion consumers, in this modified model fashion has been considered as a core and there has been added factors which influence
on the process especially from a consumer’s personal perspective. As fashion means
different thing to different consumers, it is evident that there are people who don’t have
any interest towards it; they don’t have the passion, however, they might still take
pressures of their appearance. For others, on the other hand, it can be an important way
of expressing oneself, evaluating others and being part of who they are. The purpose
of answering the first research question is to express these different feelings.

Sociology of consumption goes hand in hand with fashion, which is a major part of
people’s consumption. Fashion, and clothing overall, indicates people expressing their
values, characteristics, and even wealth through the way they are dressing (Stevenson
2011: 6-7). Fashion can be considered as a change or an evolvement, and a process of
social diffusion. Nevertheless, fashion doesn’t have a mutual agreed definition, and
even if it did, would today’s fashion be defined the same way as fashion in the history?
When fashion history is compared to the way fashion looks like today, it can be noted
that fashion overall has become more liberal and there is not just one and single fashion
to follow. On the other hand, the pace of fashion evolvement has fastened and at the
same time, the overall quality has become poorer. In the interview, the respondents
suggested that fashion is implemented by the mass, however, also one respondent
considered it to be a way of distinction. In addition, in the interviews it could be noticed
that the line between the terms fashion and trend is blurred. As already pondered in the
analysis part, because of the fast movement of fashion, I conclude that the meaning of
these terms has gotten somewhat similar. Fashion today is more likely a mixture of
changing trends, rather than just one fashion which eventually changes to a new one.
Fashion is, so to speak, fragmented.

Due to these presented features, fashion doesn’t represent a typical kind of decision
process, of having a need and searching a solution, comparing alternatives, making a
purchase as so on. More likely, the process depends on the consumer and his/her
willingness to be part of the fashion development. In the modified model of EKB,
fashion acts as an engine to keep the process flowing. New trends create needs and at
the same time offers solutions because fashion and trends are evolving all the time
further. If the consumer is interested in fashion, his/her needs and wants, the search
and alternative evaluations are an ongoing process because the pace of fashion is also
ongoing. The same time fashion is followed, consumers evaluate it.
Today’s diverse and fast paced fashion allows people to dress similarly according to several dominant trends, however, it also encourages them to separate themselves, be forerunners, and lead with new trends, which eventually may become popular and be worn by the mass. On the other hand, what used to be a higher class’ privilege to wear fashionable clothing or clothes telling whether or not the person is wealthy, is not applicable anymore and fashion is intended for everyone. Nevertheless, even if we stand in the position of fashion being liberated, depending on the consumer, fashion arises contradictory feelings. Fashion is thought as a guideline of how people should dress, but at the same time it is also causing pressures.

As the pace is fast, it is evident that there are concurrently several existing trends loose. This lets consumers to choose his/her favorite one or several trends and implement one’s own preferences. The respondents of the research were asked to describe their own style, which they all said to possess, and the answers were to a large extent similar; basic or classic, which on the other hand, describes Finnish fashion quite well. Some of the respondents took a lot of influence of current fashion trends, and some didn’t more than they had to. When discussed further, it turned out that everyone purchases most clothing from a fashion store, whether it is a fast fashion store or a luxury brand store, anyway from stores which sell the latest mass fashion. Even so, in addition to where consumers buy their clothing, it also matters what they buy from there, and what type of fashion they are actually searching. Even if consumers buy their clothing from a fashion store, they may still make choices according to their own preferences and pick the type of trends they feel most comfortable with, which indicates that they are following their own style.

In this thesis, three nowadays’ fashion types were considered: 1) fast fashion, which is fast changing and low-cost garments (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010), 2) sustainable fashion, which is so to speak, an objection for fast fashion and concentrates on responsiveness (Henninger et al. 2016), and 3) luxury, a pioneer of fast fashion representing today’s ready-to-wear and couture (Fionda & Moore 2008). Fast fashion is a dominant of these fashion types because it is cheap and the garments’ turnover is fast. Nevertheless, it is not highly appreciated because of the bad quality. In the theory chapter, the basic motivations for purchasing cloths were suggested to be either a need or a want (Tatzel 1982). Further on, when consumers are purchasing something, they
experience some of the three motivational conflicts which can either be approach-approach, approach-avoidance, or avoidance-avoidance. These indicate to which extent the consumer feels that the options he/she has to fulfil needs are positive or negative. (Solomon & Rabolt 2009: 123.) Motivational conflict can occur for example, when consumers make decisions which either support or fight against their own values. In the theory, it is suggested that people express their values through their clothing (Crane & Bovone 2006). Among the respondents, when purchase fast fashion, they experience approach-avoidance conflict, which means that the need or want is fulfilled, however, the outcome of buying bad quality clothing is not satisfying. On the other hand, if luxury clothing (generally good quality) or sustainable fashion (ethicality) are considered, the prices are too high to switch from fast fashion. Good quality and responsibility are considered as close values, however, due to these mentioned issues, there are difficulties to fulfil them in dressing.

The theory suggests that the more people are interested in fashion, the more they tend to be materialistic. Related to this, two types of fashion groups were introduced; fashion change agents, who are the forerunners of fashion, and fashion followers. (Workman & Lee 2011.) To compliment these two, there has also been considered consumers who don’t have fashion interest at all. Even if it is generally assumed that fashion means clothing, it should be realized that clothing is not always fashion. Regarding to consumer’s own preference, it is possible to dress according to your own values and character, and not to follow fashion. (Powell & Gilbert 2009: 1-2.) In the empirical research, the relation between materialism and fashion interest was considered. According to the data received from the interviews, the claim is supported to some extent. Even so, also those respondents who say not care about fashion, have some qualities of materialists. It can be noted that fashion forerunners feel the most envy of others purchases, however, also some of the followers and a non-fashion lover admits having jealousy towards others. Nevertheless, what was a clear distinction between those who love fashion and those who share only the tiniest interest, was the frequency of buying new fashion and the motivation they face when acquiring it. Those who feel passionately towards fashion, buy new clothing at least once a month and usually their motivation is a want, and those who don’t have any interest in fashion buy it when there is a need, which occurs only in every two months. This indicates that people who have passion for fashion consider it as a want or as a hedonic motivation,
indicating that they expect pleasure and have more emotional feelings towards it, and on the other hand, if there is only a pure need for buying fashion and it is not enjoyed, then the motivation is utilitarian and the it is satisfied with practical solutions (Childers et al. 2001, Zhou et al. 2007).

An interesting finding of the empirical part suggest that fashion is the most purchased material each of the respondents buy, no matter what type of fashion user the person is. When other material is purchased, it is always for a need, or if it is a want, it is another type of beauty product, such as make up. This supports the fact that fashion and clothing overall is a major part of today’s consuming, and even if fashion itself is not as a prior interest, clothing is still an important material to acquire. Nevertheless, this finding should not be taken for granted as six of seven respondents were women and women are broadly more into fashion than men. Another point of view is that today fashion carries such a bad quality that the need to purchase new garments becomes fast as the old clothes turn into unwearable.

As a conclusion for the first research question; the meaning of fashion depends on how consumers consider the topic overall. It can be concluded that if the person is not into fashion, there seldom rises any types of actual wants but more likely needs when something is for example broken, and fashion is seen in a way a burden because it creates pressures. The search is done basically through easiest and seen what retailers have to offer. On the other hand, if the consumers find great passion for fashion, there arises new wants and needs all the time, and these are affected e.g. by the regular fashion following. Fashion can cause pressures, nevertheless, in a way they can be identified positive because the search and alternative evaluation for new trend is sort of speak always on.

The second research question considered fashion from the point of view of digitalization and especially; how consumers experience their fashion consuming has changed. The change of fashion can partly be explained by the changed consuming habits in the 20th century, however, also by the development of the technology, which emerged in the 1970s (Perez 2007). By its part, it allowed faster communication, and later, e-commerce, which visible changes can be located to the turn of the century (Chiang & Dholakia 2003). Overall, it can be noted that digitalization has brought new
possibilities and dimensions to not just only purchase but also to follow fashion. There has always been some type of role model or forerunner in fashion; whether it has been an elitist in the history or a movie star in the 1920s, which has been spread by the media to masses. Today, however, due to technological developments, there is a possibility to follow fashion in real time all over the world, and not just through the professional media, but also shared by average consumers. Social media is a critical change in fashion industry but also in consumers’ lives. Fashion is not even always the topic of interest which is followed, however, it can act as a side product in several other lifestyle related cases.

In the empirical research, it was found out that web stores are used by all of the respondents, indicating that it is an important purchasing channel among the age group of 24-30 years old, and it has made major changes to consuming habits. However, in clothing the amount of web store users is smaller. Even though e-commerce is a great option as a shopping channel, brick-and-mortar stores are still concerned as an essential way of shopping. According to the theory and the empirical findings, the most valuable benefits of brick-and-mortar stores when considering clothing purchases are physicality (such as feeling the materials, and possibility to fit) and customer service, whereas online stores had convenience as a best feature. In addition, online stores are used to find better selections, which can be considered quite reasonable in Finland especially, where the fashion markets are quite small compared to abroad. Nevertheless, multichannel is an important way of acquiring extra knowledge, and it is used when the respondents look for something special. Multichannel is also used by those who normally don’t feel comfortable to order from web stores. In these cases, mostly the Internet acts as a source of information and brick-and-mortar as place to fit the cloth and eventually buy it.

As a new finding the empirical research suggests that when a consumer doesn’t look for anything special but shops just for fun, he/she is strict to use the channel, which he/she uses normally, i.e. those who prefer web stores, shop for fun online, and the ones who purchase generally from brick-and-mortar, use it also in unplanned purchases. Another surprising result is that online stores are used only minimal to compare prices, in case the proper cloth has already been found from a brick-and-mortar store. If the price comparison was done, it was made before the actual buying
situation, when the item was still searched and evaluated to direct to the right store, however, when the right product had been found from brick-and-mortar, it was purchased there even if known that it could be found somewhere cheaper. The effort for acquiring new information, ordering and waiting the product to arrive was seen too big to save only little amount of money.

As it turns out, digitalization has affected consumers’ fashion experience in fashion following and also in the actual purchase situation. Even so, not all respondents were comfortable with the Internet in the purchase situation, however, the theory suggests that when consumers get more familiar with the act and get more experience, their online shopping may increase. Also, the information search from the Internet encourages consumers to further continue to actually make a purchase from there. To support these, those respondents who didn’t use online stores to purchase clothing, forecasted to use online shopping more in the future.

### 8.2 Limitations of the study

In this study, there are two limitations. The first limitation is the small number of respondents of each fashion group. The small amount of respondents is one of the key features of qualitative research, however, as there were several fashion groups considered in the study, there was only a little number of respondents especially represent those with no passion for fashion (two respondents) and those who considered to be fashion forerunners (one respondent, and one who considered him/herself half forerunner and half follower). Fashion followers were represented by three (and a half) respondents. Even so, the intention was to get experiences and reasons behind attitudes from each consumer, which was well made, however, with bigger amount of respondents, the results compared to the theoretical assumptions would have been more accurate, and on the other hand, there could have been made some generalization of the answers.

The second limitation in this study is the small amount of academic literature of Finnish consumers and fashion markets. Considering fashion, consumer behavior and digitalization, there is a lot of suitable academic literature available, however, hardly any of them is especially researched in Finnish markets, which is why the theoretical
framework had to be built based on international studies. On the other hand, it opens a possibility to produce new knowledge, which this thesis aims to do. Even so the lack of nation specific theory might have caused big differences when comparing the international theory and empirical research conducted to Finnish consumers because Finland is generally assumed to be quite plain nation in mass fashion especially. This indicates that if the research would have been done in some other country where overall fashion interest is different, the results might be totally distinct.

8.3 Suggestions for future research

The research arose further questions and research suggestions of few topics. First of all, as already mentioned in the limitations there is a gab of academic literature concerning Finnish fashion consuming. As suggestion for future research, I encourage to study Finnish fashion consumers even further to get perspectives even from a larger population, of what kind of fashion users we really are, and how we set when compared to other nations. This, on the other hand, arises questions of today’s fashion overall, and how it is seen by the consumer all around the world.

Another topic that is suggested for further research rose from the empirical research and the interviews. Each respondent considered that through material people are showing their status in society, however, none of themselves personally thought that they would brag with their own success through what they possess. Even if the respondents is small, however, all seven answered the same way, it makes me as a researcher question whether the interviewees were telling the truth, which is unlikely that all of them would have been lying, or if the general assumption of material and status is not up to date, and if material is not anymore the sign of, so to speak, a rich lifestyle, which it used to be.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1

OUTLINE OF THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Fashion attitude:
1. What is fashion?
2. Does fashion mean something to you, and if it does, how much?
3. Do you think your dressing is drawn with fashion or do you have your own style?
4. Do you think you are fashion forerunner or follower?
5. Do you have favorite brands?
6. How often do you buy clothing on average?
7. Why do you usually buy clothing? (e.g. want, need, special occasion, sale, etc.)
8. Do you buy much material (other than clothing)?
9. How do you feel when you buy new material?
10. How important are your most important items?
11. Do your values show in your dressing?
12. Do you think that material is a sign of status or accomplishment?
13. If you friend or relative buys a new cloth/car/electronics/or anything you would like to have, are you jealous?

Channel experience:
14. Is online store an option for you as purchase channel regardless of the item or service group?
   a. How much do you use it?
15. How big part of your fashion purchases takes place online?
   a. What possible risks do you see in fashion online shopping?
   b. What are the biggest advantages in online shopping?
16. Do you use brick-and-mortar stores in your fashion shopping?
   a. What do you think are the biggest benefits in brick-and-mortar shopping?
17. In which purchase stage (before the purchase, purchase, after the purchase) do you use online store?
18. You want a certain kind of new cloth, describe your typical purchase process. Which channels do you use and in which order?
19. You want to shop for fun, describe your typical purchase process.
20. Has your shopping behavior changed during the past years, how?
21. How do you see your fashion consuming in the future?