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Genuine or misleading?

An exploration of Gen Z consumer perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding

by

Roosa Maria Viloma

Katharina Nadine Junge

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and Brand Management

Supervisor: Veronika Tarnovskaya
Examiner: Mats Urde
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Abstract

Title: Genuine or misleading? An exploration of Gen Z consumer perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding

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Authors: Roosa Maria Viloma and Katharina Nadine Junge

Supervisor: Veronika Tarnovskaya

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Thesis purpose: The purpose of the research is to contribute to existing research and theory by providing insights into how Gen Z consumers perceive inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. It also aims to understand how these perceptions differ between fast fashion and luxury fashion and how they contribute to consumer attitudes towards brands. Moreover, it aims to contribute to managerial knowledge by providing insights into whether Gen Z consumers accept inauthentic brand heritage and the potential negative consequences of non-acceptance.

Methodology: This study adopts an interpretivist approach as it aims to understand consumers' perceptions, opinions and attitudes towards inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. Furthermore, the purpose of the research is exploratory in nature. Therefore, a qualitative approach was adopted based on four focus group interviews with Gen Z consumers, predominantly with marketing expertise.

Findings/Conclusion: The findings reveal a wide range of opinions and perspectives among consumers, highlighting the subjective nature of authenticity. The research reveals consumers' difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage, as brands can create a convincing illusion of authenticity. The research also identified several risks of inauthentic heritage for brands. Consumers have shown a tendency to value authenticity more than brand heritage, leading to a perception that a brand's values and personality are more important to its future. The research also highlights differences in perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage between fast fashion and luxury fashion brands, with luxury brands relying on their history to shape authentic perceptions.

Practical implications: The research underlines the importance of authenticity and its relation to brand heritage for Gen Z consumers as they seek genuine connections. Brands that leverage inauthentic heritage risk losing consumer trust, loyalty and reputation. The impact of inauthentic heritage differs between luxury and fast fashion brands, with luxury brands having more potential to shape authentic perceptions. However, both categories face challenges when inauthentic heritage is exposed. To connect with Gen Z, brands should focus on personal stories and values and adopt a 'new heritage' approach. Maintaining authentic brand heritage is critical to maintaining consumer trust and brand reputation.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

“The brand. The myth. The legend.” (Dion, 2021) These words can inspire the creation of a captivating fantasy tale around a brand. They evoke a sense of mystery and wonder, suggesting that there is more to the brand than meets the eye. This is the allure of heritage branding, where a brand's history and legacy are leveraged to create a compelling narrative that captures the imagination of consumers (Hudson, 2015). With these powerful words as a foundation, a brand can craft a tale that infuses its products and services with a sense of magic and wonder, transforming them into objects of desire that capture consumers minds (Boccardi et al., 2016; Hudson, 2015). But what happens when a brand's heritage becomes more of a fictional tale than the actual history of the brand?

From a brand perspective, the heritage and history of the brand are an integral part of managing the brand, accelerating its value and creating consumer trust (Dion, 2021). When the fashion business changed from a dimming and loosely organised constellation of family-owned maisons to powerful corporations with a focus on the bottom line in the late 80s and early 90s, ideas about heritage and luxury (fashion) became intertwined (Borrelli-Persson, 2020). Brand heritage is highly significant as it is unique to each brand and difficult for competitors to imitate. The creation of a compelling story about the brand's heritage can be used as a marketing tool and is therefore an essential component of heritage branding (Dion, 2021). By incorporating historical references into marketing initiatives, companies can influence future purchasing behaviour and gain a competitive advantage (Hudson, 2015). Furthermore, according to Hudson (2015), heritage elements may be utilised as evidence to support assertions about the attributes or status of a brand or its products, particularly concerning principles like authenticity or innovation.

Building brand loyalty can be difficult in the highly competitive fashion industry. Brands seek to create unique products and services that will stand out from their competitors and draw customers in (Urde et al., 2007). As we are looking into branding concepts from the perspective of inauthenticity, it is crucial to define this term. Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) describes “inauthentic as something that is not true, real or what people say what it is”. It can also be described as being false, misleading or imaginary. In the world of fashion brands, authenticity has become an essential factor in consumer decision-making and for the brands, this has meant the ability to charge premium prices for their products. resulting in brand preference and increases willingness to pay a premium price (Fritz et al., 2017; Napoli et al., 2014). On the contrary, when a brand is perceived as inauthentic, it can have a detrimental effect on the brand and can create mistrust amongst consumers.

To better understand this phenomenon, it is worth examining some examples of brands that have effectively incorporated their authentic heritage into their branding practices. For instance, the upscale French fashion house Chanel is a notable example of such a brand. From the iconic Bouclé tweed and quilted handbags to statement jewellery, Chanel's rich history and legacy of founder Coco Chanel are still prevalent in its designs today (Chanel, n.d.). On the other hand, a premium Swedish brand named Gant is an example of a brand that operates in a different price range, yet leverages its authentic heritage in its various branding activities. The founding year and American origin are incorporated in various ways across their clothing items and brand identity (Gant, n.d.). These examples illustrate that when brands have truly woven their authentic heritage into the brand identity, the heritage is not only recognisable and strong, but also consistent over the years.

Looking into examples where heritage has been inauthentic, Gucci serves as another prime example of a luxury brand that effectively incorporates its heritage into its branding initiatives. Although in the case of Gucci, their heritage has been fabricated to some extent. Guccio Gucci, who is the founder of the luxury fashion house, had borrowed a heritage that spoke of equestrianism, with an association with saddlery and horse bits (DeFanti et al., 2013). To follow Guccio, his oldest son, Aldo Gucci, promoted this concept with style and

popularised this idea by portraying stables and horses, incorporating elements such as green and red webbing of girth straps, as well as hardware designed to resemble linked stirrups and horse bits (DeFanti et al., 2013). Gucci's borrowed heritage was confirmed in 1987 by Guccio Gucci's granddaughter stating she "wanted the truth to come out" (DeFanti et al., 2013, p. 20). Furthermore, it seems that Gucci's association with saddle-making was borrowed, and in recognition of this fact, Francois-Henri Pinault, the Chairman of PPR, which owns the Gucci Group, acknowledges the importance of history and craftsmanship in luxury brands. He recognizes Gucci as a part of Italian history (DeFanti et al., 2013). It is not known to many consumers that the popular heritage nuances that Gucci uses in their brand are actually "borrowed" and not part of their history.

The popular brand Hollister from the early 2000s is another illustration of a similar scenario, although, in the case of Hollister, their heritage was a completely fictitious story. The news broke about the popular US brand Hollister's fabricated heritage in 2009 (BBC, 2009), and the brand received a backlash for this. Eggers (2015) from *The New Yorker* investigated the story of Hollister further and explained that for years the employees of the brand were told this story about their founder starting a surf brand in 1922 when the brand was founded in 2000. These heritage references were then again referenced in clothing pieces similar to the brand Gant discussed earlier. Academic director of the Oxford Institute of Retail Management, Jonathan Reynolds, commented on the issue of the fabrication to the news outlet stating "To make up a character like that, you'd think, well, that was very deceitful. In fact it is only part of creating a lifestyle brand, a kind of cultural myth that consumers can really engage with" (BBC, 2009). Was this heritage created to cover their corporate colours and purely a sales strategy to lure the consumers to think that the brand started as an independent surf store? Younger consumers were interviewed on the matter at the time in 2009, fictional heritage did not concern them (BBC, 2009; Schlossberg, 2015). However, even though the younger consumers in 2009 were not concerned about a brand's inauthentic heritage, there is still a risk of a backlash in today's world where consumers quest for realness and authenticity.

Gen Z individuals, typically born between 1995 and 2010, are considered authentic digital natives (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Growing up in a world where the internet, mobile phones and social networks are part of their everyday lives, this generation has a remarkable ability to gather and cross-reference different sources of information (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Merriman, 2021). The second to youngest generation is well educated about brands and consequently looks for authenticity, tolerance, diversity, inclusivity, transparency and trustworthiness (Biondi, 2021; Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Another important fact to note is that Gen Z is not only looking for authenticity from themselves, but beyond themselves (Merriman, 2021). They are looking for everyone around them to be authentic, including brands. Such behaviours influence the way Gen Zers view consumption and their relationships with brands (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Merriman, 2021). It is crucial for the brands to pay attention to the behaviour of Gen Z, since their spending power is only going to increase, making it even more essential for the brands to understand their behaviours and motivations. Furthermore, brands' marketing initiatives aimed at Gen Z should be the main focus point, according to Marconi (2022).

1.2 Research problem

The central concept of brand heritage has been explored from many different angles in marketing for more than three decades (Hudson & Balmer, 2013) and can thus be considered a well-researched field. A considerable number of studies have been dedicated to a deeper understanding of brand heritage by examining its perceived value and outcomes (Wiedmann et al., 2011a), its relationship with consumer behaviour mechanisms (Hudson & Balmer, 2013), and its importance for brand image building (Wiedmann et al., 2011b). Another central perspective on brand heritage was established by studying it as part of brand identity and defining it as an identity dimension related to a brand's longevity and history (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007). A contrasting view of brand heritage was created by studying brands with fictional heritage and defining the phenomenon as mythical heritage that allows consumers to escape into fictional stories (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). However, their study did not cover consumer perceptions, but rather a company perspective by relating fictional heritage to the process of brand identity creation. Hudson & Balmer (2013) also suggested linking the

concept of brand heritage to authenticity and nostalgia, citing iconic authenticity as a potential explanation for the assumed acceptance of adapted and reproduced heritage. Although the risks of inventing a corporate past have been acknowledged by other studies (Brunninge & Hartmann, 2018), it remains unexplored whether consumers and other stakeholders believe in the fictional heritage and to what extent and under what circumstances they would forgive an invented history (Brunninge, 2023). The focus of recent research in this area remains on identifying strategies for companies to use invented heritage to build a heritage brand and potentially overcome the liability of novelty (Brunninge, 2023).

While a remarkable amount of heritage studies being linked to authenticity is focusing on the sector of tourism, more specific museums and heritage sites (Breathnach, 2008; Kidd, 2011), also a variety of other sectors are being examined such as automotive (Wiedmann et al., 2011a; Wiedmann et al., 2011b) and fashion (DeFanti et al., 2013; Boccardi et al., 2016). However, research within these sectors has not yet been exhausted. In the fashion sector, for example, there are studies that take a closer look at the borrowed heritage of brands in the luxury sector, but they only refer to branding strategies and do not consider the consumer perspective (DeFanti et al., 2013). However, they establish a connection with the concept of authenticity by defining it as an element of (luxury) heritage and emphasising its importance (DeFanti et al., 2013; Boccardi et al., 2016). It is argued that authenticity is threatened by conservative heritage marketing and the creation of myths through the repetition of certain narratives (Boccardi et al., 2016). However, these hypotheses are not empirically tested, leading the authors to suggest further research to investigate heritage in relation to perceived authenticity in fashion companies (Boccardi et al., 2016).

As Boccardi et al. (2016) argue in their research, heritage plays a special role in fashion branding, as symbolic meaning is of particular value within the fashion industry, which can be enhanced by heritage. In addition, fashion plays a very personal role that is intertwined with the consumer's identity and self-image (Arnould & Thompson, 2018; Gilmore & Pine, 2007), creating a consumer expectancy of brand authenticity, which will be further examined in the following. This makes the fashion sector particularly interesting for further research in the field of heritage related to authenticity.

Especially in the age of social media and the various possibilities to conceal, falsify or enhance, (brand) authenticity is a widely discussed topic. Brands are expected to be authentic, not least by Gen Z, who have high levels of brand education and are constantly seeking authenticity (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Research has shown a correlation between high brand authenticity and Gen Z purchase intent (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Therefore, it has become increasingly important to understand the concept of authenticity and the factors that contribute to authentic brand perception from a consumer perspective (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). Brand authenticity has been identified as an important research topic in marketing and has been studied for over 25 years across various consumer goods industries (Södergren, 2021). However, there is limited research on inauthenticity and whether a brand that is perceived as inauthentic by consumers can be perceived as being authentic through its marketing and advertising activities (Södergren, 2021). Thus, there is limited research on how consumers perceive and respond to brand inauthenticity. Whether and how consumers can have positive attitudes towards an inauthentic brand remains unexplored. The most recent research within the selected research area does indeed address inauthenticity by examining (in)authentic brand activism in the context of woke washing (Gambetti & Birarghi, 2023; Vredenburg et al., 2020). Gambetti and Birarghi (2023) define this phenomenon as a misalignment of activist marketing activities with respect to socio-political conflicts and the core of a brand. However, it has not been investigated how consumers perceive inauthenticity in relation to brand heritage which is considered as one of the essential factors contributing to brand authenticity (Urde et al., 2007; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Mohart et al., 2014; Choi et al., 2014; Napoli et al., 2014). This study aims to address this research gap.

The purpose of this research is to explore how Gen Z from a consumer perspective perceives inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. As mentioned previously, heritage plays a particularly important role in the fashion industry, which is why we decided to conduct our research on fashion branding. Previous research has shown that heritage has a significant influence on luxury fashion brands, providing an interesting perspective on the chosen topic. However, this leads us to include another fashion brand category, namely fast fashion brands, to gain further insight by comparing two fashion brand categories. Gen Z's high level of brand education and desire for authenticity from brands makes them an interesting generation to study. In order to achieve the objective of this study, it is necessary to elaborate on the meanings that emerge from Gen Z's perception of inauthentic brand heritage. By exploring

these meanings, a deeper understanding can be gained of Gen Z's acceptance of fictional or extended brand heritage, and in particular, whether they see value in this branding strategy or whether the brand is perceived negatively, resulting in potentially negative attitudes.

In order to fulfil the aim of the study, we have identified the following specific research question with two sub-questions for the study:

RQ: How does Gen Z perceive inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding?

A. How do the perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage differ in fast fashion and luxury fashion?

B. How do Gen Z consumers' perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage contribute to their attitudes towards brands?

1.3 Aimed contribution

By exploring Gen Z consumers' perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, this study aims to address several research gaps related to perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage. It aims to contribute to the aforementioned research challenges, specifically that the extent to which inauthentic brand heritage is accepted by consumers remains unexplored. It also takes a consumer perspective on a borrowed heritage that has not been explored in existing research. Hence, this study aims to contribute to research by exploring consumer perceptions of inauthentic heritage in the fashion sector. It also contributes to the literature by focusing on whether a brand that uses inauthentic heritage can be perceived as authentic. Finally, this study aims to investigate how consumers perceive inauthenticity in relation to brand heritage. Heritage is considered to be one of the essential factors contributing to brand authenticity and has not been sufficiently addressed in research from the opposite perspective of inauthentic heritage. By fulfilling the purpose of this study, we aim to contribute to existing research and theory by providing insights into how Gen Z consumers perceive inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding.

This study also aims to contribute to managerial knowledge by providing insights into whether Gen Z consumers accept inauthentic brand heritage and the potential negative

consequences of non-acceptance. Therefore, it aims to provide insights into the risks that inauthentic brand heritage could pose to brands.

1.4 Delimitations

As the aim of this study is to interview Gen Z about their perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, the study may only capture consumers' perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage at a particular point in time and may not consider changes in attitudes over time. Respondents will have limited time to specifically explore the topic, which may limit the elaboration of long-term perceptions, especially if consumers have not heard of the exemplary cases before. Generation Z, as already mentioned, is particularly relevant to the concept of authenticity, but nevertheless represents a limitation of the research. This study only examines the fashion branding sector because of the aforementioned relevant and historical link to brand heritage, which promises in-depth insights. However, it will not fully capture the fashion industry as a whole, but will only look at luxury and fast fashion brands, thus limiting statements about integral fashion branding. The examination of two different fashion brand categories, namely fast fashion and luxury fashion brands, also implies that the study may not fully capture the nuances of each fashion brand category. Due to the scope of this work, the business models and consumer bases of the selected fashion brand categories cannot be fully integrated into the research.

2. Literature review

This study will use various frameworks to guide our analysis of the inauthentic heritage of fashion brands and the associated consumer perception. The theoretical models we will be utilising aim to provide an in-depth understanding of the importance of heritage in fashion branding and (in)authenticity.

2.1 Fashion branding

In order to approach the aim of this study, it is important to understand the basics of fashion branding, which will be explored below. We will also define different categories of fashion brands to support the understanding of the first sub-question of this study's research question.

2.1.1 The fundamentals of fashion branding

Branding in the fashion industry is essential as companies rely on intangible assets. Brands act as the most important purchase decision factor due to the high competition in the sector caused by low entry barriers (Jin & Cedrola, 2017). It is therefore particularly important to enable consumers to identify specific product characteristics and quality through the collection of tangible and non-tangible elements, hence the brand (Jin & Cedrola, 2017). Specific emotions are evoked by the symbols communicated by the brand, which take precedence over functionality and differentiate the products from others (Jin & Cedrola, 2017). Thus brand equity is produced, which Aaker defines as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand name and symbol, which add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service” (1991, p.15). Aaker's model of brand equity comprises four dimensions: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991). Brand awareness measures how well-known the brand is to the general public. Brand associations refer to the associations evoked by the brand, while perceived quality defines the degree to which the brand is perceived to produce high-quality products. Finally, brand loyalty defines the consumer's loyalty to the brand, which includes being less sensitive to the

market's pricing policies. This makes it more difficult for new companies to enter the market and also helps to reduce a company's marketing costs, as it is cheaper to target existing customers than new ones.

Understanding the basics of the fashion industry and its branding strategies helps relate the concept of heritage to fashion branding.

2.1.2 Classification of fashion brands

Fashion branding starts with the name of a brand and its copyright, while the most important factor is its positioning, determining its purpose, target group, differentiation and competitors (Kapferer, 2012). According to Hameide (2011), fashion brands can be divided into four different categories: griffe, luxury brands, premium brands and mass market brands. In this study, we focus on luxury and fast fashion brands, which are defined in the following to explain and understand their branding approach.

Although several authors approached to define “luxury brands”, defining and measuring the term “luxury” remains subjective (Ko et al., 2019). According to Kapferer (2014, p. 716), luxury brands are defined as “a mix of high-quality product, brand heritage, unique knowledge, exclusivity, personalization of service, and bespoke communications fused with long-term relationships with selected clientele and categorised by high prices and prestigious physical stores.” Brand heritage is a central aspect of luxury brands and is deeply rooted within them as they are distinguished by their history, roots and ancestral heritage (Kapferer & Bastien, 2010). As luxury is a special concept and industry, it also requires a specific strategy with the aim of maximising the perceived value and making it stand out from competitors (Kapferer, 2014). A brand’s heritage acts as one of the unique selling points created by this strategy. Although high-street brands try to emulate the image of exclusivity through selective digital communication, luxury brands differentiate themselves through their heritage (Kapferer, 2014). As luxury brands have a history to convey, social networks are the ideal channel for this purpose. However, the luxury brand strategy must be maintained. Luxury brands, therefore, need to use digital channels for discreet communication that highlights their rarity, while creating buzz around special events and highlights. Kapferer (2014) describes the rising phenomenon of luxury brands collaborating with trendy designers and artists to give the brand a "cool" touch. As this is an extension of the brand's own

heritage, it is an interesting phenomenon that acts as a small modification of the brand's unique selling point.

According to Hameide's classification (2011), fast fashion brands belong to the mass market brands that produce and distribute products for the masses at lower prices. They often emulate trends set by established designers, compromising on the quality of fabrics and production to assure a low price (Jin & Cedrola, 2017). In contrast to luxury brands, which typically do not sell their products at reduced prices, fast fashion brands rely on end-of-season sales (Buzzo & Abreu, 2019). The speed of production is an important factor in the process of the fast fashion industry, as its name suggests. These brands allow people to have access to the latest fashion trends at an affordable price, which was previously only available in higher priced brands (Buzzo & Abreu, 2019), which constitutes their unique selling point. The collections are not planned as with traditional fashion brands, it is a matter of flexibility to offer trendy products in stores for sale within a few weeks (Buzzo & Abreu, 2019). Fast fashion brands use sub-brands to diversify their product range in order to reach different target groups (Buzzo & Abreu, 2019). Another key difference from traditional fashion brands is that fast fashion brands do not have a single designer for whom the brand is known. Fast fashion brands are more market-oriented than brand-oriented, focusing on what consumers want, thus putting the brand's heritage in the background (Arrigo, 2010). Social media constantly contributes to the rise and spread of styles and trends leading to a higher consumption of fast fashion as consumers become co-creators and influence each other (Buzzo & Abreu, 2019).

2.2 Heritage

In this chapter, several theories and frameworks will be elaborated in order to approach the key concept of this study, heritage. Heritage is first defined followed by an explanation of its importance in fashion branding.

2.2.1 Definition of heritage

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, heritage can be defined as "features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings, which come from the past and are still important" (Merchant & Rose, 2013, p. 2620). Therefore, essentially heritage is a multifaceted concept that is intricately linked to both the past and present and has

a substantial impact on the future (Balmer, 2011; Boccardi et al., 2016). This term refers to the complex legacy of all that has been transmitted from the past to the present, shaping the identity of a population, a territory, or a social group (Boccardi et al., 2016). In this sense, heritage provides individuals with a sense of individuality, continuity, and stability in a rapidly evolving world (Boccardi et al., 2016), emphasising the interrelatedness between heritage and identity concepts.

Within this research, brand heritage will be presented as an approach that embraces all time frames regardless of their period, instead of as a historical overview of the past or a retrospective approach to the past (Wiedmann et al., 2011a). Urde et al., (2007) clarify that there is an important role for a brand with a heritage to draw from and clarify the past while making it relevant for current contexts and purposes. Our goal is to narrow the focus of our discussion on heritage branding by briefly discussing three types of branding that have been identified as heritage brand types in literature and then contrast these types with our approach of heritage branding (Wiedmann et al., 2011a; Urde et al., 2007):

Table 1. Heritage branding concepts comparison

Concept	Similarities with heritage branding	Differences with heritage branding
Retro branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both retro branding and heritage branding involve drawing inspiration from the past. - Both aim to create a connection with consumers by evoking nostalgia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retro branding is related to a specific era, whereas heritage branding focuses on the overall history and evolution of a brand. - Retro branding may not necessarily clarify the past and make it relevant for contemporary contexts and purposes.
Iconic branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both iconic branding and heritage branding aim to establish a strong and recognizable brand identity. - Both may have a cult following among consumers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Iconic branding is culturally dominant and distinctive, while heritage branding may not necessarily be so. - Iconic branding often involves mythmaking, while heritage branding may or may not.
Heritage marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both heritage branding and heritage marketing involve promoting and showcasing a brand's history and legacy. - Both may target consumers who are interested in history, tradition, and nostalgia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heritage marketing is primarily concerned with tourism and the heritage industry, while heritage branding is not limited to these areas. - Heritage marketing is retrospective in nature, while heritage branding is both forward-looking and retrospective. - Heritage marketing may focus on brands that are aligned to a particular era, while heritage branding may cover the overall history and evolution of a brand.

We can see from the table that while those constructs are usually associated with a one-time period of history (often only the past), brand heritage is a more comprehensive and holistic representation of brand identity (Urde et al., 2007). In the field of branding and management studies, heritage branding is not an entirely new term. Several scholars have done considerable research on the term 'heritage' and its importance for brands (Boccardi et al., 2016; Hudson, 2015; Urde et al., 2007). When integrating heritage into their corporate brand strategy, firms make use of historical elements related to the brand to enhance its appeal to today's consumers (Misiura, 2006; Urde et al., 2007; Balmer, 2011).

According to Hudson (2015), the heritage nature of a brand of well-established companies may boost the attractiveness of products and services. Urde et al. (2007) state that heritage can add authenticity, credibility and depth to a brand's value proposition. Whereas a study conducted by Boccardi et al. (2016) specifically addresses the fashion industry, where symbolic meaning and value play an important part in the consumption of goods. Therefore, brand heritage proposes that incorporating historical elements into branding activities can enhance a brand's appeal and influence consumers' future behaviour (Hudson, 2015). This is crucial for companies because it gives them a competitive advantage that is difficult for competitors to replicate. Hudson (2015) furthermore, suggests that these heritage elements can serve as evidence to support claims about a brand's attributes or status, particularly in terms of authenticity or innovation. Many scholars are seeing the benefits of communicating a brand's roots in order to stress its identity and strengths, particularly in times of uncertainty (Aaker, 2004 & Balmer, 2011). More importantly, brand heritage gives consumers a sense of stability and reassurance (Merchant & Rose, 2013).

Urde et al. (2007), who have been researching corporate heritage extensively state that corporate branding can utilise heritage as a strategic resource to generate value. Therefore, as part of brand heritage, the development of a brand is closely linked to heritage (Boccardi et al., 2016). The studies are suggesting that heritage branding is an effective strategy, highlighting the past through the lens of the present (Balmer, 2011), and therefore communicating enduring institutional values. From this perspective, it is important to create synergies with stakeholders and the community by focusing on the relationship between the brand and the community (Boccardi et al., 2016). As illustrated by Hudson (2015), the use of heritage as a brand strategy can be illustrated by including company founding dates on

packaging, writing about the company's history on the company's website, and remembrances of company anniversaries. The branding can also refer to the company's historical context or to iconic artefacts the company owns (Urde et al., 2007). A new offering could even incorporate visual elements from past versions or it could be designed to represent idealised or artificial memories of past events (Brunninge, 2023). Whether a brand is new or has a meaningful history that is relevant to what it offers in the present and the future is important to customers (Brunninge, 2023). Brunninge (2023, p.157) argues that from a consumer perspective, there is a certain expectation that the brand needs to fulfil: “Corporate heritage brands are underpinned by a perennial covenant that guarantees the continuity of key characteristics.”

However, heritage branding does carry some risks. Brands need to be careful and strategic with their heritage branding, as too much reliance on the past can result in only a reproduction of the past (Boccardi et al., 2016). As a result, the brand might become stagnant and not develop. Firms often implement heritage branding strategies during times of crisis in order to maintain a sense of continuity and to emphasise brand identity, thus missing the opportunity to regenerate their brand identity (Boccardi et al., 2016). It is evident that there are many advantages that brands can gain when incorporating heritage as part of their branding strategy. This creates stability and recognition amongst the consumers, as well as brands, are able to differentiate from competitors, gaining an advantage that is hard for competitors to replicate. Although, everything should be done with caution to avoid the risk of the brand being too caught up with past and missing future business opportunities due to this. Despite the risks, this solid foundation provides a consistent baseline for the brand, enabling them to stand out from the competition and remain relevant in the eyes of consumers. But there is a fine line between using the past to inform the present and being stuck in the past (Boccardi et al., 2016).

One of the key frameworks that materialises from the literature is Urde’s *Heritage Quotient* (HQ). HQ is established on the definition of brand heritage and its differentiation from related constructs (Urde et al, 2007). It is a crucial framework as it examines five key elements that indicate the existence or potential presence of heritage within a brand and this allows us to examine the extent of a brand’s heritage (Urde et al, 2007). As presented in Figure 1, HQ consists of the following 5 main elements: core values, longevity, use of symbols, history

important to identity and track record (Urde et al, 2007). The latter elements in a brand indicate a higher heritage quotient (HQ), signifying that the brand maintains its heritage both internally and externally (Urde et al., 2007; Wiedmann 2011a).

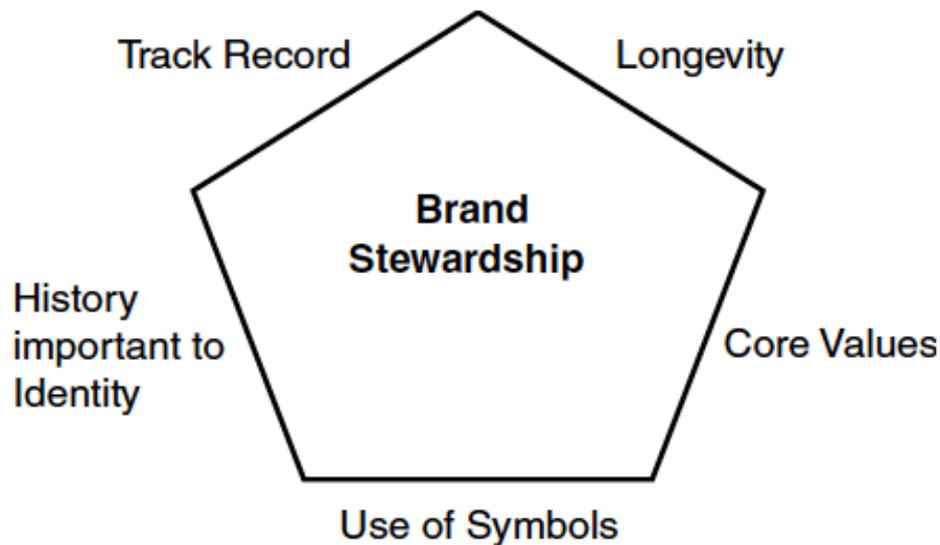


Figure 1. Brand's heritage quotient - The elements of brand heritage (Urde et al., 2007)

For some brands, history can be a key element to their identity in order to communicate who and what they are (Urde et al., 2007). Heritage brands are particularly affected by their past, which influences how they operate today and make choices (Wiedmann et al., 2011a), the presence of certain elements in a brand indicates a higher heritage quotient (HQ). Longevity is another key element of HQ described by Urde et al. (2007), however, a brand having longevity is not quite enough to be considered a heritage brand. Within Urde's study, it is defined as a consistent demonstration of other heritage elements such as track record and use of history over time, which should be ingrained in the organisation's culture (Urde et al., 2007; Wiedmann et al., 2011a). Corporate strategy is defined and shaped by core values for some brands and these core values become part of their heritage (Urde et al., 2007). Brand positioning is based on the core values, which are communicated externally through promises or covenants while guiding internal behaviour and actions (Wiedmann et al., 2011a). When a brand lives up to these values, they become an integral part of its identity and heritage (Urde et al., 2007). Symbols like logos and designs also contribute to a brand's heritage, representing the brand and what it stands for (Urde et al., 2007). For brands with high HQ, these symbols

may take on an identity of their own and become synonymous with the brand, such as the five rings of the Olympics or the Mercedes star (Urde et al., 2007). Lastly, a brand's track record reflects its performance and demonstrates proof that it has lived up to its values and promises over time (Urde et al., 2007). This helps create and confirm expectations for future behaviour and builds trust and credibility among stakeholders (Urde et al., 2007). For instance, Volvo has demonstrated its commitment to safety, making it synonymous with the value of safety (Urde et al., 2007).

2.2.2 Mead's theory of heritage

Drawing on the theories of George Herbert Mead discussed by Hudson and Balmer (2013) in their study focusing on corporate heritage brands and their historical dimensions to consumers, using Mead's ideas, they explain why and how corporate heritage brands appeal to consumers, especially their historical dimensions. Furthermore, Hudson and Balmer's (2013) paper develops a conceptual model with four dimensions of corporate heritage brands: structural, implied, reconstructed, and experiential heritage. Additionally, the research provides a comprehensive overview of the individual characteristics of each dimension, and how they all interact to form the brand's identity.

The work of George Herbert Mead, particularly on the theory of symbolic interactionism, continues to be relevant today, as evidenced by more than a thousand academic articles referencing him (Mitchell & Taylor, 2023). Mead posited that individuals develop a sense of self through reflection and comparison with external entities and objects (Mitchell & Taylor, 2023; Hudson & Balmer, 2013). He emphasised the importance of time in understanding identity, arguing that past events and people, including previous versions of oneself, play a vital role in the process of symbolic interaction (Mitchell & Taylor, 2023). Mead's work has led subsequent scholars to view the self as a temporal process and to reconceptualize human agency as a socially engaged process informed by the past (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). A 1983 sociological article by Maines and colleagues presents a four-part model that develops Mead's theory of the past and applies it to human behaviour (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). The model developed by Maines serves as the foundation for Hudson and Balmer's (2013) own approach, which focuses specifically on consumer behaviour and the concept of heritage brands.

Hudson and Balmer (2013) describe the *structural heritage* dimension refers to the historical process as it is commonly understood and involves a succession of causes from the past to the present. It is impossible to alter events that occurred in the past, which determine the nature of the present (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). This dimension is expressed in corporate communications by referring to founding dates, for example, the phrase ‘Established 1949’ on the Gant t-shirt (Hudson & Balmer, 2013).

The *implied heritage* dimension describes the characteristics of the past that can be inferred or understood from current conditions (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). The present characteristics of the brand logically require that these attributes emerged during the past and support the construction of realities that explain causation in the development of the related company. This dimension is indicated by references to the age of a brand, where longevity may act as a signal or substitute for more substantial measures of performance (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). Claims of differentiation or superiority by a firm can be validated through statements of longevity or demonstrations of continuity between past and present (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). Practical examples of implied heritage include corporate brands celebrating centennial events, displaying historic artefacts linked to their brand identity, and creating visitor centers to showcase these items (Hudson & Balmer, 2013).

The *reconstructed heritage* dimension suggests that our relationship to the past is interpretive and our understanding of prior events is enhanced through contemplation (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). The process is interactive and may involve not only re-classification of the past resulting from comparison to the present but also re-conceptualisation of the present through comparison to a reconstructed past (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). The brand or its subsidiary products become associated with idealised qualities that are superior to those in modern products or in the current experience of consumers (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). Hudson and Balmer (2013) elaborate that reconstructed heritage can be found in packaging design and in the designs placed in consumer environments. One example of this is the plastic version of the classic Coca-Cola hourglass bottle, while the latter is exemplified by the interior decor of newly built Cunard ships that is reminiscent of classic vessels from the past (Hudson, 2011; Hudson & Balmer, 2013).

Based on Maines et al. 's (1983) description, *mythical heritage* corresponds to creating an “air of realism” through their contextual relevance and serves as a “shared consciousness” of “truth” (Maines et al., 1983, p. 351). They are often associated with an idealised or romanticised "Golden Age" that envisions perfect human relations and natural settings (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). In Hudson and Balmer's (2013) research, they refer to a past that is either partly or entirely fictional and allows consumers to immerse themselves in an imaginary world connected to the brand. Therefore, the display of fake heritage is often done through the use of illusions or fantasy, particularly in communication narratives or the design of products and environments. Mythical heritage is frequently depicted through vintage design elements in products and consumer environments (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). For instance, Chrysler's PT Cruiser, which bears similarities to Hot Wheels toys, serves as a case in point (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). Additionally, mythical heritage can be brought to life via marketing communications, as in the case of Hollister, where the brand communicated about its fictional surf brand heritage.

2.2.3 Importance of heritage in fashion branding

Literature concerning the role of heritage in fashion branding is largely linked to luxury brands rather than fast fashion brands such as Hollister (Buckley, 2011 & Morley & McMahan, 2011). The brand must connect with compelling and authentic stories, including people, images and quotes, to leverage heritage (Buckley, 2011). Leveraging heritage in a high street brand, where in-house designers are usually anonymous and countries of origin vary, requires a different genre of storytelling to those associated with luxury brands (Buckley, 2011). Buckley (2011) continues new fashion brands frequently prioritise other qualities over their history or country of origin. However, the most successful brands incorporate history in three distinct ways (Buckley, 2011). These include an authentic history that generates modern myths, the re-appropriation or borrowing of a true story, or the creation of a new contemporary legend inspired by a particular era or lifestyle, such as Ralph Lauren (Buckley, 2011).

In contrast, luxury brands have a long-standing association with traditional craftsmanship and a family business, typically with well-known founders (Köning et al., 2016). Authenticity and emotions from the past are essential components of luxury brand positioning in the modern world, and they form the heart of brand heritage (Köning et al., 2016). By placing consumers

in the centre of the luxury heritage brand's 'experience' and personality, they can see it as a reflection of their own exclusiveness, authentic uniqueness, belonging, and cultural value (Morley & McMahon, 2011).

As discussed earlier, there are several ways that brands can benefit from heritage, which can create advantages over the competition as it enhances the authenticity of a brand and facilitates consumer relationships (Urde et al., 2007). As such, carefully crafted messaging is key to connecting with luxury consumers and driving sales. Urde et al. (2007) state in their research that increased credibility and feelings of trust are common among heritage brands because, over time, the brand has opportunities to build strong 'brand stature', measured by characteristics of esteem, consumer respect, and knowledge or consumers' familiarity with the brand (Urde et al., 2007; Morley & McMahon, 2011). It has been noted that in addition to communicating a sense of elevated status and enhanced self-image through luxury consumption, consumers are also able to develop a greater sense of self-esteem and ego fulfilment resulting in a stronger and more positive sense of self (Okonkwo, 2007; Morley & McMahon, 2011). Consumers are able to experience positive psychological effects when they align themselves with the brand imagery, which is one of the things that makes luxury brands unique and valuable (Keller, 2009). In the process of formulating branding strategies for luxury brands, it is crucial for them to grasp the external and internal emotions evoked by their heritage and brand positioning (Morley & McMahon, 2011).

As a luxury brand, it is imperative to tell a story that is either rooted in the brand's own past and history, or one that has been developed from scratch in order to create emotional connections with consumers (Morley & McMahon, 2011). Brands must understand that heritage is not merely synonymous with history but represents an emotional response that can be adapted to contemporary contexts in order to enhance the relevance of the brand in contemporary contexts (Keller, 2009; Urde et al., 2007). Morley and McMahon (2011) argue that it is imperative that brands are not exploiting their heritage by drawing on it without further enriching it or adding anything to it. The ability of luxury heritage brands to balance the timeless nature of brand heritage with contemporary demands is an important element that defines successful brands (Okonkwo, 2007; Morley & McMahon, 2011). It is measured on three criteria of differentiation, or point of difference, energy, or momentum of the brand, and relevance, how broad the appeal is amongst consumers (Okonkwo, 2007; Morley &

McMahon, 2011). A brand leader in the luxury field needs to be strong in all these categories to successfully utilise its heritage (Morley & McMahon, 2011).

2.3 Consumer perceptions

In order to understand Gen Z consumers' perspectives on inauthentic heritage in fashion branding, it is necessary to first examine the fundamentals of consumer perception. This is undertaken below by defining perception and explaining the perceptual process.

2.3.1 Definition of perception

The term perception defines how people organise and interpret sensory information to give meaning to their surroundings in order to understand the world (Zimbardo et al., 1995). It is affected by various factors that evolve around the stimulus and the subject, including the extent and intensity of the stimulus, the response of the sensory organs, previous experience, attention, and the subject's motivational and emotional state (Draskovic et al., 2009). Perception does not equate to understanding, but to consider perception as truth (Aque, 2007). As the first response generated by the use of our senses, Aque (2007) refers to perception as "raw data that enters our mind to be processed through thought and action". The concept has already been studied by Aristotle (Aque, 2007; Everson, 1997) and has since then been approached by academics and practitioners (Draskovic et al., 2009). Within marketing communications research perception has become essential as it supports the understanding of consumer behaviour (Draskovic et al., 2009). Kotler and Keller (2008) contribute an important argument that highlights the importance of this area of research, arguing that it is more important how consumers perceive a brand than how a brand perceives itself, as this is the foundation on which consumer actions are based. Perception has been looked at as a process, consisting of stages in which stimuli are selected and interpreted (Solomon et al., 2006). This will be examined in more detail in the following.

2.3.2 Perceptual process

Within research, there are several concepts and models that approach perception. The perceptual process is studied from two main perspectives, the psychological and the

behavioural (Draskovic et al., 2009). This study focuses on the latter, as the perceptual response to a stimulus as a form of behaviour (Goldstein, 2007) is of particular interest. The perceptual process according to Solomon et al. (2006) consists of two key stages, namely sensation and meaning. In the sensory stage, sensory receptors such as the nose, eyes, ears, mouth and fingers receive a stimulus such as tastes, smells, textures, sounds or sights (Solomon et al., 2006). In the following stage meaning is assigned to the stimuli by interpreting and responding to them (Solomon, 2006). The examination of perception, however, places the emphasis on the degree to which a person focuses on the stimuli and on what is taken away or added to the stimulus in the process of assigning meaning to it (Solomon et al., 2006). The knowledge and past of a person thus is of importance for the interpretation of stimuli, as it involves feelings, opinions, values and thinking (Draskovic et al., 2009). The perceptual process encompasses the described stages as illustrated in Figure 2.

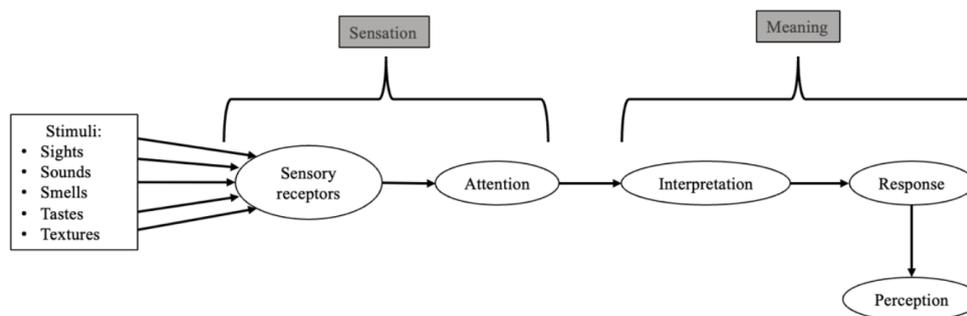


Figure 2. The perceptual process (Solomon et al., 2006, p. 37)

Another behavioural approach to perception is proposed by Kotler and Keller (2008), who introduce three distinct processes. The first process focuses on how people selectively choose which stimuli to notice and which to exclude due to the high daily exposure to stimuli. This implies that the consumer's attention must be actively directed. This process is referred to as *selective attention*. In the process of *selective distortion*, Kotler and Keller (2008) describe the phenomenon of using previous perceptions when assigning meaning to new stimuli. This could include having an established opinion or feeling about a brand, which leads to a particular way of perceiving new information about it. *Selective retention* is referred to as the final process of perceiving, providing insight into what information is stored and what is forgotten by the consumer (Kotler & Keller, 2008). Retained information can also contribute to an established image of a brand.

The theories introduced are essential to this study, as they help to understand and interpret the way in which consumers make sense of (new) information. Kotler and Keller's theory is of particular interest when considering consumers' perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, as it explores changes within perceptions and includes a consideration of established opinions.

2.4 Consumer attitudes

There are two different perspectives on attitudes and their formation, namely functional and constructive (Argyriou & Melewar, 2011). From a functional perspective, attitudes are described as object-related and therefore relatively stable, whereas constructive theory argues that consumers evaluate objects on the spot using perception and decision-making, indicating that attitudes are temporary (Argyriou & Melewar, 2011). In order to clearly distinguish between perceptions and attitudes, this study adopts a functional approach and defines consumer attitudes as follows. Attitudes are formed through perceptual and learning processes and are thus created and memorised from consumers' past experiences (Fill, 2013). They can thus be considered "relatively stable object associations" (Argyriou & Melewar, 2011, p. 431) helping make decisions related to the specific object. Attitudes are stored in memory as they contribute to the performance of human functions, in particular to the need to consolidate knowledge and articulate values (Argyriou & Melewar, 2011), and can be considered as the action of thoughts.

Fill (2013) identifies three components of attitudes. First, the *cognitive* component considers the learning perspective by relating to the beliefs and knowledge a consumer has about the object. The *affective* component relates to the evaluation of the object based on feelings and emotions towards it. This component, therefore, takes into account brand preference based on emotional attachment, which may include longevity and past experience. A consumer's behavioural intention is taken into account within the *conative* component, which relates to intended or completed actions. Fill (2013) highlights the importance of the *affective* component by suggesting a single-component model only considering the feelings held about an object. Attitudes are not only related to brands or their products but also to (advertising) messages, which can influence the overall attitude towards a brand (Fill, 2013). Kotler et al. (2011) note that it can be challenging to alter the attitudes of consumers, particularly from a

marketing point of view. Therefore, it may be advisable to adapt consumer attitudes rather than trying to transform them.

The notion of consumer attitudes contributes to a holistic understanding of opinion towards brands with inauthentic brand heritage within this study. Although interviewees' knowledge of inauthentic brand heritage may be expanded during the interview, and thus their opinions may be considered rather than perceptions, the concept may still be valuable to take into account past experiences or attitudes towards the brands discussed.

2.5 Definition of brand (in)authenticity

In order to understand inauthenticity, it is crucial to first define the concept of authenticity. Being authentic can be defined as the state or characteristic of being worthy of acceptance, trustworthy, authoritative, and not false, imaginary, or an imitation, but corresponding to an original (Beverland, 2009). In literature, authenticity is also related to concepts such as genuineness, truth and reality (Muñoz et al., 2006; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). There are various benefits that arise from a brand being perceived as authentic, including increased trustworthiness (Eggers et al., 2013), strong emotional attachment and increased word-of-mouth (Morhart et al., 2015). These benefits lead to brand preference and hence the willingness to pay a premium price (Fritz et al., 2017; Napoli et al., 2014).

Heritage is one of the factors that consumers consider to contribute to a brand being authentic, along with consistency, transparency, sustainability and unique storytelling (Urde et al., 2007; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Mohart et al., 2014; Choi et al., 2014; Napoli et al., 2014). Although these five factors have a significant impact on people's perceptions of authenticity, consumers may prioritise these factors differently and may be influenced by culture and context.

Bruhn et al. (2012) are characterising the concept by four dimensions of brand authenticity being *continuity, originality, reliability and naturalness*. According to these dimensions, a brand is perceived as authentic if it remains stable throughout time, is innovative and imaginative, keeps its promises and is genuine (Bruhn et al., 2012).

Greyser (2009) refers to four contexts of authenticity, further enhancing the general concept and linking it to high reputation. The different contexts are linked through communication and are key elements in creating, maintaining and protecting a high reputation (Greyser, 2009).

The substance is highlighted as the fundamental basis for building authenticity and is therefore recommended as the basis for communication, referred to as *talking authentic*. *Being authentic* is the second context and relates to a brand's core values, track record and behaviour. Aligning a brand's actions with its communicated core values is discussed as the third context, namely *staying authentic*. The final context of authenticity is referred to as *defending authenticity* and relates to protecting a brand's reputation during a crisis. Brands are advised to generate long-term consumer trust by building a reputational reservoir (Greysler, 2009).

Moreover, authenticity is not a fixed or static characteristic, brands need to work continuously to ensure that their authenticity is maintained and strengthened over time. Consumers expect brands to be authentic as they increasingly attribute the construct to brands rather than to themselves or the market (Napoli et al., 2014). However, when considering the viewpoint of a brand, striving for authenticity through advertising by employing mass-marketing strategies poses a complex and paradoxical situation (Beverland, Lindgreen & Vink, 2008). However, *staged* and *constructed authenticity* has been discussed in recent years, suggesting that authenticity can be perceived as authentic even when it is not (MacCannell, 1973; Alexander, 2009; Chhabra et al., 2003; Leigh et al., 2006). Especially in the sector of tourism research authentication processes are examined in detail (Koontz, 2010). Authenticity is thus measured by the degree of originality of an object. This presupposes that there is an objective criterion against which authenticity can be measured (i.e. tangible origin) (Leigh et al., 2006). This perspective is also found in the approach to indexical authenticity, referring to an object as “the original” (Grayson & Martinec, 2004, p. 297). The authors distinguish this concept from iconic authenticity, which is referred to as an “authentic reproduction” (Grayson & Martinec, 2004, p. 298). Cohen (1988), on the other hand, takes a social constructivist perspective that authenticity is perceived by individuals and shaped by personal experience. Authenticity is thus understood as a socially negotiable concept. Morhart et al. (2015) additionally present an objectivist approach, which describes authenticity as the quality of an object as assessed by experts. As examples of quality, they use labels of the origin or the founding date of a brand.

Consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by the combination of the factors previously discussed, which make the offers feel authentic or inauthentic to them. It thus remains an open

question what a consumer perceives as (in)authentic. Nevertheless, a definition of inauthenticity that is valid for this work will be established.

Inauthenticity is defined as "the fact of not being what somebody claims it is or not possible to believe or rely on" (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, n.d.). Inauthenticity is the antithesis of authenticity as defined in this chapter. An inauthentic brand is therefore not an original and to some extent is false, imaginary or an imitation. The following chapter explains in more detail what this implies in the context of brand heritage.

2.6 Inauthentic brand heritage

Brands can gain many benefits from using heritage in their marketing efforts as a part of their overall brand image. There is a part of this subject that has not received as much research as it should, and that is the question of what happens when the heritage a brand holds is false or invented? It has been suggested in the literature on corporate heritage, that the past is not simply a contingency, but also a constituent element of the phenomena at the level of the corporation (Balmer, 2011; Brunninge, 2009). It is quite likely that the present may shape the past in a similar way that the past shapes the present (Balmer, 2011; Brunninge, 2009). Therefore, invented heritage can possibly be used to leverage the past in the present (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019). Brunninge (2023) has done extensive research into invented brand heritages and defines this phenomenon as a branding strategy that focuses on a heritage that exploits accounts of the past that are strong enough to be considered by key stakeholders as being fictitious, exaggerated, misleading, or otherwise untrustworthy. Brunninge and Hartmann (2019) argue that the appeal of invented heritage lies in its perceived authenticity, despite not necessarily meeting objective standards. Similarly, Hudson and Balmer (2013) refer to this as mythical heritage, which can be fake but is still appealing to consumers because it allows them to immerse themselves in a romanticised and idealised past. Using Gucci's fictitious provenance as an example, Beverland (2005) discusses how authenticity can be conveyed through stories about a brand's origins, whether real or imagined. Brunninge (2023) points out how the concept of image heritage suggests that corporate heritage brands risk being deemed inauthentic by brand communities, which could result in a negative backlash against the brand.

Because the past is open to multiple interpretations, this creates opportunities for companies to make their past relevant in ways that change over time (Balmer & Burghausen, 2014). Urde et al. (2007) identified credibility and trust as key attributes of heritage. Thus, any potential risk to the trustworthiness of a heritage brand poses a direct threat to its intrinsic value. As Balmer and Burghausen (2014) suggest, firms have pragmatic flexibility when adopting a relevant, but not necessarily factual past when the heritage that they are supposed to leverage is made up or at least contestable. However, they note that this is within unspecified limits. Although invented heritage is a phenomenon that is acknowledged and addressed in the extant literature, it is rarely the focus of the discussion, and it is usually addressed within the context of larger discussions. The representation of the past in itself is, however, a product of identity construction (Brunninge, 2023), whereas historical references are constructed with the purpose of maximising their strategic utility (Brunninge, 2023; Brunninge, 2019). As a result, the past becomes more than just a contingency when it comes to corporate-level branding phenomena.

In this sense, heritage is by definition selective and entails opportunities for improving the past (Brunninge, 2023). The process may involve downplaying or ignoring things that are perceived as embarrassing or unusable (Balmer, 2009; Balmer & Burghausen, 2015; Brunninge, 2009), and adapting to spatial and temporal contexts (Balmer, 2013). In the course of time, some aspects of heritage may be discarded, while others may be preserved (Hudson, 2017). In essence, there are multiple sources from which heritage can be constructed, rather than a single quarry (Balmer, 2013). According to Balmer and Burghausen (2019), the corporate past is diverse and perceived differently by various stakeholders. However, this does not imply that historical accounts can be entirely arbitrary. The corporate heritage literature emphasises the importance of understanding the past as people perceive, think, and communicate about it, rather than how it happened.

It is evident that the origins, which Burghausen and Balmer (2014) refer to as provenance in a corporate context, play a fundamental role in defining a company's identity (Blombäck & Brunninge, 2009). Hudson and Balmer (2013) recognise the appeal of the mythical past as an ideal that is often glorified and romanticised. Especially founding myths, whether they pertain to corporations or entire civilisations, are implicitly universal, suggesting that they provide

direction for the future (Assmann, 1992). As a result, it is important for managers to be able to define and redefine the ‘true’ origins of their organisations (Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993).

Previous studies on corporate heritage suggest that brands have some flexibility in interpreting the past, meaning that there is no clear distinction between exaggerations, far-fetched interpretations, and fictional inventions when it comes to corporate heritage (Brunninge, 2023). From the brands’ perspective, they have more pragmatic flexibility when it comes to interpreting the past (Brunninge, 2023), which can lead to the past being more fiction than actual fact. A prime example of this is the American clothing brand Hollister, which has a fictional origin story of being founded as a surfing store in 1926, when in fact the brand was founded by its parent company Abercrombie & Fitch in 2002 (Eggers, 2015). The goal of corporate heritage is to construct useful rather than accurate accounts of the past, aimed at eliciting reactions from stakeholders (Blombäck & Brunninge, 2016). The benefit of this would result as customers who perceive a brand as trustworthy due to its history may exhibit higher purchase intention and brand attachment (Urde et al., 2007).

Despite lacking authenticity, a corporate heritage invented by the company can still be attractive to consumers due to its ability to deliver an enchanting experience regardless of its substantive authenticity (Brunninge, 2019). Furthermore, Hudson and Balmer (2013) indicate that consumers use symbols to achieve their desired identities. It appears that a corporation's past can mask its present identity problems, despite its invented past. Therefore, adopting a fictional past can be acceptable as long as it holds symbolic significance and helps achieve desired objectives (Burghausen & Balmer, 2014). While this may lack in authenticity, an invented brand heritage may still attract consumers since it can construct an aura of authenticity by delivering an enchanting experience to consumers, irrespective of its substantive genuineness (Hudson, 2017).

The very essence of heritage is the multiple relationships between different time frames, even though the heritage would be fabricated or purely fictional. Therefore, a brand with an invented heritage may tap into the potential of creating an “omni temporality”, imbuing its products and services with an aura of authenticity (Balmer, 2019). As a concept, “omni temporality” (Balmer, 2011; Balmer, 2013) emphasises that all time frames are relevant simultaneously, while dialectical relationships – or combinations of time frames – can be used

to emphasise the dynamics between the past, present and future. For the brand today and for the future, the past is relevant because it shapes what it is and what it will become (Balmer, 2011). As a result, activities that appear to be preoccupied with the past actually relate to future-oriented strategic decisions (Hudson, 2011). Due to its inherent nature, corporate heritage is omni temporal (Balmer, 2013). The omni temporality of brand heritage is linked to the idea that certain things remain the same from past to present and potentially into the future (Brunninge, 2023). This idea of corporate heritage being omni temporal is based on the concept that a brand's history informs its identity and how its identity will evolve over time. This understanding is essential for the brand to create a coherent strategy that resonates with customers and potential customers, now and into the future.

Omni temporality further creates a sense of authenticity, which Brunninge (2023; 2018) and Balmer (2011; 2013) define as the “aura of authenticity”. Brands can see this as an opportunity to deliver an enchanting experience to consumers, but also carry with it a significant risk with their strategy, if stakeholders feel deceived by a fabrication of the past (Brunninge, 2018). In addition to Brunninge's findings, Alexander (2009) also confirms that invented brand heritage serves to construct an aura of authenticity at a deeper level. The "true," "genuine," and "real deal" have become essential aspects of marketing and branding, specifically linked to a brand's history and tradition (Brunninge, 2018). The quest for authenticity can never be achieved through simple assertion (Beverland, 2005; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Instead, as Brunninge (2018) points out it is construed by the creation of an aura of authenticity.

Hudson and Balmer (2013) point out that corporate heritage can be mythical in the sense that it refers to a glorious past that has been romanticised and partly fabricated. However, mythical heritage can have an aura of authenticity when it is subjectively perceived as genuine by consumers (Brunninge, 2018). The past provides essential resources in the creation of such an aura, as it offers rich symbolic elements that provide clues about the genuineness of a brand's or firm's existence, its values, and its promise (Beverland, 2009). Hollister, for example, displayed the dates of its founding on its logo, even though this past is fictional (BBC, 2009). Despite appearing far-fetched, Brunninge (2018) explained that these connections conjure up feelings of continuity - as a result, the brand must be authentic or real. Based on the brand's past performance, it can provide credibility to its promise that it will continue to provide value

to its customers in the future (Balmer, 2013 & Brunninge, 2019). By creating a narrative rooted in a distant past, Hollister could evoke a sense of stability and reliability, allowing customers to trust the brand and feel confident in its ability to deliver the same quality products and services in the future.

2.7 Conceptual framework

The theories presented in this chapter are intended to contribute to a full understanding of the research topic. Firstly, theories on fashion branding and fashion brand positioning were reviewed in order to establish the overall context of the study. Next, the concept of heritage was considered and related to fashion branding. In order to understand how consumers perceive inauthentic fashion brand heritage, theories on consumer perceptions and attitudes were included to facilitate the subsequent analysis and consideration of previous perceptions and attitudes. As inauthentic brand heritage is the subject of this study, the term authenticity was first defined and differentiated from antithesis. Finally, the theoretical underpinnings of inauthentic brand heritage are presented to provide the reader with a comprehensive introduction to the study. Not all of the theories mentioned will be discussed further during the analysis, as some of them only served as an introduction to the topic. The following conceptual framework (see Figure 3) therefore only summarises theories that will be used to evaluate the empirical material. The use of these theories is intended to provide new insights within the research field. The theories are therefore put into a fashion branding context.

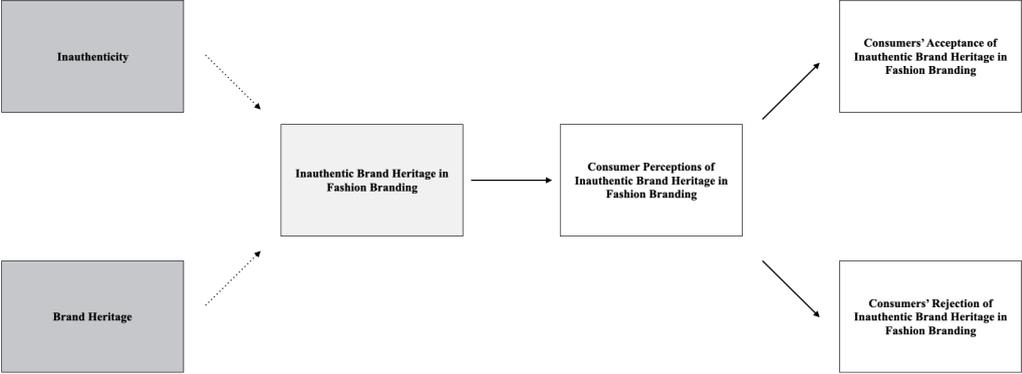


Figure 3. Conceptual framework

As this study approaches brand heritage from an inauthentic perspective, our framework uses the four dimensions of brand authenticity (Bruhn et al., 2012) and the four contexts of authenticity (Greyser, 2009) as a basis to first define authenticity. Consequently, the question of what happens when these theories are not met because a brand or its heritage is inauthentic is explored throughout the analysis of this study. To provide a theoretical basis for the concept of brand heritage, Urde et al.'s (2007) brand heritage quotient is used to define authentic brand heritage. These theories are used to discuss the empirical material, in particular by looking at how the concepts of (in)authenticity and heritage work together and what significance they have for consumers. They also lay the foundation for inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, which is further theorised with the concept of aura of authenticity (Hudson, 2017). It explores whether a brand can succeed in creating omni temporality (Balmer, 2019) based on inauthentic brand heritage, and what inauthentic heritage means for consumers. This leads to the final two parts of our conceptual framework. To answer our research question on how Gen Z perceives inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, the unit of analysis, consumer perceptions, is integrated. These perceptions allow us to understand how Gen Z consumers perceive inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. This leads us to the final step of assessing whether Gen Z consumers accept or reject inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, incorporating the notion of consumer attitudes to further elaborate on our second sub-question, specifically the potential consequences of consumer perceptions on inauthentic fashion brand heritage. From this, theoretical and managerial implications are derived as to whether and to what extent a brand with an inauthentic brand heritage can be successful in the long term. In this way, the study aims to contribute to the field of research by generating new insights.

3. Method

In the following, the qualitative methodological approach will be presented. To this end, the research philosophy and design are discussed. This is followed by a description of the semi-structured interview process, the selection of interviewees, the structure and content of the interview guide, and the preparation and conduct of the interviews. Finally, the transcription process and the analysis method are presented and evaluated.

3.1 Research philosophy

Identifying a philosophical standpoint is crucial to clarify our research design (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021), which will be done in the following. It helps to consider what data is needed, and how it is collected and interpreted, in order to ensure a consistently high research quality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Research philosophy is divided into two distinct branches: ontology and epistemology. Ontology is concerned with "philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021, p. 71), so it defines reality and "types of beings". Epistemology, on the other hand, is "a general set of assumptions about ways of inquiring into the nature of the world" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021, p. 71).

The aim of this research is to explore how Gen Z perceives inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. It therefore follows an interpretivist approach, which aims to understand the behaviour and actions of individuals (Oberholzer & Buys, 2023). The interpretivist paradigm acknowledges the existence of multiple realities, as opposed to the positivist paradigm, which objectively observes and infers social reality by attempting to explore one reality (Saunders et al., 2012). Thus, the ontological assumption of this paradigm is that reality is complex and has multiple meanings (Oberholzer & Buys, 2023). The epistemological assumption of the interpretivist paradigm is that knowledge and understanding are subjective and value-bound (Oberholzer & Buys, 2023). Subjective meaning is investigated by focusing on individual

meanings and social phenomena, as well as by investigating the details of them (Saunders et al., 2012).

Reality is seen as socially constructed 'through the meanings that social actors ascribe to their experiences' (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 185), hence subjective and multiple. Therefore, it is crucial for researchers to distinguish between different social actors and their meanings as they determine reality according to the interpretivist paradigm (Saunders et al., 2012). This approach aims to find out how people make sense of their experiences and surroundings by focusing on individuals' social interactions, motivations and understandings (Saunders et al., 2012). This also applies to the aim of this study by exploring subjective perceptions and attitudes rather than objective outcomes, proving that the interpretivist philosophical approach is the most suitable.

Throughout data collection and analysis, therefore, researchers will remain aware that there are multiple subjective realities and that interpretive values may influence the process of observation, inquiry and interpretation (Nunan et al., 2020).

3.2 Research approach

Research approaches to plan the process and different stages of research from data gathering, and data analysis to its interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These decisions are made and combined with a particular design and method. The approach to this study is outlined in the following.

Three approaches to research are presented: *quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods* (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These approaches are not as distinct as they seem. They can not be viewed as opposites, but should be seen as “different ends on a continuum” (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 3). *Quantitative* research aims to test theories by exploring the relationship between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It is suitable for studying a wide range of phenomena in a short period of time. Statistical analysis of large samples allows for the generalisation and replication of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and makes research efficient and cost-effective (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). However, quantitative methods are not suited to understanding the processes or meanings that individuals attach to their behaviour (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Therefore, quantitative research approaches are not

useful for generating in-depth knowledge about (new) phenomena and, consequently, for contributing to future implications.

Qualitative research on the contrary examines the “meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 4). It allows researchers to understand processes over time and generate in-depth knowledge of human behaviour, enabling the study of emerging phenomena and the generation of theory (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Although data collection is perceived as more natural than quantitative data, it is more time and resource consuming (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Data analysis involves the construction of themes from the data and the researcher's interpretation of their meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It is therefore more complex and dependent on the researcher's knowledge and therefore less controlled. Because qualitative research explores the subjective meanings of smaller samples, it is partly considered to be less credible (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

In the middle of the continuum of research approaches is the *mixed methods* approach, which encompasses both quantitative and qualitative data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It recognises the weaknesses of both approaches and combines them to provide a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. This approach can enable the researcher to increase the validity and generalisability of the study, provided that the researcher has the expertise to apply different methods and avoid contradictions between the philosophical approaches underlying the methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

As this study aims to explore Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, a qualitative research approach was used to gain in-depth knowledge of how Gen Z ascribes meaning to (inauthentic) brand heritage and, consequently, their behaviour. As it was essential to gather detailed data on the perceptions of the respondents, a quantitative approach would not have been appropriate. Focus group interviews were used to generate in-depth and rich qualitative data while capturing multiple perceptions of the research topic.

In order to elaborate on how theory is used and generated in this study, the three main approaches to analysis, namely *induction*, *deduction* and *abduction* (Saunders et al., 2012; Easterby-Smith et al., 2021) are discussed further. The *inductive* approach aims to generate a theory from the data collected to explore a phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2012). Conversely, the *deductive* approach is the reasoning from theory to a particular phenomenon with the aim

of testing the theory (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). In the *abduction* approach, observations are related to theory through interpretation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The aim of this approach is to generate or modify theory from the data collected, incorporating suitable previous theories (Saunders et al., 2012). The data collected can therefore be used to test a conceptual framework and explore specific (new) components of it. It is especially suitable when a mixed approach, such as interpretivism is used (Oberholzer & Buys, 2023).

According to the interpretivist perspective that this study takes, an inductive approach might initially seem appropriate, as subjective perceptions were examined with the aim of identifying more general patterns. However, as this research used existing theory to explore Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, an abductive approach was used. This study is based on a conceptual framework (see Chapter 2.6) which uses key concepts as a foundation to define inauthentic heritage and allows conclusions to be drawn from the data collected through focus group interviews in relation to existing theory.

3.3 Focus group interviews

To explore Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, we conducted our research using four semi-structured focus group interviews. Focus groups are moderated discussions among a group of people participating in a research project (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Focus groups differ from group interviews in that the interview group is formed by the researcher, as opposed to being a naturally occurring group within a particular setting, such as a work context (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Interviews with genuine groups have high external validity, but may also limit the openness of the discussion (Vogl, 2019). Ultimately, it is crucial that the interviewees have enough in common to be able to talk about the research topic and still not agree on everything, as this could lead to a superficial discussion (Vogl, 2019). We deliberately chose to conduct focus groups in preference to group interviews in order to obtain multiple perceptions of the research topic, rather than including participants who were likely to have a similar view of the topic. However, the selection of participants and the formation of focus groups will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.3.

The advantage of a group discussion is that the conversation between respondents provides a special dynamic and encourages the formulation of opinions (Brosius et al., 2016). However, the opinions generated should be viewed and interpreted with caution, as respondents may tend to follow the majority opinion and thus their answers may influence each other (Brosius et al., 2016). The size and composition of the group depend on the research object and the analysis sought (Krüger & Casey, 2009). However, Krüger and Casey (2009) recommend a focus group size of five to eight participants. They further define the increasingly popular focus groups with four to six participants as small or mini focus groups (Krüger & Casey, 2009). These focus groups have the advantage of being more comfortable for respondents, but the number of participants limits the shared opinions and experiences (Krüger & Casey, 2009). Krüger and Casey (2009) also recommend having fewer participants when researchers want to gain in-depth insights and have more questions to cover, as well as when participants are passionate about the topic and may have a lot of experiences to share. As this research aims to generate in-depth knowledge about participants' perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, we chose to form rather small focus groups of four to five participants. This decision was further consolidated by the selection of respondents, which is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.3.

The interviews were loosely structured using a semi-structured interview guide to encourage and guide the conversation between the participants (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Discussions between participants allowed for the collection of rich and comprehensive information from participants on their opinions, experiences and perspectives (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). This method is therefore particularly useful for exploring in-depth and complex issues, such as Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. We chose to conduct four interviews as we anticipate that this will allow for initial exploitation or overlap of responses, as well as generate insights for further research into consumer perspectives on inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding.

In accordance with the semi-structured interview, an interview guide was developed to provide a rough sequence of questions to be asked. The basis for this guide was provided by pre-determined ideas about the research problem, preliminary considerations, and the conceptual framework we have established (see Chapter 2.6). The open-ended formulation of the questions allowed for flexibility in the flow and order of the conversation, as well as for the exploration of additional concepts and areas of research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

However, the guide ensured systematic and consistent conduct of the different focus group interviews, enabling us to compare the data and identify themes and patterns across the data collection. Incorporating the conceptual framework into the interview guide provided guidance for data analysis and allowed for reference to existing theories during data analysis and interpretation.

Three main phases structured the interview guide for this study: introduction, interview and conclusion. In the first phase, the interviewer thanked the focus group for their participation, introduced the interview procedure and asked the participants for their permission to record the interview and to use the collected data in an anonymised form. Before starting with introductory questions to introduce the interview phase, the participants were reminded that the interview should be an open conversation. The aim of the interview was not to answer each question in turn but rather to elaborate and discuss.

The principle of openness was maintained by giving participants the freedom to discuss the issue in as much detail as they desire. The interviewer asked a follow-up question if an aspect was unclear or unanswered. However, the discussion was not interrupted to allow respondents to add to another respondent's statement. The interview remained flexible and adaptable if a deviation from the original chronology of questions was required. However, explicit thematic control and redirection of the conversation through follow-up questions was possible. The techniques of 'laddering down' through asking for specific examples and 'laddering up' through follow-up 'why' questions were employed (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Participants were asked for their experiences and perspectives through narrative-generating questions. Overall questions were neutral and open-ended to avoid limiting or distorting participants' responses.

In the final phase of the interview, respondents had the opportunity to add any final thoughts on the topic discussed, which provided new perspectives on the research problem.

Overall, the use of the interview guide allowed for a structured and consistent approach to data collection, while allowing flexibility in the order and flow of the discussion.

3.4 Sampling method

To gain deeper insights into consumers' perspectives on inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, we decided to interview consumers belonging to Generation Z, as their high level of brand education and desire for authenticity from brands make them an interesting generation to study (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). According to Francis and Hoefel (2018), Gen Z includes individuals born between 1995 and 2010. We adopted this definition and limited the selection of our participants to this age group, in order to answer the defined research question.

The group discussion participants were deliberately selected according to age and fashion brand consumption. The aim was to bring together different age groups and consumer groups to get as many different perspectives on the research topic as possible. To ensure that the topic was discussed in depth, we decided it would be useful to include marketing experts in the focus groups. To find suitable participants for the focus groups, we approached selected marketing students and marketing managers. Part of the search and approach of marketing managers was done through the social media platform LinkedIn. Potential interviewees were informed of the purpose and topic of the research and asked to participate in the focus group interview, which was scheduled to last approximately one hour.

As marketing students were easily accessible as a sample for the researchers of this study, it could be argued that they were a convenience sample (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). However, the reason for their selection was their expertise and not their ease of access. Our sampling approach can therefore be classified as typical case sampling, as our aim was to identify the most prototypical examples, namely participants who are part of Gen Z and partly marketing professionals (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). It can therefore be considered purposive sampling (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021) as we assessed potential participants to determine if they met the inclusion criteria before selecting them to participate in the sample.

The first group was selected to bring together marketing students and participants working in marketing with respondents who had no specific expertise in the field. The first interview confirmed that the experts, with their high level of brand knowledge, had a different perspective on the research topic and could contribute more to the discussion than the other respondents. Accordingly, in the further selection of interviewees, more attention was paid to

the fact that the interviewees had marketing expertise and/or were active consumers of fashion brands, as it was assumed that they would also have a high level of brand knowledge and thus a different perspective on the research topic. Furthermore, in the group discussions, the age groups were mixed to allow for different perspectives on the research topic, with all interviewees always belonging to Gen Z. The first focus group interview showed an extensive and lengthy discussion with five participants, indicating that the group size might be too large for the scope of the questions asked. Therefore, we deliberately decided to reduce the group size to four participants for the following focus group interviews. Figure 4 summarises the formation of the focus groups, including the age and background of the participants.

Table 2. Overview of participants

FOCUS GROUP 1 – 28 April 2023 (62 min)			
Participant	Gender	Age	Education / Employment
1	Male	27	Master's student in international marketing and brand management, works as a commercial producer
2	Female	25	Master's student in psychology
3	Female	26	Master's student in international marketing and brand management
4	Female	18	Bachelor's student in international business
5	Female	25	Master's student in international marketing and brand management
FOCUS GROUP 2 – 5 May 2023 (42 min)			
Participant	Gender	Age	Education / Employment
6	Female	24	Master's student in marketing, works as a figure skating coach
7	Female	20	Bachelor's student in marketing, works in a digital tech agency
8	Female	24	Master's student in marketing
9	Male	25	Master's student in finance, works in start-up investment
FOCUS GROUP 3 – 5 May 2023 (46 min)			
Participant	Gender	Age	Education / Employment
10	Female	27	Master's degree in communications, works as a coordinator in a marketing agency
11	Female	24	Bachelor's degree in business, works as an intern in brand communication and marketing
12	Female	28	Master's degree in business psychology, works as a manager in an influencer marketing agency
13	Female	26	Bachelor's degree in international business, works as a manager in a marketing agency
FOCUS GROUP 4 – 9 May 2023 (51 min)			
Participant	Gender	Age	Education / Employment
14	Female	28	Bachelor's degree, works as a social media manager
15	Male	22	Master's student in international marketing and brand management
16	Female	25	Master's student in International Marketing and Brand Management, works as a working student in an
17	Male	28	Master's degree in brand and communications management, works as an analyst in a consulting firm

For ethical reasons, we only interviewed people over the age of 18. We interviewed people of both sexes. However, due to the small sample size and the similarities within the sample, demographic information such as gender or education is not taken into account or compared when analysing the data.

3.5 Structure and content of interview guidelines

The interview guide was designed according to the rules set out in chapter 3.2 (see Appendix B). Accordingly, the theoretical assumptions about the factors to be investigated were operationalised in a total of 21 questions in the interview guide. These were divided into five introductory questions on the background of the interviewee, fifteen thematic questions and one open-ended final question. Overall, the questions were divided into the interviewee's background and three thematic parts: brand heritage in fashion branding, inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding and responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage. These parts were set up according to the conceptual framework of this study (see Chapter 2.6) in order to allow a well-structured analysis of the participants' perceptions.

To facilitate entry into the interview, demographic data such as age, background and education were collected during the introductory phase. The interviewees were also asked if they would consider themselves fashion-conscious and if they consume fast fashion/luxury fashion.

The first part of the interview explored the respondent's approach to fashion brand heritage, its importance in purchase decisions and differences in perception between luxury and fast fashion brands. Before starting the questions, respondents were provided with a definition of brand heritage to ensure a common understanding. This part of the interview is related to the first part of the conceptual framework of this study, which explores brand heritage in fashion branding on a broader scale.

The second part focused on understanding and assessing inauthenticity in fashion brand heritage, starting with a definition of inauthenticity in brand heritage to ensure common knowledge among the respondents. This definition refers to the middle part of the conceptual framework, which elaborates on the assessment of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding.

Before entering the final part of the interview, two examples of inauthentic brand heritage were presented, namely the cases of Gucci and Hollister (see Appendix C). First, the respondents were informed about the brands' heritage before being asked to elaborate on the

extent to which it was inauthentic. The respondents were then asked to discuss the examples, their perceptions of the brands after learning about their inauthentic heritage and the potential consequences. This part, in line with the conceptual framework, was expected to show participants' perceptions of real-life cases and to reveal potential acceptance or rejection of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding.

In the final part of the interview, participants were asked if they would like to add any further thoughts on the topic discussed. This gave them the opportunity to raise additional themes not covered in the interview guide.

3.6 Preparation and conduct of the interviews

Once the guidelines were prepared, the selected interviewees were contacted and asked to participate in the interview. The interviewees were informed of the aim and purpose of the interview and the interview schedule. They were also given an overview of the topic, including examples of authentic brand heritage, to help them approach the research problem during the interview (see Appendix A).

An introduction to the purpose and procedure of the interview was again given to the participants. For ethical reasons, the interviewees' verbal consent was obtained for recording the interview as well as for using and anonymising the statements made in the context of the study. The audio recording was then taken and the interview started. The interviews lasted, on average, 50 minutes.

3.7 Transcription

The transcription of the audio files can be considered the first analytical step of the research, as it forms the basis for the evaluation of the gathered data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). As the research topic was classified as non-sensitive and interactions were exclusively between the interviewer and respondents, no nonverbal interactions were recorded. Therefore, only what is spoken was considered in the analysis. The data was transcribed into standard written

English using a transcription service called 'happyscribe'. However, the transcripts still had to be edited manually to remove errors, pauses, filler words and other conspicuous features of the language. Transcribing the interviews resulted in 74 pages of empirical material.

3.8 Method of analysis

Grounded analysis was chosen for the first part of the analysis for this study. The aim was to gain insights to answer the overarching guiding research question (see Chapter 1.2). The method is designed for the analysis of transcripts of open-ended interviews and is therefore ideally suited to the evaluation of the research material conducted. Grounded analysis was used with the aim of generating theory (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). With an inductive and open approach, the data collected was constantly compared during the coding process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). However, by structuring the interview guide according to the theory-derived conceptual framework of this study (see Chapter 2.6), the approach to this part of the analysis can partly be considered abductive. This allowed us to simplify the mapping of categories to theoretical concepts.

Starting from an inductive logic, the empirical data collected was reduced and systematised into codes. This study adopted an open coding process using a codebook and a coding table (see Appendix D and E). First, the transcripts were screened for quotations relevant to answering the research questions. These were then paraphrased and added to the coding table in order to assign meaning to the data (see Appendix E) (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). As mentioned above, the focus group interviews were divided into three parts, which were used as overarching parts within the analysis to separate participants' perceptions of heritage in fashion branding from their perceptions of inauthentic heritage in fashion branding, as well as from their responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage (following the presentation of exemplary cases). These three overarching parts were derived from the conceptual framework of this study.

The paraphrases generated were reduced to descriptive codes representing sub-categories in the first cycle of 'open' coding (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021), summarising participants' opinions. In the subsequent second cycle of 'focused' coding, the sub-categories were sorted by similarities into larger themes (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015), namely categories. In order

to ensure a systematic analysis according to our research sub-question to identify differences in perceptions of fast fashion and luxury fashion, these two brand categories served as categories within the analysis of the first and third part of the interview. Paraphrases could therefore be coded twice to ensure that they appeared within these categories in order to analyse the differences in perceptions of fast fashion and luxury fashion.

To assure a systematised reduction of the collected data, the codes were constantly reviewed during the coding process. Finally, a codebook was created that provides an overview of all categories and their sub-categories, their definitions and examples (see Appendix D). This provides the foundation for the interpretation of the empirical material, as all key statements from the focus group interviews are systematically collected within the codebook.

In the second part of the analysis of this study, the findings from the grounded analysis were interpreted by linking them back to the theories and concepts mentioned above from the theoretical framework of this study. This step can therefore be considered as the abductive part of the analysis, in line with the research approach of this study. While the analysis is structured according to the findings of the grounded analysis, in the discussion of this study the findings were again linked to the conceptual framework, thus finally elaborating the research question and sub-questions.

3.9 Quality of data

When discussing the quality of this study, its trustworthiness should be considered. Research can be considered trustworthy if the audience has confidence that the study is worthy of attention and consideration. As traditionally used quality criteria such as reliability, generalisability and validity take a single reality into account, they are not appropriate for considering the quality of a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As noted above, this study adopts an interpretivist philosophical approach, which means that multiple subjective realities are acknowledged, which demands an alternative approach. Lincoln and Guba (1985) present four criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative research, namely *credibility*, *dependability*, *transferability* and *confirmability*. In the following, this study will be evaluated according to these criteria.

Credibility is stated as the first and most important criterion and discusses confidence in the truth of the research (Connelly, 2016). It is similar to the quantitative criterion of internal validity and examines the level of transparency achieved in the collection and analysis of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As mentioned above, we primarily interviewed individuals with a high level of marketing expertise, ensuring that the interviewees have extensive knowledge of the research topic. This ensures that participants can share relevant perspectives and opinions, allowing for in-depth exploration. Credibility was further enhanced by the method of analysis, which provided a systematic way of structuring and interpreting the empirical material. Throughout the data analysis process, coding decisions were reviewed several times by both researchers. A detailed description of the methods used can be found in the previous chapters to ensure transparency.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the second criterion is *dependability*, which refers to the extent to which the data are stable across study conditions and over time. It is therefore based on the credibility of the study. The criterion considers whether the same results would be obtained if the research were conducted by another researcher or in the future (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a total of four focus group interviews were conducted, we were able to reach a certain level of saturation in the responses of the participants, thus determining repetition, which indicates that the findings are replicable. The semi-structured interview guide also ensured consistency within the interview process. This provided a systematic and similar way of interviewing participants across the different focus groups and enabled common themes to be identified within the analysis. The grounded analysis also ensured a systematic and structured analysis, which was revised several times throughout the process by both researchers. The thorough description of the methods would also enable an external researcher to replicate the research process. In addition, all research materials such as audio recordings, transcripts and coding tables have been preserved and are available on request if not included in the appendix.

The next criterion is *transferability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although the aim of qualitative research is not to generalise findings, qualitative researchers claim that patterns can be applied to other settings (Stahl & King, 2020). This can only be achieved through a 'thick description' of a unit of analysis or case, including contextual information (Stahl & King, 2020). Lincoln and Guba (1985) present purposive sampling as a strategy to enhance 'thick description', as

was done in this study. This study documents and reviews in detail which participants are selected and how they might influence data collection (see Chapter 3.3). In addition, the methods and timeframe of data collection are described in detail (see Chapters 3.2-3.6), which may further enhance the applicability of the findings to other contexts (Stahl & King, 2020). In addition, we included two examples of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding in our focus group interviews, namely the examples of Gucci and Hollister, and explored consumers' perceptions of them. Whilst we cannot guarantee that our findings speak for all examples of inauthentic brand heritage, we approach the topic from an applied perspective. However, it is important to note that this study aims to explore a research gap in relation to the research topic and contribute to existing theory. It therefore aims to provide initial insights into a relatively unexplored area of research, but not to contribute generalisable findings.

The final criterion according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) is *confirmability* and describes the researchers remaining objective and neutral throughout the conduct of the study. This was ensured in this study by both researchers constantly reviewing and challenging the empirical data and coding decisions. In addition to taking detailed notes throughout the research process, the authors suggest asking participants to validate the empirical data and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, this method of validation is critically discussed in the literature, mainly because it approaches a single reality (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). As this study follows an interpretivist philosophical approach, exploring multiple subjective realities, the aim is not to find a single truth. Therefore, the last two quality criteria are only considered to a limited extent. Given these considerations, this research is considered trustworthy.

3.10 Limitations

The chosen method also has limitations, which will be discussed in the following. As this research aims to investigate Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, the average age of the participants, 24, seems slightly high given that the Gen Zers were born between 1995 and 2010. However, due to ethical concerns, we decided to only interview participants over the age of 18. We also assumed that they would not be able to provide in-depth knowledge and reflect on their perceptions. This assumption was reinforced after the first interview, when we noticed that participants with a marketing background had a

positive impact on the discussion, as they were able to better elaborate and provide in-depth insights into the research topic. As a result, this study is largely limited to a sample with a high level of marketing expertise. However, the aim of this research is not to generalise the findings. The study is also limited by an over-representation of female participants within the sample, which may limit the diversity of perspectives. For organisational reasons, the interviews were all conducted remotely, which may have limited the dynamics of the group discussions. However, it allowed us to include participants from Sweden, Germany and Portugal, which broadened the cultural perspective and allowed for a more active discussion. It could be argued that this also ensures a higher degree of transferability, but this is not the aim of this study. Nevertheless, there is a language barrier to consider. Although all participants were fluent in English, opinions and perceptions may be better conveyed in one's mother tongue.

4. Analysis

The purpose of this study is to explore Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. Therefore, the analysis focuses on consumers' general evaluation of brand heritage, inauthentic brand heritage, and how brands are perceived after using inauthentic heritage. This chapter is divided into these three parts, which are also aligned with the conceptual framework of this study. The first part serves as a general introduction to the topic, summarising participants' definition of heritage and how significant it is to them, including in purchase decisions. In the second part, participants evaluate different extents of inauthentic heritage and their (potential) responses to it. Their actual responses to inauthentic heritage in fashion branding are then examined in the third part of the analysis, with a particular focus on the differences between fast and luxury fashion. Participants were given the opportunity to add additional thoughts, which are reflected upon in the final chapter of the analysis. It is worth noting that in the following the participants will also be referred to as 'Gen Z' or 'the consumers'.

4.1 Brand heritage in fashion branding

Brand heritage in fashion branding was the first part of the semi-structured interviews. In this part, categories were identified with belonging sub-categories to each. As a result, the analysis will only present the key sub-categories related to this study. This section analyses the empirical data collected on brand heritage in fashion branding. It provides a consumer perspective on heritage in general, which can later be compared with consumers' perceptions of inauthentic heritage. Observing consumers' perceptions of heritage in this way will help us to determine whether they have changed.

4.1.1 Definition of brand heritage

First and foremost, in order to better understand how participants conceptualise what heritage is and what it means to them, they were asked for their definition of it. The most commonly

mentioned elements were: long history, high quality, and interestingly, some participants argued that a brand does not need to be high quality to create heritage. As the interviews progressed, participants delved into additional aspects related to a long history and high quality, which remained consistent and interconnected with other categories and components. This indicates the significance of the long history and high quality for the perception of heritage, as described below:

“A brand with a long-lasting history that has kind of become part of the brand. [...] Of course, I think Chanel is to me a good example of that because it's like the history has become such a part of the brand and it's an important part of the story.”

Participant 3

In addition, participants often clarified that heritage is more than just a product or a brand; it is about being consistent as part of a brand's identity. Brunninge (2023) asserts that corporate heritage brands are backed by an enduring covenant that guarantees that key characteristics persist.

4.1.2 Significance of brand heritage

It was imperative to understand the significance of brand heritage among the participants. As a result, a range of opinions emerged when participants were interviewed. Participants clearly preferred brands that had heritage over brands that did not have heritage, as expressed below:

“So I think if I would choose between a brand with a heritage or not, I would be very tempted to go towards the brand with the heritage because I feel like they've had just way more time. Of course, depending on first I would choose the product I would prefer. But I think if then I would prefer that heritage brand because I feel like they've just had more time to enhance or to perfection what they make.”

Participant 3

This preference included a desire for products that had a history, a narrative and a story behind them, as well as a deeper connection to the brand and its values. It was confirmed by participants that a brand having heritage makes it easier for them to build a relationship with the brand as there is a sense of trust between the customer and the brand. Among the benefits of heritage is that it is a source of stability and reassurance for consumers (Merchant

and Rose, 2013). This trust is rooted in the brand's history and commitment to quality and craftsmanship.

Opposed to the positive attitudes towards heritage brands, the remaining half of the participants stated that heritage was not important to them. Indicating that when people are for instance looking for something new and innovative, they do not look for heritage brands. This shows that while heritage is relevant, it is not always the most important factor when making purchase decisions, as discussed in the example below:

“I don't think that it's so important for me that the brand has to be there for like 100 years, because if there's something cool coming up, I'm also happy to buy a brand that I didn't know until then.”

Participant 12

Additionally, some stated that heritage does not particularly add any value to the brand, especially when talking about fast fashion brands. To further elaborate this, Gen Z consumers stated that heritage is not as important when it comes to low-involvement products, like fast fashion.

4.1.3 Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions

Brand heritage has a varying impact on purchase decisions. Thus, as Urde et al. (2007) pointed out, a brand's history may affect its trustworthiness and therefore higher purchase intention. Opinions between the Gen Z participants were divided when it came down to the role of brand heritage in purchase decisions, as outlined below:

“So, I see it as an extra plus when I buy something and I like it and kind of affordable, but to be honest, there are many more criteria that I'm looking at when I'm buying something.”

Participant 2

While many of the participants agreed that heritage can be an additional factor influencing their choices, others considered it insignificant. Participants concurred that heritage's role in their purchase behaviour was mainly related to luxury fashion. In the context of luxury fashion, Gen Z consumers show a willingness to pay a higher price for brands with a rich heritage, especially for timeless products, as a participant expressed below:

“And also if heritage, I think if I know that as a rich heritage brand, I’ll probably value it more than it actually is valid, meaning maybe I’m willing to pay more for their stuff.”

Participant 15

Lastly, moving on to fast fashion, participants mentioned once again that heritage is an insignificant factor when purchasing fast fashion brands. They stated that the main reason for buying fast fashion is the cheap price and the wide variety of product choices. Additionally, they noted that fast fashion brands often have a lower price point and also that heritage does not add any value to a fast fashion brand, as outlined in the example below:

“It’s not much that you get back and it doesn’t really add maybe necessarily to the value if a fast fashion brand has a heritage.”

Participant 7

4.1.4 Risks for heritage brands

Even though there is a great chance to build a long-lasting relationship with consumers by incorporating heritage into branding practices, there are risks associated with heritage-based brands as identified in the literature review. Both luxury and fast fashion brands may suffer negative consequences as a result of incorporating heritage into their brand identity. Gen Z participants expressed that some of the risks that heritage brands may face are staying innovative and relevant to today’s consumers, as described by the participant below:

“And I think I associate younger brands a lot more with innovativeness than with heritage.”

Participant 1

At its core, heritage branding is about embracing history and projecting it into the future (Balmer, 2011). However, some participants described that some heritage brands might come across as outdated. As one of the participants noted:

“Thinking of Chanel, I find it a bit dusty in a way because they are so focused on their past that I kind of feel like they’re a bit outdated, still timeless, but a bit dusty in a way.”

Participant 1

To combat this perception, heritage brands should strive to reinterpret their historical roots in a contemporary light in order to remain relevant to today's consumer. Otherwise, as Boccardi

et al. (2016) stated, the result of brands holding too tightly onto their heritage is that they might become stagnant and fail to develop. The definition can be linked to some of the worries that surfaced amongst Gen Z participants. Participants noted that heritage brands are at risk of not remaining innovative without compromising their heritage. Participants also discussed the risk of heritage brands not remaining relevant to Gen Z consumers.

Nonetheless, brands with less established heritage also face risks. Many of the participants stated that young brand heritage can be viewed as inauthentic. This perception of inauthenticity is due to the modern approach to maintaining a brand's legacy. As participant 3 states:

“But I also think sometimes it says, like, ‘established’ and then like 1998. And then I just have to laugh because it's like, okay, now you're just purposely trying to look cool, like, oh, we've been around for a bit longer. I think this is kind of the topic we're supposed to talk about, but then it's like, you've been around for a bit longer. Come on, you cannot flex with this yet.”

Participant 3

This lack of perceived credibility and authenticity can be a major barrier to success for any young brand, as customers may be unwilling to invest in the company. As a result, young brands need to focus on building trust with their customers and demonstrating their knowledge and expertise to gain credibility and legitimacy.

In contrast, some respondents suggested that innovation was more often associated with younger brands than with heritage brands. So there are still advantages to being a young brand, such as the potential to be seen as innovative or exciting by customers, even if the heritage of young brands is not perceived as strong.

4.1.5 Use of symbols

The use of symbols is an important factor to consider as the visual representation of the brand is closely linked to the identity and therefore to a brand's heritage. These elements can speak on behalf of the brand, and the brand can be recognised on the basis of them. Mead's theory of

reconstructive heritage can be applied to this context, which involves comparing the past with the present and reimagining the present based on a reconstructed past (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). In this instance, participants discussed the use of a specific style or pattern to be linked to the brand's heritage. Usually, these patterns have been part of the heritage brands for a long time, as discussed below:

"I wouldn't say history in their history of development, but more like maybe their specific style or pattern. [...] like the handbags from, I don't know, Fendi with the pattern or Chanel as well. I think this is something that is also belonging to heritage, but just because of the looks."

Participant 13

Using these specific styles and patterns can help to create a unique identity for a brand, and set it apart from its competitors. It also helps to create a sense of familiarity and recognition among the brand's customers. Linked to heritage, the style and patterns should be consistent across all the brand's touchpoints. This continuity helps to create a sense of trust and reliability (Merchant and Rose, 2013). It will also make it easier for customers to recognize the brand and its products. Another aspect that was discussed, was brands using 'established' symbols, which can be used in several ways by the brand, as expressed by this participant:

"[...] you can see like sometimes in what is it now, fast fashion brands kind of trying to imitate that with these hoodies of having established in 1989, [...] So you can see those references here and there."

Participant 7

As Hudson (2015) has illustrated, the use of heritage as a brand strategy can be utilised by including company founding dates on products. Furthermore, the use of strong visual symbols such as logos can add an extra layer of association and recognition, allowing the audience to become more familiar with the brand as discussed earlier. This is also referred to as structural heritage by Hudson & Balmer (2013), which refers to the historical process and causal relationship between past and present. Brands can communicate this by using founding dates or, in this case, the 'established' symbol. Founding dates, according to Morhart et al. (2015), can also be used as an example of quality, increasing the authenticity of a brand.

4.1.6 Authentic brand heritage

Given the research's focus on Gen Z participants' perceptions of inauthentic heritage, the authenticity of brand heritage emerged as a significant topic of discussion. This was crucial to gain a genuine understanding of Gen Z's perspective on the subject, as the research aimed to delve into their authentic perceptions. Participants linked authenticity with well-known heritage brands. Hudson (2015) argues that the heritage nature of well-established companies' brands can enhance the appeal of their products and services.

Interestingly, there were mixed responses from Gen Z participants regarding the importance of a long history for developing and maintaining heritage. While some participants agreed that a brand must have a long-standing history to establish heritage, other opinions varied. Moreover, participants recognized the significance of brands with well-known heritage, indicating that familiarity and recognition play a role in perceptions of heritage. Participant used Levi's as an example of a well-known heritage that is non-luxury, yet successfully utilising heritage in their branding activities:

“Do you think that the brand Levi's would have all of the attributes of this longevity? Because I was thinking about it and it's not like a luxury brand, I would say, but it's so old that people do have all of like give the brand all of the attributes of it being like high quality, long-lasting and they know what they're doing in terms of producing jeans. But I don't think they themselves market themselves as a luxury brand as others would, but I'm not sure if others would agree. I just thought of an example that has been on the market since very long, but maybe it's got a different core value than the other brands. Not sure.”

Participant 4

In contrast to this, some participants expressed the view that a brand's heritage can be meaningful even if its history does not span a hundred years. The extent and significance of a brand's heritage can differ accordingly. Furthermore, participants discussed the brand's approach to heritage. They emphasised the brand's aim to truly embody heritage qualities instead of just claiming to be heritage through their positioning. This highlights the importance of a brand genuinely embracing and reflecting its heritage characteristics rather than solely relying on the image of being heritage. In light of this, heritage values must be authentic and consistently delivered, as expressed below:

“Not trying to position themselves as heritage, but actually being heritage.”

Participant 1

Contrary to traditional notions and the above discussion, some participants acknowledged that heritage brands can successfully maintain a sense of youthfulness and innovation. It can be argued that heritage does not necessarily mean outdated or unoriginal. This contradicts what has been said about the risks of heritage branding. Considering the multifaceted opinions and perspectives highlights the complexity of understanding the role and perception of brand heritage among Gen Z consumers.

4.1.7 Key elements of brand heritage for consumers

According to Boccardi et al. (2016), incorporating heritage can serve as a strategy for a brand aiming to establish enduring connections with consumers. Therefore, it was imperative to explore the key elements of brand heritage for Gen Z participants. Two of the strongest elements that were discussed on several occasions during the different interviews, were longevity and product quality, as one of the participants expressed:

“I think it just creates more credibility for the brand, for the luxury brands, if they have like they've been there for a long time and, you know, [...]”

Participant 7

Consistency was also a significant factor when considering heritage. Furthermore, consistency with the brand identity and consistent storytelling proved to be important to Gen Z. Brands having years of consistent heritage is something that consumers can rely upon, serving as a security. In such cases, heritage may allow brands to differentiate themselves from competitors and facilitate customer-brand relationships. Participant 5 discusses the importance of consistency:

“For me, the most important aspect of heritage brands when just thinking about it, it's like consistency, I would say.”

Participant 5

Brand core values were also discussed amongst the participants. The core values of a company can have a major influence on how customers view a brand and the heritage

associated with it. As such, core values should be carefully considered, as they will have a lasting impression on customers and can even determine success or failure. Core values form the foundation of brand positioning, influencing external communication through promises and commitments, while also guiding internal behaviours and actions (Wiedmann et al., 2011a). It is therefore essential that companies communicate their core values clearly and consistently, so that customers understand the company's identity and have confidence in its products, as explained below by a participant:

"I was about to say that core values wouldn't be as important to me, but then I thought, okay, the second a company changes their core values, I kind of consider the brand in a new way, so they have to build that heritage for me again. So, if I see a brand that really changed their image and everything, then I think I would consider the change of the image, a new start of the heritage building."

Participant 3

4.1.8 Heritage in luxury fashion branding

Heritage is widely recognized as an integral part of the identity of luxury brands. The observations from the participants further reinforce the importance of brand heritage in luxury fashion. The participants acknowledge that luxury fashion brands are inherently heritage-driven, with the heritage element being particularly pronounced in older luxury brands. This confirms Kapferer & Bastien's (2010) research that luxury brands are distinguished by their history, roots, and ancestral heritage. Participant 3 discusses the above:

"I think it's often, like, maybe quiet or like old luxury that uses heritage more. For example, Balenciaga. I don't know if they use their heritage. I'm not aware of it. But I think we know the example of Patek Philippe that uses it a lot."

Participant 3

There was a link between participants' perceptions of heritage and old luxury fashion brands. There is a common perception amongst Gen Z participants that old luxury fashion brands possess a rich heritage, which adds to their reputation and credibility. This heritage is often reflected in the design of the product or prints, which then adds to its luxury appeal and reinforces the perception of authenticity, as expressed below:

“[...] obviously Chanel is a brand that really uses their heritage of Coco Chanel in their perfumes and all these kinds of elements that are being brought constantly in every collection. Same with Gucci also is really relying on their past.”

Participant 7

Some participants commented that a luxury brand with a heritage would justify a higher price point for a product. This would indicate that Gen Z consumers associate value, prestige, and craftsmanship with heritage. According to Kapferer (2014), heritage can be used as a specific strategy to maximise the value consumers perceive. This can be due to heritage can add an intangible value, which is not easily replicated, which can help to differentiate a product from its competitors and add a sense of exclusivity (Kapferer, 2014). The presence of heritage justifies a higher price point as described by the participant:

“If I think about if I'm justifying a price for buying a bag from Céline or then buying a brand like a high price point bag from another newer brand, then I think it does matter the heritage.”

Participant 7

Participants also discussed that luxury fashion brands may have it easier when communicating and showcasing their heritage to consumers, especially against fast fashion brands. The exclusivity, tradition, and craftsmanship associated with luxury fashion align well with the concept of heritage. Luxury fashion often has a unique story behind it, from the source of the materials to the expertise of the craftsman. This makes it a perfect representation of a brand's heritage, as it speaks to the quality, history, and culture that are associated with it. Brands incorporate heritage into various aspects of their brand, including storytelling, values, and product offerings. This comprehensive approach allows heritage to permeate the brand's identity and resonate with consumers (Boccardi et al., 2016).

Another concept that arose several times during the interviews was that the world of luxury heritage is romanticised, adding to its allure and desirability. Gen Z consumers are looking for brands that are authentic and have a story to tell, as expressed below:

“I think in luxury; brand heritage is really romanticised [...]”

Participant 10

Luxury heritage brands are able to leverage their legacy to create a strong and unique brand identity that resonates with consumers. They can do this through creative storytelling that taps into the emotions of their customers.

The participants also indicated that they were more aware of heritage among luxury brands than fast fashion brands. This is because heritage is often associated with quality and craftsmanship passed down through generations, something that luxury brands strive to maintain, whereas fast fashion brands are more focused on staying on top of the latest trends.

4.1.9 Heritage in fast fashion branding

The following category concentrates on the participants' views on heritage in fast fashion branding. It was noted by most participants that fast fashion brands are not known for their heritage, or that heritage is not something they strongly communicate. The reason for this may be that fast fashion brands have a different focus than luxury brands. Fast fashion brands tend to be more focused on providing the latest trends at the lowest prices possible, rather than investing in the traditional methods of making clothes that are associated with heritage, according to one of the participants:

“I don't know any, I couldn't tell anything about fast fashion brands and their heritage.”

Participant 13

Buckley (2011) mentions that fast fashion brands tend to focus on other aspects rather than heritage. Even though most participants do not associate heritage with fast fashion brands, on the contrary, some participants pointed out how fast fashion brands use heritage branding methods. For example, one participant pointed out that Levi's uses their founding years in their label, which has stayed the same throughout the years. Levi's is a great example of showing a non-luxury brand that combines high quality, heritage and low price points.

An example of heritage in fast fashion branding is the use of 'established' symbols and founding years in print designs. This is another great example as this type of branding strategy is used to evoke a feeling of nostalgia and heritage as if the company has been around for many years and is a trusted brand. It also gives customers the impression that the company is

reliable and trustworthy. The following is an excerpt from a participant's response to 'established' symbols in fast fashion:

“But I think it's so interesting because I never actively thought about it. But when you think of just normal fast fashion hoodies, you have these 'established' so many times.”

Participant 2

Another participant pointed out that fast fashion brands are not looking into building long-lasting relationships with consumers. This further suggests that fast fashion brands may not be prioritising building relationships with consumers through heritage. Consumer loyalty may be hindered by the absence of a strong heritage-based identity in fast fashion brands. Instead, according to the participants, brand relationships are created with luxury brands, where the consumer receives more value for the relationship and brand loyalty.

In an interesting discussion, some participants suggested that fast fashion brands could develop heritage over time if they specialised in a specific product. This could potentially lead to greater consumer loyalty as they recognise the brand for its expertise and commitment to creating a unique product, as outlined below:

“I don't know if you would think for example about H&M or like Zara being like crazy specialized on linen shirts for example. As you said, just being known for hundreds of years of making great linen shirts, then why shouldn't they communicate it? But that's obviously not what they do. Fast fashion brands tend to just do this now and this then and so then it just doesn't make sense.”

Participant 17

4.2 Inauthentic fashion brand heritage

This section discusses consumers' perspectives on inauthentic fashion brand heritage. The aim of this part of the focus group discussion was to introduce the participants to the main topic of the study, to explore their assessment and perceptions of inauthentic fashion brand heritage, and to determine if they would be able to identify specific examples, before confronting them with real-life cases in the next part.

4.2.1 Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage

One of the key themes identified in the empirical material relating to inauthentic fashion brand heritage is the difficulty consumers have in identifying inauthentic brand heritage. Although most participants agreed that they had encountered inauthentic heritage, they were unable to identify specific examples. A large number of participants stated that inauthentic fashion brand heritage is difficult to identify. The main reason given was that brands are good at hiding inauthentic heritage from consumers, as expressed below:

“So I think it's quite well hidden from a lot of the consumers and people, quite frankly, have no idea of what's going on.”

Participant 7

Participants also elaborated on misleading heritage branding strategies, stating that brands successfully use them because the heritage, although not genuine, appears authentic to consumers:

“I just don't know them. So for me, it's authentic, right?”

Participant 15

This can be linked to the aforementioned concept of the 'aura of authenticity' (see Chapter 2.5.2) by creating an 'omni temporality' that emphasises brand consistency over time (Balmer, 2019). Brands are able to create an enchanting experience for consumers, regardless of their actual inauthenticity. In doing so, they can mislead consumers into perceiving their heritage as authentic when it is not, which is supported by our findings. One of the examples provided accurately supports this theory, as it involves a brand misleading its customers by inspiring them with storytelling from previous decades.

Other participants explained that brands can easily mislead consumers because they believe the stories that brands tell. One participant argued that it is therefore “ridiculous” (Participant 12) for a brand to lie about its origins because consumers are generally unable to discern them. It was added that brands would never admit to using inauthentic heritage. Another argument raised during the discussion was that consumers trust brands to be authentic, which is a contradictory expectation for consumers who have encountered inauthentic brand heritage. Brands are perceived as trustworthy until proven otherwise.

4.2.2 Extents of inauthenticity

Participants identified different types and extents of inauthentic brand heritage. The most frequently cited was a minor alteration of the heritage, which was defined in the following way, among others:

“[...] And then there are maybe some brands that stretch the truth to some degree or probably all brands do that and tell a story around a bit. [...]”

Participant 15

Several participants described minor alterations, with the specific example of fake founding dates, communicated through 'established' symbols on products and within brand logos. However, it was noted that brands with a young heritage are to some extent inauthentic because they have not been around for a long time and therefore cannot demonstrate long-term expertise. This was cited as a reason why some brands play with these symbols within the products. Consumers said that the origin of the brand could also be misleadingly communicated within a brand's storytelling, which was also seen as an extent of inauthenticity. One of the participants rated “telling white lies” (Participant 15) as a level of inauthenticity and distinguished it from “lying on a large scale” (Participant 15). Some of the participants link this level of lying to fictional heritage, stating that some brands “just totally lie and make stuff up” (Participant 17). Specific examples are given of fictitious brand values, where a brand communicates values such as family within its heritage without living up to them. In addition, participants discussed fictitious production facts, which are linked to worse production conditions than communicated. Borrowing heritage elements was also mentioned by a few respondents, meaning taking inspiration from other brands or decades and communicating this as their heritage. However, there were different extents of this, from simply borrowing elements to spinning a brand's story around them. An extreme form of this was defined as 'copied heritage':

“[...] And then there are probably even companies that actually steal stories from other brands [...]”

Participant 17

Although different extents of inauthentic heritage were discussed in the different focus group interviews, it could be observed that a spectrum from small modifications to serious untruths

was always constructed and discussed. The extent discussed by the participants can also be related to previous studies, as discussed in the literature review, which ranges from exaggeration to fictional invention (see Chapter 2.5.2).

4.2.3 Consumer responses to extents of inauthenticity

In order to explore how Gen Z perceives the different levels of inauthenticity before being confronted with specific examples, participants were asked to elaborate on the extents of inauthenticity mentioned. The responses of the participants were quite diverse, hence it is not possible to make a concrete statement about the extent to which inauthentic heritage is accepted by consumers.

However, some respondents suggest that minor changes to brand heritage do not affect consumers because they may not perceive the heritage as inauthentic, based on the idea mentioned earlier that consumers are easily misled by brands and have an initial trust in their authenticity. This is exemplified by the following quote:

“Yeah, I think if you romanticise your story a bit, then I don't think that anyone will reflect upon it.”

Participant 6

However, participants indicated that they would be negatively affected by falsified founding dates and brand values, as they would be seen as highly inauthentic and a problem for the brand. For one participant, fictitious production facts would even disrupt the idea of a heritage brand, as it does not fit with their view of a heritage brand. Borrowed heritage was also perceived as being overstated in some cases as excessive exaggeration could also lead to an inauthentic perception of a brand's heritage.

On a general note, respondents see fictitious heritage as problematic and elaborate that it could cause a brand to lose credibility because it is unreliable, as expressed below:

“[...] and then it just comes across that you're just very unreliable and you're just trying to make money out of your consumers instead of creating a trust between you and the consumer.”

Participant 7

It is further associated with dishonesty, which distinguishes brands that use inauthentic heritage from those that are honest and tell the truth, suggesting further brand distrust and

consequences. One of the participants stated that they consider copied heritage to be the worst level of inauthenticity, as it is not original at all, but rather a copy of another brand.

Summarising the ideas of the others, one participant remarked that it could be far worse for a brand for consumers to discover an inauthentic heritage than to have no heritage at all. They suggested that brands without heritage should not try to be perceived as such.

Although the participants' responses were quite diverse, the study results suggest negative effects of inauthentic heritage perceptions. Furthermore, perceived factors such as violation of originality and reliability, which lead to a perceived negative impact on consumers, can be related to Bruhn et al.'s (2012) four dimensions of brand authenticity. The primarily negative perception of inauthentic heritage also highlights the aforementioned consumer expectation and search for brands to be authentic.

4.3 Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage

This chapter discusses participants' responses to given examples of inauthentic fashion brand heritage. In the interview, participants were given the example of Gucci as a luxury fashion brand altering its heritage by claiming to have been saddle makers and therefore incorporating equestrian-inspired elements into its designs. Hollister's fictional heritage is used as an example of a fast fashion brand. By falsifying not only its founding date, but its entire story of origin, the brand is an excellent example of a brand with a high extent of inauthentic heritage in fashion branding. In order to differentiate between the luxury and fast fashion brand categories, two themes have been created that summarise the main statements of these categories. These themes also include evaluations of sub-categories that belong to other themes but are related to either fast fashion or luxury fashion (see Appendix D).

4.3.1 Consumer views on luxury fashion brand's inauthentic heritage

After being introduced to the real-life cases, several participants reported that they were more surprised by Gucci's inauthentic heritage than Hollister's. Consumers were therefore unaware of Gucci's inauthentic heritage, supporting the difficulty consumers have in identifying inauthentic brand heritage. Participants note that Gucci has succeeded in making its heritage

appear authentic to consumers. Moreover, they did not expect the brand to have an inauthentic heritage and had never thought about it before, as one of the participants explains:

“For Hollister, I could definitely imagine it, to be honest. But for Gucci I never thought about this fact.”

Participant 14

This may also be the case because heritage is largely associated with luxury brands and compelling authentic stories (Buckley, 2011; Morley & McMahon, 2011), which reinforces consumers' expectations of authenticity. Some participants go on to explain that older luxury brands are seen as more authentic because of their long history. One participant describes the brands' longer presence on the market as a ‘shield’ that protects them from being perceived as inauthentic. In addition, consumers do not expect luxury brands to have an inauthentic heritage because they trust them. Learning about the inauthentic heritage is therefore perceived as disappointing, as explained below:

“But for a brand like Gucci it's quite disappointing I would say, because I would never actually imagine that a brand, a luxury brand like this would fake it. [...]”

Participant 14

One reason for this may be, as mentioned by other participants, that older brands have a long history to rely on, which may also help them to make inauthentic elements of heritage appear authentic. In particular, factors such as consistent style, core values and storytelling are seen by participants as enabling luxury fashion brands to appear authentic.

Several participants are convinced that it is unnecessary for luxury brands to lie about their heritage if the brand is generally performing well. This is also used as an argument when assessing the severity of the impact of Gucci's inauthentic heritage on consumers:

“I think it doesn't really affect me or like the perception because as [participant 10] said, I think Gucci is still like, they do nice stuff and it didn't have to be like this story around it for me to think or to like the style [...]”

Participant 13

Although most participants agree that they are surprised by Gucci's inauthentic heritage, opinions differ when it comes to assessing the impact on consumers. While some say they would not be negatively affected by the luxury brand's inauthentic heritage, or less so than Hollister's, others feel the opposite. In addition to the need for inauthentic heritage,

participants argue that product style and status are more important to luxury brands than heritage. Furthermore, participants argue that inauthentic heritage is less problematic when it's more about design elements than the core of the brand. One could therefore conclude that the extent of inauthenticity is important in the perception of inauthentic brand heritage and influences the perceived negative impact on consumers, which is consistent with participants' responses to the extent of inauthenticity.

However, the opposite perspective is taken by some other participants who state that Gucci's inauthentic heritage negatively affects their perception of the brand and that they would be more affected by it than by Hollister. This is mainly due to the high price of luxury brand products:

“But if it's like a high involvement purchase, it definitely matters. These little alterations.”

Participant 5

Luxury brands tend to charge a premium for their products, making them high-involvement brands (Kapferer, 2014), which means that consumers may consider a purchase carefully. Participants argue that this is why small changes in brand heritage are important to consumers. Furthermore, participants argue that the quality of the piece is also a factor that contributes to a higher importance of brand authenticity:

“For a high quality piece, I would care way more if I was being frauded than for a fast fashion piece.”

Participant 5

Participants also state that inauthentic brand heritage leads consumers to question the brand in question, which is discussed in detail when the potential risks of inauthentic heritage are elaborated (see Chapter 4.3.3)

4.3.2 Consumer views on fast fashion brand's inauthentic heritage

The majority of participants were not surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage, as some of them had already heard about it in the news or already considered the brand identity to be inauthentic. One of the participants said:

“The Hollister one didn't surprise me at all. I feel like their whole brand identity come across as inauthentic to me. I think no actual surfer ever bought something from Hollister, so it doesn't surprise me that their heritage positioning is also fake.”

Participant 1

Even though the brand and its heritage appeared fake to some consumers, they did not reflect on it before learning that it was in fact inauthentic. Consumers classify Hollister's heritage as fictitious according to the levels of inauthenticity established beforehand. They describe it as a "made-up story" (Participant 6) and see it not only as a falsification of the founding date. This leads them to conclude that if the founding story is fake, then the whole brand and business behind it is fake. This can be related to the dimensions of brand authenticity, which states that a brand is perceived as authentic if it is genuine (Bruhn et al., 2012), which is not the case if the founding story is fictional. One of the consumers elaborates:

“But yeah, it's kind of unoriginal when you think about it. It makes the brand totally unoriginal because it completely played with this surfer boy image and that's also why we bought it back then to some degree if we bought it to be seen like that. But would actually like someone who actually likes to surf and stuff ever buy this brand? That never happened. So the brand kind of loses its whole I don't know, it's completely built on this one single piece. Basically it loses its whole authenticity if you want it like that.”

Participant 17

Consumers think that inauthentic heritage makes the brand unoriginal and loses its authenticity. They consider it unnecessary for a fast fashion brand like Hollister to invent such a heritage story. It is perceived as “not cool and [...] ridiculous” (Participant 12), which has a negative impact on consumer perceptions. It is also argued that the brand does not have the same status as Gucci, making it even harder for them to get away with this lie. However, the majority of participants state that they are not affected by Hollister's inauthentic heritage, which is mostly related to the fact that the brand is a fast fashion brand or that consumers do not like the brand in general. The reason for this might be that heritage is mostly associated with luxury fashion, resulting in fast fashion brands prioritising other unique selling points over their heritage (Buckley, 2011). As a result, consumers may not be used to fast fashion brands communicating extensive heritage and therefore do not expect it from them. This was also stated by consumers when defining and rating the importance of fast fashion brands' heritage. It is also argued that product style is more important than brand heritage when buying fast fashion, which in turn is linked to the low price point of the products. Fast fashion

brands are seen as low-involvement brands, which, according to consumers, gives them more freedom to bend their heritage. However, there were a few participants who, unlike the others, were surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage:

“I always thought it was something really special and that they were actually old and from America, but it's all fake and we all believe their story, so I don't know.”

Participant 4

They further point out that the brand's inauthentic heritage could negatively affect consumers' perception of the brand and lead them to stop buying from it. Participants discuss other risks, which are discussed in more detail in the following chapters. An important aspect for fast fashion brands, however, is that consumers report that the barriers to buying from a different brand are very low because the offering is so vast. This may be related to the high level of competition in the market, which makes intangibles particularly important for brands.

4.3.3 Risks of inauthentic heritage

A brand's inauthentic heritage poses a number of risks, resulting in negative consequences and potential damage. The responses of participants on brands with inauthentic heritage provided interesting insights. While researching the impacts of artificial heritage, participants had a range of opinions on the issue, suggesting a nuanced understanding of the complexities of brand authenticity. Inauthentic heritage was discussed as a consequence of consumers' perceptions. One of the main concerns that Gen Z participants had was about the credibility of the brand. If brands are inauthentic about one element, in this case heritage, Gen Z will question whether the brand is being dishonest about other elements of the brand, such as sustainability. As a result, the brand's trustworthiness suffers, affecting the consumer's relationship with the brand. Gen Z participants view heritage as a key factor in luxury fashion, as it speaks to the quality of the product and the brand's commitment to craftsmanship. Therefore, when heritage branding is inauthentic, it undermines the trust Gen Z participants have in the brand and they feel they are not receiving the quality they are paying for, as expressed below:

“Maybe now I'm also wondering, are they just trying to rip us off by acting as if they were such a brand heritage company and making us pay so much for luxury brands products, but they don't really have anything? I'm not so sure.”

Participant 4

Another widely discussed issue is the loss of trust towards the brand. Trust, a vital component of brand loyalty, is eroded when consumers perceive a brand's heritage as inauthentic. Research conducted by Urde et al. (2007) found that heritage brands are seen as more reliable and dependable due to their ability to build a robust 'brand stature' over time, rooted in consumer admiration, understanding and familiarity (Urde et al., 2007; Morley & McMahon, 2011). Participants highlight the disappointment of inauthentic heritage when it is a key purchase factor:

“And it would be very disappointing because the heritage is one of the factors that makes me buy the brand.”

Participant 3

Gen Z participants expressed disappointment towards inauthentic heritage when it was considered as a purchasing factor before. From a company perspective, consumers finding out about inauthentic heritage can have a detrimental effect on brand reputation and ultimately sales. Participants discussed the damage that can be caused to a brand's reputation by dishonesty about heritage. Such deception can have a significant impact on consumer trust and loyalty to a brand, as consumers may feel they have been lied to or misled. Rebuilding a brand's reputation after this kind of revelation and loss of trust can take a considerable amount of time and may also require brands to rethink their branding strategies. Participants predicted that the use of inauthentic heritage could therefore ultimately lead to the downfall of a brand.

This, in turn, can have a negative impact on brand equity according to Aaker's (1991) brand equity model by violating one of its dimensions, namely brand loyalty. Consumers are more likely to be loyal to a brand that has genuine heritage and history, as this can make them feel more connected to the brand. Some participants pointed out that inauthentic heritage can trigger a backlash when it deviates too far from the brand's identity, as consumers perceive such attempts as disingenuous, as outlined below:

“So I think the worst thing would be, I think, not for Gucci now, because they are so established, but for a newer brand, and if something like that happened, it could be that they attract the wrong people or lose loyal customers who bought the brand because of the story and because of this sophisticated feeling.”

Participant 13

Brands should not underestimate consumers' ability to discern authenticity, while attempting to deceive them can have serious consequences. A fictitious founding story may also lead consumers to believe the brand is solely focused on profits, undermining its authenticity and values. An example of an inauthentic brand heritage's impact can be seen in the case of Hollister, whose reputation has suffered in part due to its perceived inauthenticity. From the responses of participants, the risk of inauthentic heritage is higher for younger brands, since they have less time to establish a genuine heritage and build consumer trust. The authenticity of a brand's heritage is therefore crucial, especially to those in the early stages of development, in order to avoid the risks associated with inauthenticity. Furthermore, as participants pointed out, inauthenticity can cause receiving negative backlash. It is therefore important for heritage brands to be mindful of their messaging and ensure that the heritage they promote is genuine and authentic to their audience. As it is often difficult to reverse negative opinions, it is better to prevent it from occurring in the first place.

4.3.4 Impact on purchase decisions

As discussed in the previous chapter, inauthentic heritage contributes to the risk of negatively affecting consumers' purchase decisions. Some of the participants stated that after learning about the inauthentic heritage of the brand, they would not be willing to purchase a product from the brand again. However, this was mostly related to the Hollister case. Their decision was mostly based on the high extent of the inauthentic heritage and the resulting negative impact on the brand's image:

“[...] it's a little bit ridiculous, they lose their seriousness and maybe that's bad for the brand because people say, no, I don't want to buy this anymore because it's like stupid.”

Participant 10

As mentioned above, consumers indicated that they would consider buying similar products from another brand instead. Particularly in fast fashion, the barriers to buying a similar product from another brand are considered to be quite low, allowing consumers to easily

disengage from the brand. Nevertheless, some respondents indicated that they would not be willing to pay a premium price for a brand with an inauthentic heritage, which mainly concerns luxury brands. As Keller (2009) notes, it can have positive psychological effects on consumers to identify with brand images, making luxury brands valuable and unique. However, it can also have the opposite effect if people can no longer identify with the brand due to inauthenticity. Consumers say it makes them question the brand beyond its heritage. Therefore, the extent of inauthenticity also plays an important role when considering the impact on purchase decisions. Especially if other brand assets are also deemed inauthentic, such as brand values, quality or working conditions:

“I would just maybe buy another brand, but maybe also not if it is something around like quality or as I said, working conditions and stuff, it would affect me more and I would rather maybe then reconsider and buy another brand.”

Participant 10

Other participants stated that the inauthentic heritage had no impact at all on their purchasing decisions, although this was mostly related to Gucci. Consumers justify this by saying that it does not affect the status and quality of the brand. While for Hollister it is discussed that if consumers expect them to have an inauthentic heritage and it is not the main purchase decision factor, as previously discussed, it could also have no impact on consumers' purchase decisions.

4.3.5 Tolerance of inauthentic heritage

There was a mixed response regarding the extent of inauthentic heritage. This can be seen as a spectrum from slightly distorted heritage to completely fictitious heritage. The Gen Z generally does not view a brand negatively when its heritage is slightly bent, showing an extent of tolerance for minor deviations from authenticity:

“So in the end, it doesn't maybe matter as much because it's been just tweaked the story.”

Participant 7

The level of inauthenticity plays a role, with consumers exhibiting different reactions based on the extent of distortion employed. However, many of the participants mentioned that the

target group being catered to also influences the response, as different demographics may have varying expectations and preferences regarding heritage:

“I think it also depends on the group of customers. I think Hollister, all the 16-15 year old girls would hear the story and they found out it's not real. I'm not sure if it affects them at all.”

Participant 11

Participants' responses indicated that when inauthentic heritage is expressed primarily through design elements rather than being a core element of the brand, it is often considered less problematic. The consumer may be more accepting in these situations, recognizing the creative aspects of the brand presentation. This suggests that when heritage is used to enhance a brand, it may be seen as a positive attribute rather than a deceptive ploy. However, several participants pointed out that it is advisable for new brands to avoid positioning themselves as heritage brands, as they may lack the historical foundation to support such claims. Consumers may be particularly suspicious of heritage claims made by new brands, and may even view them as deceptive. Therefore, heritage-based branding strategies should only be pursued by brands with the legitimacy to back up such claims:

“But for me Hollister just seems like a fraud now because they're obviously a new company so why would they even try?!”

Participant 5

Participants observed a connection between the price point of the product and the impact of inauthentic heritage. The effect of inauthentic heritage is influenced by the price of the product, particularly in distinguishing between luxury brands and fast fashion brands. For luxury brands, participants expressed that they may expect a greater extent of authenticity, due to higher price points. On the other hand, brands operating in different markets may experience different reactions based on their pricing.

Some respondents expected a certain lack of authenticity from brands, but generally disliked being deliberately misled or lied to. Another aspect shared by the participants was that transparency is an important aspect of consumer expectations, with consumers expecting brands to be open and honest about their heritage and brand narratives.

Other influences that Gen Z participants mentioned were the status of the brand, the category in which the brand operates, the level of consumer involvement, and the severity of any

associated scandals. These factors all have an effect on how participants perceive a brand, and can have a major influence on their purchase decisions. For example as one of the participants mentioned, if a brand is associated with a scandal, Gen Z consumers may be less likely to support it:

“I also think that maybe the way that this kind of news gets out, if there is a scandal around it, like if New York Times would write about it in a very scandalous way, then I would probably perceive it more disturbing. I think that you kind of get affected about how big it is perceived to be a scandal or not.”

Participant 6

Furthermore, for high-involvement brands, even minor alterations to heritage can hold significance and impact consumer perception. In contrast, low-involvement brands may have more freedom to bend their heritage as consumer attachment and scrutiny are typically lower in such cases. This is because consumers of high-involvement brands tend to have a much deeper connection with the brand and are more likely to be aware of even subtle changes. Therefore, it is important to be mindful of how changes to heritage might be perceived in this context:

“But if it's like a high involvement purchase, it definitely matters. These little alterations.”

Participant 5

As a result, consumer tolerance for inauthentic heritage varies based on the extent of inauthenticity, the target group, the presence of design elements versus the core brand identity, and the brand's status. According to the participants, consumer responses are also influenced by factors such as price point, consumer expectations of authenticity, and level of consumer involvement. In order to align with consumer preferences and expectations, brands need to understand these dynamics.

4.3.6 Evaluation of success in utilising inauthentic heritage

Understanding the success of brands that utilise inauthentic heritage from the perspective of participants was essential. According to this research, success is measured by the extent to which the brand persuaded consumers with inauthentic heritage. In the case of Gucci's inauthentic heritage, the majority of the participants agreed that the brand managed to make fictitious heritage appear authentic, potentially through effectively aligning their actions,

values, and behaviours with their communicated core values. In addition, continuity played an important role, as Gucci remained consistent in the repetition of the narrative, which ultimately led to acceptance and even convinced the consumer to believe in the inauthentic heritage. As Greyser (2009) explains, authenticity is about a brand's core values, track record, and behaviour. The idea of staying authentic is discussed as aligning a brand's actions with its communicated core values. As one of the participants points out:

“Their marketing made it so well for them to seem as they for them to seemingly have this brand heritage. I've never really liked the brand that much because I thought it was a bit too over the top. So I would prefer more subtle luxury brands, but I'm not sure.”

Participant 4

This demonstrates the importance of substance and authenticity in building consumer trust and protecting a brand's reputation during crises. It is recommended that brands focus on generating long-term consumer trust by establishing a reputational reservoir, in order to defend their authenticity during a crisis (Greyser, 2009).

Furthermore, participants discussed how to effectively utilise inauthentic heritage by associating the brand with a distinct aesthetic and engaging storytelling. By utilising inauthentic heritage, brands such as Hollister and Gucci have been able to associate themselves with a specific aesthetic and create compelling stories to engage their audience. This has helped them build a loyal following and increase their brand recognition. In this way, brands may indeed be able to leverage inauthentic heritage effectively, as consumers do not seem to be aware of such instances, as seen in the example below:

“[...] but for Hollister, the designs are not crazy specific when you think about it. But they still completely played with this surfer boy surfer girl image. So back in the days, you would go in the store and everything would the story would be perfect, actually. So it was like a genius move to do it like that back then when the world was maybe not that transparent. So it wasn't that easy to just Google and find out, okay, that's actually all not true. And there were not people on social media or Twitter who would start a shit show about it. So back then it was way easier to just create these fictional stories which people also fall into.”

Participant 17

Although many of the participants agreed that Gucci and Hollister were able to use inauthentic heritage successfully, brands should not rely exclusively on falsifying their

identity or fabricating heritage to achieve success. Several participants discussed the possibility of successfully leveraging inauthentic heritage if it is done honestly and transparently. It is therefore crucial to create a consistent heritage narrative that includes a coherent sense-making element to resonate with consumers and build a strong brand identity. This is discussed by participant 15:

“[...] Just while we're speaking about the awareness that now people have if Hollister instead of just creating a fiction, they've called it California Dream or Surfer Dream and then say that they are creating an ideal surfer, Californian surfer brand or something they could actually build a fiction character. It's like saying the lie, but if you actually say the lie, it's less hurtful. People buy it more. It's kind of weird stuff. But if you say it, I don't know, maybe I'm just thinking too much. But yeah, they both were just successful for me, Hollister could have made it a little bit better.”

Participant 15

Interestingly, some participants pointed out that even if brands no longer actively communicate their inauthentic heritage, consumers may still associate it with the brand. The findings suggest that inauthentic heritage can have a deep-rooted and long-lasting impact on a brand's reputation, even if the brand actively attempts to distance itself from the heritage.

“But I mean only because they stopped communicating it, people don't stop having the association with it. I don't know if I would have not known that they stopped communicating these things, I would still think the same way.

But I don't know who is mainly buying it and how they position themselves otherwise today, so hard to say.”

Participant 17

Participants noted that the success of leveraging inauthentic heritage may depend on consumer expectations, but also on the brand category. If a (luxury) brand is expected to have a heritage narrative, it may have a better chance of successfully exploiting inauthentic heritage. In the case of fast fashion brands, on the other hand, consumers do not expect them to have a heritage at all and, as participants pointed out, it is therefore unnecessary to create an inauthentic heritage. In addition, one participant questioned whether selling a vision might be a more successful approach for brands that are not expected to have a heritage narrative, rather than relying heavily on inauthentic heritage.

According to the participants, the successful use of heritage involves associating the brand with a distinctive aesthetic and engaging storytelling, as well as being honest and transparent about the truth. Inauthentic heritage can be perceived as authentic if it is executed correctly,

with consistency and a compelling vision. This raises the question of whether fictional heritage can be used effectively by brands. However, it is important to note that, according to consumers, simply fabricating an identity is no guarantee of success. Participants warn that brands cannot fake their entire existence without risking being perceived as entirely fake.

4.3.7 Authentic heritage

There is a general association between luxury brands and heritage based on the data collected from the interviews. Throughout different categories, it has been established that authentic heritage is seen as valuable for brands, as it adds an additional layer of prestige and significance:

“[...] but I think that it can give extra value if the story would be authentic.”

Participant 6

A participant highlighted the significance of genuine heritage in distinguishing a brand from its competitors, especially in highly concentrated marketplaces with numerous competing brands. This is particularly relevant in the context of fast fashion brands, some of which may resort to fabricating their entire heritage in order to gain a competitive edge:

“Also in terms of the fast fashion brands, I think when you build up these whole stories about heritage, I think what is your aim is to have a story and a purpose and to make people buy it because of this, because there are so many brands out there and this is something then that's outstanding.”

Participant 12

Several participants also noted that the founders of brands are often closely associated with the brand's heritage, contributing their stories and personalities to its authenticity. This personal connection adds depth and authenticity to the brand's heritage. The personal connection between the founder and the brand also adds an emotional resonance that attracts customers, creating lasting relationships with them:

“But still, I feel like Chanel has, like, a story with a strong woman liberated. She made a brand and she sold it and it was part of her personality and also for Gucci, this whole family thing.”

Participant 1

Furthermore, as discussed several times throughout the analysis, participants consider authentic heritage to play a crucial role in building relationships with consumers. Consumers can feel more attached and loyal to a brand when they have a rich historical background and legacy associated with it, strengthening their relationship with the brand. In Gucci's case, we can see how fictional heritage is perceived as authentic through factors like consistency and compelling story. Further discussion of these aspects will be provided in the following chapter.

4.4 Additional remarks

In the final part of the focus group interviews, participants were invited to share additional opinions or perspectives on the topic discussed. Two themes emerged from this part, namely participants' perceptions of heritage in relation to new fashion brands and the future significance of heritage, which are discussed below.

4.4.1 Participant perspectives on new brands and heritage

In two interviews, participants independently raised the challenge for newer brands to build heritage and be perceived as heritage brands. As mentioned previously, young brands are not perceived as having an (authentic) heritage. This was again emphasised by participants in this part of the interview, with the justification that brands today are expected to have a different purpose, which is perceived as more significant than heritage. Therefore, participants would not consult brands to try to be perceived as having heritage, whether authentic or inauthentic:

“I would consult new brands to not go into the topic of because also I think things have become totally different for us. The purpose of a brand is more important, as we said, for example, sustainability and stuff, quality as well. [...] But if I would start a brand now, I would not go into this kind of topic or try to build a USP on this element.”

Participant 12

It is also seen as a challenge for young brands to build heritage. This perspective is supported by the participant's assumption that newer brands face a greater risk of losing credibility if they lie about heritage, as they may not have a strong established position in the market. It is

also considered whether new brands would need to rebrand at some point, as consumers question whether they can communicate authentic heritage right from the start. Additionally, the question is raised as to when a brand should consider rebranding for heritage, as young brands are perceived as not having an authentic heritage.

4.4.2 Future significance of heritage

In one of the interviews, participants discussed the future importance of heritage by comparing current fashion brands and their approach to heritage. Similar to the discussion of newer brands' approach to heritage, they stated that brand values are becoming more important than heritage. In particular, issues such as sustainability, equality and diversity are gaining in importance now and will continue to do so in the future. The concept of heritage is therefore seen by participants as becoming increasingly irrelevant, as seen below:

“It's a bit outdated and not needed because it's more about values like sustainability, diversity, equality, stuff like that.”

Participant 12

Consumers also discuss how a brand's personality is becoming more important than its heritage. They link this to a specific person who stands for the brand and its values, who is the "brain behind it" (Participant 10). Several examples are given of brands that put their founder at the centre of communication, which participants define as 'new heritage':

“And that could turn into because this is innovation and this is also kind of heritage for me if you look at it now. So just like making the story around the person because the person is actually the brand, I would consider that heritage as well. And this is something I would advise because that's actually cool and nice.”

Participant 12

This strategy, however, is based on the participants' opinion that young brands should not try to be perceived as heritage in a classic way. It is therefore a suggestion on how to build heritage for new brands, but also on what future heritage should look like. In particular, building a relationship between the brand and the consumer seems to be an important issue, as consumers can identify with the founder and designer of fashion brands and be inspired by their style and history. This mirrors the mechanics of luxury brand heritage, which is also used to build a reflection of consumer belonging and cultural value (Morley & McMahon, 2011).

Furthermore, Gen Z consumers' perspective on the future importance of heritage highlights their demand for authenticity (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). They expect brands to be authentic, and they expect this to be reflected in their storytelling in order to unfold the strong emotional connection they seek with fashion brands (Morhart et al., 2015).

5. Discussion

As previously mentioned, the aim of this study is to explore Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. The following discussion is based on the analysis presented in the previous chapter and aims to discuss the posed research question: *How does Gen Z perceive inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding?* Furthermore, the sub-questions will also be elaborated on, giving a deeper insight into how these perceptions might differ across fast fashion and luxury fashion, as well as how these perceptions shape consumers' attitudes towards brands.

5.1 Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding

Several interesting findings emerged from the analysis of the empirical material. Firstly, it is important to note that perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage varied widely across the focus group interviews. While there was a trend in consumer perceptions for some of the themes, there was a wide range of opinions and perspectives for others, which can be attributed to the subjective nature of authenticity itself. According to Cohen (1988), authenticity is perceived by individuals and shaped by their personal experiences. This socially negotiable concept of authenticity is reflected in our findings, as consumers have very different perspectives on the extent of inauthenticity and their impact on (negative) perceptions. The diverse nature of Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage highlights the complex relationship between authenticity, individual subjectivity and personal consumer experience in the context of fashion branding. The factors of authenticity, including heritage, are also prioritised differently by consumers and influenced by their culture and context (Urde et al., 2007; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Mohart et al., 2014; Choi et al., 2014; Napoli et al., 2014). It is therefore expected that consumers vary in their perceptions of the importance of heritage.

Another finding of this study is that consumers construct a continuum from minor alterations to fictitious heritage when evaluating the extent of inauthentic brand heritage. Copied heritage is further identified as the worst form of inauthenticity.

The study also found that consumers are largely unaware of inauthentic brand heritage in practice, highlighting the difficulty consumers have in identifying inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. Consumers have a strong tendency to believe in the authenticity of brands, although this belief is limited by the expectation that brands can only be authentic to a certain extent, which discourages closer examination of brand heritage. The difficulty of identifying inauthentic brand heritage can be further traced back to the concept of the 'aura of authenticity' (see Chapter 2.5.2; Balmer, 2019), which explains how brands can mislead consumers into perceiving a brand's heritage as authentic when it is not. Thus, this finding is consistent with previous research and supports the notion that brands are able to create a convincing illusion of authenticity when in fact they are inauthentic. This further illustrates the complexity of inauthentic heritage and suggests that, from the consumer's perspective, there is no concept of inauthentic heritage as they are unable to reveal it.

It was found that consumers were mostly surprised by the real-life cases presented. Consumers generally agreed that when they did learn about inauthentic heritage, it tended to be perceived negatively. As mentioned above, this study revealed different perspectives on inauthentic heritage in fashion branding, with notable differences between brand categories, which will be discussed in the following chapter. Although romanticising or making small changes to a brand's heritage was not perceived as problematic by consumers, major changes are perceived differently. The more brands alter or falsify their heritage, the more problematic it is perceived by consumers.

The study identified a number of risks to brands associated with inauthentic heritage in fashion branding. The main risks identified related to the loss of consumer trust and credibility, leading to potential brand substitution. This process can be referred to as a 'ripple effect', which starts with a brand creating an inauthentic heritage that causes consumers to question the authenticity of the brand in general. As a result, the trust of consumers in the brand is negatively affected, which has a negative impact on consumer loyalty. This in turn damages the brand's reputation, which ultimately leads to a decline in sales and a deterioration

of the brand in the market. This finding of the study thus highlights the interconnectedness of inauthentic brand heritage, consumer perceptions, trust, loyalty, reputation and ultimately the brand's market position. It underlines the crucial role of authenticity in maintaining a brand's trustworthiness, as also elaborated in the existing literature (Eggers et al., 2013), and (financial) performance.

The study also found that consumers perceive inauthentic heritage as unnecessary if a brand is performing well or has other qualities they can rely on. This further supports the fact that heritage is seen as added value, rather than a significant reason to engage with a brand. This suggests that authenticity is more valuable to consumers than brand heritage, which is further supported by Gen Z's high demand for authenticity (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Their desired emotional connection with a fashion brand can ultimately only be achieved through brand authenticity (Morhart et al., 2015).

However, although consumers do not perceive heritage as significant, especially when evaluating purchase decisions, consumers indicated that they would consider abandoning or substituting a brand if it made significant use of inauthentic heritage. The findings also indicate a negative impact on consumers' willingness to pay a premium price. It was found that consumers' purchasing decisions would be less influenced if the inauthentic heritage did not affect the perceived status and quality of the brand. This underlines that other brand attributes are perceived to be more important than heritage. The study thus reveals a contradictory consumer behaviour, as indifference to heritage quickly turns into a high level of attention when they discover nuances of inauthenticity, creating a sense of fraud. This contradiction highlights the importance of genuine brand heritage for Gen Z consumers.

Furthermore, the study found that consumers perceive a brand's values and personality to be more important to the future of brands than heritage. As they perceive newer brands as more innovative but not heritage driven, they suggest a new vision of heritage by placing the founder of a brand at the centre of communication. This, according to consumers, supports the formation of an authentic relationship between the brand and the consumer, creating a greater sense of consumer belonging and cultural value (Morley & McMahon, 2011). This further highlights the perceived importance of authenticity to Gen Z (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Finally, this study also adds knowledge to the conceptual framework. The underlying theories of both (in)authenticity and heritage have been confirmed by this research. The relevance of the concept of brand heritage quotient (Urde et al., 2007) was validated in the context of inauthenticity by consumers reproducing the factors of track record, longevity, history important to identity, use of symbols and core values when discussing the extent of inauthenticity of brand heritage and which elements could protect a brand from being perceived as inauthentic. The research found that when one of these elements is altered, it leads consumers to question the others. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that consumers expressed higher levels of concern when the dimensions of brand authenticity (Bruhn et al., 2012) were violated, particularly originality and reliability. This suggests that these two dimensions are particularly important to consumers when assessing authenticity in the context of brand heritage. As a result, these dimensions are also considered first in cases of inauthentic heritage.

This study was able to frame and define inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding, particularly through consumers' perceived extent of inauthenticity and their perceived significance of authenticity over heritage. The study thus suggests an underlying relationship between the concepts of (in)authenticity and heritage that needs to be quantified on a larger scale in future research. This allowed the study to further explore Gen Z consumers' perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage, which were discussed in this chapter. The related attitudes of potential acceptance or rejection are discussed in chapter 5.3.

5.2 Differences in fashion brand categories

Several differences in consumers' perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage across fast fashion and luxury fashion brands could be identified, which are being discussed in the following.

A key finding of this research was that consumers generally have limited knowledge of heritage elements when considering fast fashion. They predominantly associate the concept with luxury brands, which is also a finding of the existing literature (Buckley, 2011). As mentioned above, consumers generally have difficulty identifying inauthentic brand heritage, which is even more challenging for them in fast fashion. As such, consumers did not expect

fashion brands to have or communicate heritage, which meant that they were not surprised when they discovered instances of inauthentic heritage. The study also found that due to the relatively lower status and perceived young age of fast fashion brands, a high level of inauthentic heritage could lead to the consumer perception that the whole brand is fake. This in turn may raise consumer scepticism and increase the risk of consumers considering brand substitution. As the fast fashion market is highly competitive, consumers have relatively low barriers to switching to alternative brands for similar products. This can therefore be seen as a significant risk for fast fashion brands attempting to leverage inauthentic brand heritage. The use of inauthentic heritage by fast fashion brands was generally perceived as unnecessary by consumers. It was suggested that it is better not to communicate heritage at all than to fake it, which is supported by their initial expectation that fast fashion brands have no heritage. As a result, fast fashion brands in particular are advised to focus on other qualities and attributes rather than trying to convince consumers of their inauthentic heritage.

Luxury brands, in contrast, were initially associated with heritage and were therefore more likely to be expected to communicate heritage. This study found that consumers view a brand's long history and status as a shield that protects brands from being perceived as inauthentic, despite their brand heritage being based on fiction. This can be further attributed to the primary association of heritage with luxury brands that create compelling and authentic narratives (Buckley, 2011; Morley & McMahon, 2011). The longevity of luxury fashion brands allows them to rely on their history, which may help to shape authentic perceptions of inauthentic heritage elements. In this way they are able to create an 'omni temporality' emphasising the relation between the brand's past, present and future (Balmer, 2019). Other brand elements such as consistent style, core values and storytelling also contribute to this phenomenon, according to consumers. Furthermore, this study found that due to the status and history of luxury fashion brands, consumers would be more likely to accept minor alterations in brand heritage.

However, the perceived impact of inauthentic brand heritage across fashion brand categories was diverse and multifaceted among consumers. On one hand, the majority perceived it worse if a luxury brand leverages inauthentic brand heritage due to the higher price point associated with such brands. On the other hand, consumers expressed that for fast fashion brands, inauthentic heritage could mean a significantly higher risk, as the barriers of brand

substitution are considerably low, which in the worst case could lead to a downfall of the brand. As a result, it is challenging to ultimately determine which brand category is perceived to experience less negative impact from inauthentic brand heritage. This, according to consumers, often depends on the extent of inauthenticity associated with the brand's heritage.

5.3 Acceptance or rejection of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding?

As mentioned above, consumers' perceptions of fashion brands that use inauthentic heritage vary widely and are influenced by consumers' assessment of authenticity, the extent of inauthentic brand heritage and the brand category. When examining consumer attitudes towards brands that use inauthentic heritage, it is important to note that consumer attitudes are highly subjective, not least due to the consumer's prior knowledge about the brand and its inauthentic heritage, which influences the cognitive component of attitude (Fill, 2013). The consumer's attitude is thus influenced by their beliefs and knowledge about the brand in question. Therefore, the affective and conative components of attitudes will be particularly emphasised in the following.

The affective component of consumers' attitudes refers to feelings and emotions towards the brand (Fill, 2013). In the case of inauthentic heritage, according to the findings of this study, consumers are mostly exposed to negative feelings such as irritation and deception. Although consumers may have an emotional attachment to the brand, which in the case of luxury brands may be long-standing, the emotions associated with inauthentic heritage are mostly negative. However, the emotional attachment to luxury brands offers an explanatory approach as to why consumers are more likely to accept minor changes to the heritage of luxury brands than fast fashion brands. According to Urde et al. (2007), luxury brand heritage facilitates consumer relationships, which further explains why consumers who desire an emotional connection with a (luxury) fashion brand are willing to accept inauthentic heritage elements.

On the contrary, consumers' tolerance for inauthentic heritage varies based on the extent of inauthenticity, the target group, the presence of design elements versus the brand's core identity, and the status of the brand. Tolerance implies the acceptance of a certain extent of

inauthenticity. It can be seen as a continuum from complete authenticity to complete inauthenticity, with varying degrees of inauthenticity in between. Brands must carefully consider the extent of inauthenticity that is acceptable for their target audience in order to maintain their authenticity.

Consumers' stated impact of inauthentic heritage on purchase decisions can be seen as the conative component of attitude, relating to intended actions. Consumers' attitudes towards brands that use inauthentic heritage indicate that they would abandon or substitute a brand, indicating a rejective attitude. This rejection of inauthentic heritage in fashion branding is reinforced by the feeling of being cheated or frauded. In addition, the aforementioned general lack of importance of heritage leads consumers to perceive the extension or falsification of a brand's heritage as unnecessary, creating a contradictory consumer behaviour, as unveiled, inauthentic brand heritage is perceived as negative. However, the category of fashion brand and consumer expectation must be taken into account. For example, since consumers do not expect fast fashion brands to have heritage anyway, inauthentic heritage may be less important to consumers, with potentially escalating negative effects when revealed. On the other hand, in luxury branding, consumers mostly do expect brands to have heritage, so they are more likely to accept minor changes in fictitious heritage as long as it is consistent and compelling.

As overall attitudes towards a brand can be influenced by attitudes towards advertising (Fill, 2013), it is not unexpected that Gen Z consumers, who demand authenticity, develop negative attitudes towards brands that exploit inauthentic heritage. As it is considered challenging to change consumer attitudes from a branding perspective, brands are advised to rather adapt consumer attitudes (Kotler et al., 2011). Accordingly, the findings of this study suggest that brands should be cautious when considering the use of inauthentic heritage and outweigh the opportunities. However, the brand should be aware of the risks involved in order to manage rejective consumer attitudes.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. Importantly, Gen Z consumers revealed a wide range of perspectives and opinions, highlighting the subjective nature of authenticity.

The study indicates that consumers prefer authentic brands with meaningful stories. Brand heritage facilitates the formation of trust and stronger customer-brand relationships, but does not seem to be a driver of purchase decisions. In contrast, when consumers actively notice brands manipulating or faking their heritage, perceptions of inauthenticity may arise leading to consumers feeling worried and sceptical. As a result, consumers perceive manipulation and dishonesty as warning signs that a brand may be deceptive in other ways.

Differences in perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage were observed between fast fashion and luxury fashion brands. Gen Z consumers had limited knowledge of general fast fashion heritage, while inauthentic heritage was rather unexpected for luxury brands. However, perceptions of inauthentic heritage differed across brand categories, with fast fashion brands perceived to be at higher risk of brand substitution. The majority of consumer perceptions of brands using inauthentic heritage were negative, accompanied by feelings of irritation and deception. These negative reactions suggest that consumers are increasingly aware of, and averse to, companies that may be attempting to use their inauthentic heritage to generate sales. Participants in this study demonstrated a rejective attitude and a willingness to abandon or substitute brands with significant inauthentic heritage. Consumers' emotional attachment to luxury brands influenced their acceptance of minor changes to heritage, while consumers' tolerance of inauthentic heritage varied depending on factors such as the degree of inauthenticity, the target audience, the design elements and the status of the brand.

This study was able to identify several risks associated with inauthentic brand heritage, such as the loss of consumer trust and credibility. Another notion identified during the collection of empirical data was the ripple effect of inauthentic heritage, which can negatively impact

consumer loyalty, brand reputation, and ultimately, the brand's market position. As such, brands must strive to maintain a sense of authenticity in their heritage to remain competitive and establish trust with their customers.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underline Gen Z's high demand for authenticity, which is reflected in consumers' perceived importance of authentic brand heritage. The study also found that consumers perceive other brand elements, such as core values, to be more important in creating an authentic relationship with consumers, suggesting a new vision of heritage for the future.

6.1 Theoretical implications

As previously mentioned, this research aimed to contribute to existing research and theory by providing insights into exploring Gen Z's perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. This study could provide several theoretical implications.

Given that theories of heritage and authenticity in previous studies have not taken a consumer perspective, but rather a business perspective, this research provides valuable insights into a largely unexplored area by investigating consumer perceptions and attitudes towards invented heritage. The aim was to investigate whether and to what extent consumers believe in fictitious heritage and under what circumstances they would accept it. As this study looks at Generation Z, it places particular emphasis on the high demand for authenticity. By examining these aspects, this research adds a new perspective to the brand heritage literature by exploring the authenticity perceptions of a highly demanding and critical generation.

The theories used to establish the conceptual framework of this study, such as the heritage quotient (Urde et al., 2007) and the four dimensions of brand authenticity (Bruhn et al., 2012), were consequently challenged from an inauthentic perspective. The results showed that consumers use the components of these key concepts when discussing the degree of inauthenticity of brand heritage and what elements could protect a brand from being perceived as inauthentic, thus supporting the validity and reliability of the previous research. The findings of this study further demonstrate that fashion brands are able to effectively

cultivate an 'aura of authenticity' (Hudson, 2017), as confirmed by consumers' difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage. Thus, a new context has been added to this key concept, providing new insights, particularly from the perspective of Gen Z consumers.

The results of this study further highlight the complex dynamics between authenticity, brand heritage and consumer perceptions. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors that influence consumer evaluations of brand heritage and reinforces the importance of authenticity in shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes. It further confirms that Gen Z has a high demand for authenticity in a brand context. It suggests that authenticity may be perceived by Gen Z as more important than a brand's heritage. While consumers initially indicated that heritage was not as important to them, their perception shifted when confronted with deception and fraud. In turn, consumers expressed a preference for brands with no heritage at all, rather than brands with fictitious or exaggerated heritage.

6.2 Managerial implications

As mentioned above, this study also aimed to contribute to managerial knowledge by providing insights into how Gen Z perceives inauthentic heritage in fashion branding, whether they accept it and, if not, what the potential consequences could be.

The knowledge gained from this research is invaluable for brands that want to use or are using inauthentic heritage in their branding strategies. By providing insights into Gen Z consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards inauthentic heritage, this research helps brands make more informed decisions about their future heritage narratives and strategies.

First, it is crucial for brands to recognise that brand heritage is not as important to consumers as they might assume. While heritage can help build a brand narrative and enhance a brand's perceived authenticity, it can have the opposite effect if the heritage is actually inauthentic. Gen Z consumers appear to be more concerned with actual authenticity than the presence of heritage. Although consumers say that heritage is mostly not an important purchase decision factor, they feel deceived and betrayed when they discover a brand's inauthentic heritage. This underlines the importance of transparency and integrity in brand communication, particularly

in relation to heritage. This suggests that brands should be cautious about exaggerating or falsifying their heritage, as such practices carry significant risks, such as loss of consumer trust and loyalty.

The study found that the impact of inauthentic brand heritage depends on whether the brand operates in luxury fashion or fast fashion. Fast fashion brands, characterised by high competition and low barriers to brand substitution, face a higher risk of losing customers if their heritage is perceived as inauthentic. However, luxury fashion brands, with their long history and exclusivity, may be able to shape authentic perceptions of inauthentic heritage elements, depending on their severity. However, fashion brands in both categories may be challenged by consumers if they reveal their inauthentic heritage, which could have serious consequences due to consumers' rejective attitudes. The individual brand, its core values, its brand category and its relationship with its target audiences should be taken into account when assessing the potential opportunities and risks of using inauthentic heritage.

The findings of potential risks suggest that brands should avoid leveraging inauthentic heritage in order to maintain authenticity and avoid rejective consumer attitudes and backlash that may result from inauthentic heritage. Authenticity, rather than brand heritage, is perceived as more valuable to Gen Z consumers, who demand emotional connections and cultural value from fashion brands. To truly connect with Gen Z consumers, brands should capitalise on authentic stories and meaningful connections rooted in real, cultural relevance, rather than using manufactured heritage. To meet this challenge, brands should consider a 'new heritage' approach that puts the founder at the centre of the communication. By focusing on the founder's personal story and values, brands can build a more personal and authentic relationship with consumers. This can also help to achieve the emotional attachment to the brand that consumers desire.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the need to maintain a genuine brand heritage in order to maintain consumer trust, loyalty and brand reputation, all of which are important in building a long-lasting brand.

6.3 Limitations and future research

Like most studies, this study has some limitations that should be addressed in future research. Future studies may be able to explore whether these findings are applicable to other generations, as this study solely focused on Generation Z. Additionally, as the majority of participants were in their early twenties with limited disposable income, it may be interesting to investigate consumers with more disposable income, as luxury brands may be more accessible to them. Moreover, the study was conducted using focus group interviews that, in some cases, may not be able to capture the complexity of consumer perceptions in their entirety. Therefore, future research could be to do further in-depth qualitative research such as semi-structured interviews to further explore the phenomenon.

Exploring the relevance of authenticity and heritage for brands that individuals actively purchase and engage with would yield valuable insights. By understanding how these factors influence consumer decisions and loyalty in real-life situations, brands can improve their strategies and build stronger relationships with their target markets. In addition, future research should aim to validate with quantitative research the relative importance of authenticity and heritage. Exploring the trade-offs and preferences between these two concepts can help future researchers to understand their relative importance and how consumers prioritise one factor over the other.

In addition, the interviews suggested a new approach to heritage by Gen Z consumers that places the brand founder at the centre of heritage communication, acting as a personification of the brand. This finding is particularly interesting when considering brands as entities with personalities, interrelationships and anthropomorphisation, and in the context of emerging (social) media platforms. It could therefore be an interesting topic within brand personality research, asking how a brand could become more relatable through the personality behind the brand itself, especially in a (social) media context.

Even though this study has some limitations, the findings of this study provide valuable insight into consumer perceptions of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. It highlights the importance of authenticity to Gen Z consumers and the risks associated with using inauthentic brand heritage.

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Appendix A

Preliminary information about the focus group interview

Here is some information for tomorrow's interview session - thanks again for participating!

We are delighted that you have decided to take part in our focus group interview, which is expected to last approximately 45 minutes. We are particularly interested in your views on the concept of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding. To make the most of the interview, we suggest that you take a moment to reflect on your own perception of fashion brand heritage and its significance to you as a consumer. This will help us gain valuable insights into your thoughts and feelings on the subject.

Heritage branding leverages a brand's history to create a captivating narrative that captures consumer imagination. However, what happens when a brand's heritage becomes more fictional than actual history? Authentic heritage is significant for managing a brand, creating consumer trust, and building brand loyalty in a highly competitive fashion industry. Brands can use historical references in marketing initiatives to influence future purchasing behaviour and gain a competitive advantage.

One way that brands can effectively incorporate their authentic heritage into their branding activities is by utilising their founding year and origin in various ways across their clothing items and brand identity. For example, the premium Swedish brand Gant features its founding year and American origin in its branding activities, including its clothing items, logo, and marketing initiatives. Similarly, the French fashion house Chanel incorporates its founder Coco Chanel's rich history and legacy into its designs today, from the iconic Bouclé tweed to the quilted handbags and statement jewellery.

Appendix B

Interview guideline

Part 0: Introduction

First of all, hej and thanks for taking your time to be part of this research project on the perception of inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding.

Before we get started, a few basic things. The results of this and any other interviews we conduct will be kept strictly confidential and anonymised. It will not be possible to draw any direct conclusions about you as an individual. If you agree, we would like to record the interview. This will help us to concentrate on the interview and to evaluate the results afterwards. Of course, the recording will only be used for analysis within the research project and will not be distributed. Do you mind if we record the interview?

Before we start the interview, we would like to ask for your permission to use your answers anonymously and without direct reference to you in our research project (e.g. in the form of a quote or reference to the interview)?

Before we start, a quick reminder: The aim of the conversation is for you to discuss the questions openly. The aim is not for everyone to answer the question in turn, but for you to complement or contradict each other.

Part 1: Background of interviewee

1. What is your age?
2. Where are you born, where did you grow up and where are you currently residing?
3. What is your education and what are you currently doing for a living?
4. Do you consider yourself fashion conscious? What does it mean for you to be fashion conscious?
5. Do you consume fast fashion/luxury fashion?

Part 2: Heritage of fashion brands

6. When you hear the term "brand heritage," what comes to mind?

To ensure common understanding I will briefly define the term brand heritage. The term "heritage" describes the cultural, social, and historical legacies that have been passed down over time and have shaped the identity of a brand. It gives consumers a sense of continuity and stability while assisting them in discovering the brand's cultural origins and identity.

7. How important is a brand's heritage to you when making purchasing decisions?

8. Have you ever purchased a product because of the brand's heritage or history? Can you give an example?
9. Are there any particular fashion brands that you think have successfully utilised brand heritage in their branding? Why do you think this is the case?
10. To what extent does the fashion industry emphasise brand heritage and history? Do you think it is too much? Why/why not?
11. Do you think there are differences in how brand heritage is perceived in luxury and fast fashion brands? Why or why not?
12. Are there any specific aspects of brand heritage that are more important to you when considering luxury and fast fashion brands?

Part 3: (In)authenticity of fashion brand heritage

To ensure common understanding I will briefly define the so-called inauthenticity in brand heritage. An inauthentic brand heritage is defined by fictitious, exaggerated, misleading, or otherwise untrustworthy narratives of the past.

13. Have you ever come across a brand with a heritage that you thought was inauthentic or misleading? Can you give an example?
14. Do you believe that there are different levels or degrees of inauthenticity when it comes to brand heritage?

Part 4: Examples of inauthentic heritage in fashion branding

To ensure common understanding of our used examples we will present the cases of Gucci and Hollister with visual illustration.

15. Did you know that these brands have inauthentic brand heritage? If so, how did you learn about it?
16. How does this affect your perception of the brands? Is there a difference between these two brands? (luxury, fast fashion)
17. What are potential consequences for the brands of people knowing about their inauthentic brand heritage? (*Link to: price, style, sustainability*)
18. How much is this influencing your purchasing decision?
19. Do you think they successfully use inauthentic brand heritage without losing authenticity? Why?
20. In your opinion, is there a way for brands to successfully use inauthentic brand heritage without losing authenticity?

Part 6: Final part

21. Is there anything else you would like to add related to the discussed topic?

Appendix C

Examples of inauthentic heritage of fashion brands

Hollister *Heritage?*



According to Hollister, the company was founded by a Yale alumnus who left Massachusetts in 1915 to sail the South Pacific with his girlfriend, eventually settling in California and opening a surf shop.



Hollister



Hollister

The truth: Abercrombie & Fitch founded Hollister Co. in 2002 and opened its first store in Ohio. However, to give their brand a sense of history, A&F invented the story of a fictional man named John Hollister, who supposedly founded the label in 1922. This invented story has been a central part of their iconic vintage-themed advertising and in-store experience. Hollister Co. was designed to appeal to young people who enjoy beach culture.



Source: Eggers, 2015; BBC, 2009

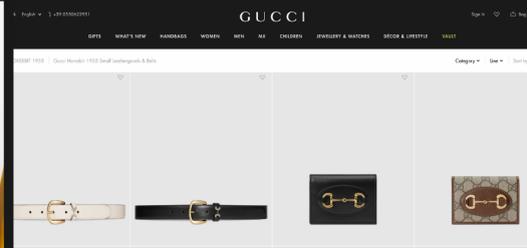
Gucci Heritage?



Gucci has always used various design elements, such as the green and red webbing of the girth straps and hardware in the shape of stirrups and horse bits, to create an image of stables and horses to promote the idea of Gucci's history as a noble saddler to medieval courts. This helped to establish the story of the Gucci family's supposed saddlery heritage.



Gucci Horsebit



Gucci

The truth: Guccio Gucci, an Italian-British businessman, was born in Florence in 1881. In the early 1900s, he became fascinated by the stylish guests and their high-quality clothes and luggage while working as a lift boy at the Savoy Hotel in London. Upon his return to Florence in 1921, Guccio founded a small family leather goods shop, which grew into a company renowned for its quality craftsmanship and equestrian-inspired designs.

Today, members of the Gucci family still speak of the heritage of the Guccio saddlers. Interestingly, Guccio Guccio's daughter, Grimalda, "wanted the truth to come out", as she told a journalist in 1987. "We were never saddlemakers".



Source: DeFanti et al., 2013

Appendix D

Codebook

Part 1: Brand heritage in fashion branding

Category 1: Definition of heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants that define brand heritage.	"A brand with a long lasting history that has kind of become part of the brand. [...] Of course, I think Chanel is to me a good example of that because it's like the history has become such a part of the brand and it's an important part of the story."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
High quality	high quality is mentioned to define heritage.
Long term history	heritage is defined by participants in terms of long-term history.
Not equivalent to high quality	participants mention that heritage does not imply high quality.
Well-known established brands	well-known established brands are associated with heritage.
Tradition	heritage is associated with tradition.
Sustainable (long term brand)	participants associate heritage with sustainable/long term brands.
Added meaning	heritage is defined as adding meaning to a brand.
Stable in relevancy	heritage is associated with brands that have stable relevance.
Marketing utilises heritage	participants mention that heritage is used in marketing.
Founding story	heritage is associated with a brand's founding story.
Brand with values	heritage is associated with a brand with values.
Extent of heritage is linked to age of the brand	perceived extent of heritage is related to the age of the brand.
Brands can rely on heritage	heritage is mentioned as something that brands can rely on.
Longevity	longevity is mentioned to define heritage.
Craftsmanship	craftsmanship is mentioned to define heritage.
Origin	origin is mentioned to define heritage.
Used as a unique selling point	heritage is defined as a unique selling point for a brand.
Continuity	continuity is mentioned to define heritage.

Category 2: Significance of brand heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants about the perceived importance of brand heritage.	"So I think if I would choose between a brand with a heritage or not, I would be very tempted to go towards the brand with the heritage because I feel like they've had just way more time. Of course, depending on first I would choose whether the product I would prefer. But I think if then I would prefer that heritage brand because I feel like they've just had more time to enhance or to perfectionate what they make."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Preference of heritage over non-heritage	participants indicate that they prefer brands that use heritage to brands that do not.
Heritage perceived as not important	participants state that heritage is not important to them.
Giving trust to consumers	heritage is perceived as giving trust to consumers.
Giving security to consumers	heritage is perceived as giving security to consumers.
Personal connection to heritage brands	heritage brands are associated with personal connection.
Heritage perceived as not important for low-involvement products	participants perceive heritage as not significant for low-involvement products.
Positive attitude towards brand heritage	participants express a positive attitude towards brand heritage.
Positive impact on brand equity	heritage is associated with a positive impact on brand equity.
Not adding value to the brand	heritage is associated with no added value to a brand.
Heritage perceived as important for high quality products	heritage is considered important for high quality products.
Subconscious influence	heritage is associated with a subconscious influence.
Nostalgic feeling	heritage is associated with a nostalgic feeling.

Category 3: Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements related to the influence of brand heritage on purchase decisions.	"I like when brands embrace the heritage, but for me it's not like a purchasing criteria."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Additional factor in purchase decisions	brand heritage is identified as an additional factor in purchase decisions.

Insignificant factor in purchase decisions	brand heritage is considered as an insignificant factor in purchase decisions.
Insignificant factor in purchase decisions when buying fast fashion	brand heritage is identified as an additional factor in fast fashion purchase decisions.
Becomes more important with higher price point	participants consider brand heritage to be more important when making purchase decisions for higher priced products.
Timeless products	brand heritage is considered important when buying timeless products.
Willingness to pay higher price	brand heritage contributes to a willingness to pay a higher price.
Limited ownership of heritage brand products	participants indicate that their ownership of heritage brand products is limited.
No ownership of heritage brand products	participants indicate that they do not own heritage brand products.

Category 4: Risks for brands utilising heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements relating to risks for brands that use heritage.	"And I think I associate a lot more with innovativeness with younger brands than with heritage."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Heritage brands are viewed as outdated	participants perceive heritage brands as outdated.
Staying innovative as a challenge for heritage brands (4)	staying innovative is perceived as a challenge for heritage brands.
Young brand heritage is viewed as inauthentic	participants associate young brands with inauthentic heritage.
Innovativeness is associated with younger brands	participants associate young brands with innovativeness.
Staying relevant as a challenge for heritage brands	staying relevant is perceived as a challenge for heritage brands.

Category 5: Use of symbols	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements relating to the use of heritage symbols.	"[...] you can see like sometimes in what is it now, fast fashion brands kind of trying to imitate that with these hoodies of having established in 1989, [...] So you can see those references here and there."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...

Use of 'established' symbols	participants mention the use of 'established' symbols
Usage of specific style/pattern	heritage symbols are related to the usage of a specific style or pattern.
Heritage symbols do not have to be perceived as actual heritage	participants mention that heritage symbols do not indicate actual heritage.
Patch on product to highlight heritage	a patch on a product is mentioned as a heritage symbol.
Sub-brands to highlight heritage	sub-brands are mentioned as a heritage symbol.
Distinct logos to highlight heritage	distinct logos are mentioned as a heritage symbol.

Category 6: Communication of brand heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements relating to the communication of brand heritage.	"So I would say it's a bit extended at some point, or from some brands."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Some brands may over communicate brand heritage	participants mention that brands over communicate heritage.
Founder as centre of communication	participants mention that brands use founders to communicate heritage.
Passing down the history to the next generation	heritage is communicated by handing down history to the next generation.
Usage of heritage in a subtle way	participants recognise that heritage is being communicated in a subtle way.
Heritage needs to be clearly defined	participants indicate that heritage needs to be clearly defined.
Communication of success story	heritage is associated with communicating a brand's success story.
Communication through films	heritage is communicated through films.
Specialisation	heritage is associated with a brand's specialisation.

Category 7: Authentic brand heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements relating to perceived authentic brand heritage.	"Not trying to position themselves as heritage, but actually being heritage."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Well-known heritage	authentic brand heritage is associated with well-known heritage.

Being heritage rather than positioning the brand as heritage	participants indicate that authentic brand heritage is about being heritage rather than positioning as heritage.
Heritage brands can manage to stay young and innovative	participants indicate that heritage brands are able to remain young and innovative.
History does not have to go back a hundred years	authentic brand heritage is not associated with a 100-year history.
Timeless products	authentic brand heritage is associated with timeless products.

Category 8: Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements relating to key elements of brand heritage for consumers.	"For me it's probably longevity. Chanel stands out because they were founded way back in the early 20th century that makes an impression."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Longevity	longevity is mentioned as a key element of heritage for consumers.
Product quality	product quality is mentioned as a key element of heritage for consumers.
Brand core values	brand core values are mentioned as a key element of heritage for consumers.
Consistency	consistency is mentioned as a key element of heritage for consumers.
Consistent storytelling	consistent storytelling is mentioned as a key element of heritage for consumers.
Symbolism	symbolism is mentioned as a key element of heritage for consumers.
Authenticity	authenticity is mentioned as a key element of heritage for consumers.

Category 9: Heritage in luxury fashion branding	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements relating to heritage in luxury fashion branding.	"Like luxury, I think it's more heritage driven, premium, maybe a bit. [...]"
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Luxury fashion brands are heritage driven	luxury brands are perceived as heritage driven.
Old luxury fashion brands use their heritage	participants mention that old luxury fashion brands

	use their heritage.
Old luxury fashion brands are perceived as having heritage	participants perceive old luxury fashion brands as having heritage.
Heritage is justifying high price point	participants indicate that heritage justifies a high price point.
Brands use heritage in different elements of the brand	heritage is used in different elements of the brand.
Heritage is romanticised	participants state that heritage is romanticised.
It is easier for luxury fashion brands to communicate heritage	participants perceive that it is easier for luxury fashion brands to communicate heritage.
Sub-categories coded within other category linked to "Heritage in luxury fashion branding"	Category
Luxury fashion brands leverage heritage more than fast fashion brands	<i>Heritage in fast fashion branding</i>
Fast fashion brands are not as consistent and specialised as luxury brands are	<i>Heritage in fast fashion branding</i>
Same strategy in fast and luxury fashion	<i>Heritage in fast fashion branding</i>
Heritage is associated with old money aesthetic	<i>Heritage in fast fashion branding</i>
Becomes more important with higher price point	<i>Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions</i>

Category 10: Heritage in fast fashion branding	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements relating to heritage in fast fashion branding.	"But I think it's so interesting because I never actively thought about it. But when you think of just normal fast fashion hoodies, you have these 'established' so many times."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Fast fashion brands are not heritage driven	luxury brands are perceived as not heritage driven.
Consumers unaware of heritage in fast fashion	participants indicate that they do not recognise examples of heritage in fast fashion branding.
Fast fashion brands are not being associated with heritage	participants do not associate heritage with fast fashion brands.
No relationship building with consumers	participants perceive fast fashion brands as not building relationships with consumers.
Specialisation can lead to heritage	a brand's specialisation is perceived to lead to heritage.
Sub-categories coded within other category linked to "Heritage in fast fashion branding"	Category
Use of 'established' symbols	<i>Use of symbols</i>
Insignificant factor in purchase decisions when buying fast fashion	<i>Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions</i>

Heritage perceived as not important for low-involvement products	<i>Significance of brand heritage</i>
Luxury fashion brands leverage heritage more than fast fashion brands	<i>Heritage in luxury fashion branding</i>
Fast fashion brands are not as consistent and specialised as luxury brands are	<i>Heritage in luxury fashion branding</i>
Heritage is associated with old money aesthetic	<i>Heritage in luxury fashion branding</i>
Same strategy in fast and luxury fashion	<i>Heritage in luxury fashion branding</i>
Not adding value to the brand	<i>Significance of brand heritage</i>

Part 2: Inauthentic fashion brand heritage

Category 1: Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants that demonstrate their difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage.	"I think maybe we can't think of an example because we are not aware of them practising this inauthenticity because I was also really thinking about I need an example, I was like I want to think and I couldn't think of anything [...]"
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Inauthentic heritage is difficult to detect	participants mention that inauthentic heritage is difficult to detect.
Not able to identify example of inauthentic brand heritage	participants were not able to identify examples of inauthentic brand heritage.
Consumers trust brands to be authentic	participants indicate that they trust brands to be authentic.
Brands would not communicate that heritage is inauthentic	it is mentioned that brands would not communicate that their heritage is inauthentic.
Brands use storytelling from other decades to mislead consumers	participants mention that brands use storytelling from other decades to mislead consumers.
Brands can easily mislead consumers	it is stated that brands can easily mislead consumers.

Category 2: Extent of inauthenticity	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants that define the extent of inauthenticity.	"No, I just wanted to say that for me the most inauthentic thing would be if everything is built up on a lie. So maybe that some brand claims, okay, this person has founded the brand in 1912 and then it turns out that everything is a lie and the brand was founded in 2018 just as an example. [...]"

Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Falsified founding date	falsified founding dates are mentioned as an extent of inauthenticity.
Borrowed heritage elements	borrowed heritage elements are mentioned as an extent of inauthenticity.
Minor alterations of heritage	minor alterations of heritage are mentioned as an extent of inauthenticity.
Fictitious heritage	fictitious heritage is mentioned as an extent of inauthenticity.
Young heritage as inauthentic	young heritage is mentioned as being perceived as inauthentic.
Falsified origin in storytelling	falsified origin in storytelling is mentioned as an extent of inauthenticity.
Fictitious brand values	fictitious brand values are mentioned as an extent of inauthenticity.
Fictitious production facts	fictitious product facts are mentioned as an extent of inauthenticity.
Telling white lies	telling white lies is mentioned as an extent of inauthenticity.
Lying on a large scale	lying on a large scale is mentioned as an extent of inauthenticity.
Copied heritage	copied heritage is mentioned as an extent of inauthenticity.

Category 3: Consumer responses to extent of inauthenticity	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants who responded to varying extents of inauthenticity.	"Yeah, I think if you romanticise your story a bit, then I don't think that anyone will reflect upon it."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Fictitious heritage could cause brand to lose credibility	participants mention that fictitious heritage could cause brands to lose credibility.
Minor alterations do not affect consumers	participants mention that minor alterations of brand heritage do not affect consumers.
Fictitious heritage problematic	fictitious heritage is viewed as problematic.
Rather no brand heritage than inauthentic brand heritage	participants indicate that it is better for brands to have no heritage rather than an inauthentic heritage.
Negatively affected by falsified founding date	participants indicate that they are negatively affected by a falsified founding date.
Negatively affected by fictitious brand values	participants indicate that they are negatively affected

	by fictitious brand values.
Fictitious production facts disrupt idea of heritage brand	fictitious production facts are mentioned to disrupt the idea of a heritage brand.
Borrowed heritage can be exaggerated	it is stated that borrowed heritage can be exaggerated.
Inauthenticity associated with dishonesty	participants associate inauthenticity with dishonesty.
Copied heritage seen as worst extent of inauthenticity	copied heritage is mentioned as the worst extent of inauthenticity.

Part 3: Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage

Category 1: Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants on luxury fashion brands' inauthentic heritage.	"I agree Gucci actually has a heritage to rely on because they are an older brand and they are family owned and they have had pretty consistent style and core values and storytelling from the start."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Gucci's inauthentic heritage as more surprising	participants perceive Gucci's inauthentic heritage as more surprising.
Considered unnecessary to lie about heritage if brand is doing well	participants consider inauthentic heritage as unnecessary if the brand is doing well.
Older brands are viewed as more authentic (protection)	it is mentioned that older brands are seen as more authentic because their history acts as a shield against inauthenticity.
Would not expect luxury brands to have an inauthentic heritage	participants would not expect luxury brands to have an inauthentic heritage.
Older brands have a long history to rely on	it is mentioned that older brands have a long history to rely on.
Product style more important than heritage	product style is perceived as more important than heritage.
Not affected by Gucci's inauthentic heritage	participants indicate that they are not affected by Gucci's inauthentic heritage.
Gucci's inauthentic heritage has less of a negative impact on consumers than Hollister's	participants indicate that they are less negatively affected by Gucci's inauthentic heritage than by Hollister's.
Gucci's inauthentic heritage negatively affects brand perception	participants indicate that Gucci's inauthentic heritage negatively affects their brand perception.
More affected by Gucci's inauthentic heritage than Hollister's	participants indicate that they are more affected by Gucci's inauthentic heritage than Hollister's.
More affected by inauthentic heritage if high quality piece	participants indicate that they are more affected by inauthentic heritage when it involves a high quality brand or product.

Sub-categories coded within other category linked to "Consumer views on luxury fashion brand's inauthentic heritage"	Category
Gucci succeeded in making fictitious heritage seem authentic	<i>Evaluation of success in utilising inauthentic heritage</i>
Not problematic if rather design elements than core element of the brand	<i>Tolerance of inauthentic heritage</i>
Negatively affects brand loyalty	<i>Risks of inauthentic heritage</i>
Inauthentic heritage makes consumers question the brand	<i>Risks of inauthentic heritage</i>
Disappointment with heritage as a purchasing factor	<i>Risks of inauthentic heritage</i>
No impact on purchase decisions	<i>Impact on purchase decisions</i>
Not willing to buy a product after learning about inauthentic heritage	<i>Impact on purchase decisions</i>
Negative impact on consumers' willingness to pay a premium price	<i>Impact on purchase decisions</i>
Loss of trust in the brand	<i>Risks of inauthentic heritage</i>
Brands are viewed as foolish to think consumers will not notice	<i>Risks of inauthentic heritage</i>
Do not view brand negatively if heritage is slightly bent	<i>Tolerance of inauthentic heritage</i>
If high involvement brand, minor alterations of heritage matter	<i>Tolerance of inauthentic heritage</i>
Heritage is expected to be authentic because consumers pay for the brand name	<i>Authentic brand heritage</i>

Category 2: Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants on fast fashion brands' inauthentic heritage.	"So I just think it's a little bit funny to make a big story for a brand that doesn't even is in the luxury field. I think it's just like, why, why would you, it's not necessary at all."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
If founding history is fake, the whole brand is viewed as fake	it is mentioned that an inauthentic founding story of a brand leads to the whole brand being perceived as fake.
Not surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage	participants are not surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage.
Not affected by Hollister's inauthentic heritage	participants are not affected by Hollister's inauthentic heritage.

Hollister's inauthentic heritage is viewed as fictitious	it is mentioned that Hollister's inauthentic heritage is perceived as fictitious.
Surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage	participants indicate being surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage.
Lying about heritage considered unnecessary for fast fashion brand	participants consider it unnecessary for fast fashion brands to exploit inauthentic heritage.
Hollister's inauthentic heritage negatively affects brand perception	it is mentioned that Hollister's inauthentic heritage has a negative impact on participants' perception of the brand.
Product style more important than heritage	product style is perceived as more important than heritage.
Sub-categories coded within other category linked to "Consumer views on fast fashion brand's inauthentic heritage"	Category
Successfully associate the brand with a particular aesthetic and storytelling	<i>Evaluation of success in utilising inauthentic heritage</i>
Not willing to buy a product after learning about inauthentic heritage	<i>Impact on purchase decisions</i>
Loss of trust in the brand	<i>Risks of inauthentic heritage</i>
Downfall of a brand	<i>Risks of inauthentic heritage</i>
If low involvement brand, more free to bend heritage	<i>Tolerance of inauthentic heritage</i>
New brands should not try to be seen as heritage	<i>Tolerance of inauthentic heritage</i>
No impact on purchase decisions	<i>Impact on purchase decisions</i>

Category 3: Impact on purchase decisions	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants about the impact of inauthentic brand heritage on purchase decisions.	"[...] But because it's probably not one of the reasons why I personally would buy the brand, it wouldn't harm my trust as much and I perhaps would still consider buying something. Maybe also because I'm not too surprised about it."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Not willing to buy a product after learning about inauthentic heritage	participants indicate that they are unwilling to buy a product after learning about a brand's inauthentic heritage.
Select another brand to buy from	it is mentioned that participants would choose an alternative brand to buy from.
No impact on purchase decisions	participants indicate that inauthentic heritage has no impact on their purchasing decisions.

Negative impact on consumers' willingness to pay a premium price	it is mentioned that inauthentic heritage has a negative impact on consumers' willingness to pay a premium price.
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Category 4: Risks of inauthentic heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants about the risks of inauthentic heritage.	"I think this leads to the damage of the brand's reputation."
Sub-category	Is being coded if..
Inauthentic heritage makes consumers question the brand	participants indicate that inauthentic heritage makes them question the brand.
Loss of trust in the brand	loss of trust in the brand is mentioned as a risk of inauthentic heritage.
Negatively affects brand loyalty	negative impact on brand loyalty is mentioned as a risk of inauthentic heritage.
Damage of brand's reputation	damage of a brand's reputation is mentioned as a risk of inauthentic heritage.
Disappointment with heritage as a purchasing factor	participants mention being disappointed when heritage has acted as a purchasing factor for a particular brand or product.
Downfall of a brand	downfall of a brand is mentioned as a risk of inauthentic heritage.
Backlash when inauthentic heritage deviates too far from identity	participants see a risk of backlash if the inauthentic heritage strays too far from a brand's identity.
Brands are viewed as foolish to think consumers will not notice	brands are perceived as foolish if they think consumers will not notice inauthentic heritage.
Decline in sales	decline in sales is mentioned as a risk of inauthentic heritage.
Fictitious founding story leads to assumption that company is solely profit-driven	participants mention that fictitious founding stories are associated with purely profit-oriented companies.
Hollister has lost its reputation partly due to inauthentic brand heritage	it is mentioned that one of the reasons Hollister lost its reputation was its inauthentic brand heritage.
The younger the brand the higher the risk	participants perceive a higher risk for younger brands leveraging inauthentic heritage.

Category 5: Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example

This category includes all statements made by participants about their tolerance of inauthentic heritage.	"So in the end, it doesn't maybe matter as much because it's been just tweaked the story."
Sub-category	Is being coded if..
Do not view brand negatively if heritage is slightly bent	participants are not negatively affected by minor alterations to brand heritage.
Depends on the extent of inauthenticity	it is mentioned that the tolerance of inauthentic heritage depends on its extent.
Depends on the target group	it is mentioned that the tolerance of inauthentic heritage depends on the brand's target group.
Not problematic if rather design elements than core element of the brand	participants do not consider it problematic to change the design elements of a brand rather than the core elements of a brand.
New brands should not try to be seen as heritage	participants suggest that new brands should not try to build a heritage image.
Effect depends on price point	it is mentioned that the tolerance of inauthentic heritage depends on a brand's or product's price point.
Consumers expect brands to be inauthentic to a certain degree	participants expect brands to be inauthentic to a certain degree.
Consumer do not like to be lied to	participants indicate that they do not like to be lied to.
Consumer expect brands to be transparent	participants indicate that they expect brands to be transparent.
Depends on the status of the brand	it is mentioned that the tolerance of inauthentic heritage depends on the status of the brand.
Effect depends on brand category	it is mentioned that the effect of inauthentic heritage depends on the brand category.
Effect depends on level of involvement of the brand	it is mentioned that the effect of inauthentic heritage depends on the level of involvement of the brand.
Effect depends on severity of scandal	it is mentioned that the effect of inauthentic heritage depends on the severity of a (potential) scandal.
If high involvement brand, minor alterations of heritage matter	participants perceive minor changes to heritage as important when it concerns a high involvement brand.
If low involvement brand, more free to bend heritage	participants will tolerate minor changes to the heritage if it is a low involvement brand.

Category 6: Evaluation of success in utilising inauthentic heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants to assess the success of brands in leveraging inauthentic heritage.	"Yeah, I think I still perceive like was it Gucci that you had as an example, right? I think that I still perceive them to be authentic."
Sub-category	Is being coded if..

Gucci succeeded in making fictitious heritage seem authentic	participants suggest that Gucci has been successful in making fictitious heritage appear authentic.
Successfully associate the brand with a particular aesthetic and storytelling	it is mentioned that a brand that leverages inauthentic heritage has successfully associated itself with a particular aesthetic and storytelling.
Inauthentic heritage has been successfully used by both brands	participants mention that both exemplary brands that have leveraged inauthentic heritage have been successful in doing so.
As consumers are unaware of examples, it is assumed that brands are successful in leveraging inauthentic heritage	it is mentioned that because consumers are unaware of inauthentic heritage, brands are successful in exploiting inauthentic heritage.
Brands can not successfully falsify their identity	participants indicate that brands cannot successfully falsify their identity.
Could be used successfully if brand is honest and transparent about the truth	it is mentioned that a brand can successfully leverage inauthentic heritage if it is honest and transparent about the truth.
Although both brands no longer communicate their inauthentic heritage, consumers still associate it with the brand	inauthentic heritage is still associated with exemplary brands, although they no longer exploit it.
Brand can be successful if it is not expected to be a heritage brand	it is mentioned that brands can be successful in using inauthentic heritage if they are not expected to be a heritage brand.
Brands can successfully leverage inauthentic heritage	participants suggest that brands can successfully leverage inauthentic heritage.
Creating a consistent heritage narrative with a coherent sense-making element	it is mentioned that a consistent heritage narrative with a coherent sense-making element could lead to a successful implementation of inauthentic heritage.
Selling a vision rather than an inauthentic heritage	it is mentioned that selling a brand's vision rather than exploiting inauthentic heritage could be more successful.

Category 7: Authentic heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by participants that relate to authentic heritage.	"[...] Because in the end we are paying not always the quality, we always pay the name. So there has to be a background behind the name."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Luxury brands tend to have heritage	participants perceive luxury brands to have heritage.
Heritage is expected to be authentic because consumers pay for the brand name	participants expect heritage to be authentic when paying for the brand name.
Adds value to the brand	it is mentioned that authentic heritage adds value to a brand.

Founders are associated with personality	it is said that the founders of a brand are associated with an authentic personality.
Helps building relationship with consumer	participants mention that authentic heritage supports building a relationship with consumers.
Used to differentiate from competitors	it is mentioned that authentic heritage can be used to differentiate a brand from its competitors.

Part 4: Additional remarks

Category 1: Participant perspectives on new brands and heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by respondents about their perspectives on new brands related to heritage.	"I would consult new brands to not go into the topic of because also I think things have become totally different for us. The purpose of a brand is more important, as we said, for example, sustainability and stuff, quality as well. [...] But if I would start a brand now, I would not go into this kind of topic or try to build a USP on this element."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Challenge for young brands to build heritage	building heritage is mentioned as a challenge for young brands.
New brand can not be seen as heritage	participants mention that new brands are not perceived as heritage.
Unclear when brand heritage should be built	participants indicate that it is unclear when brands should start building heritage.

Category 2: Future significance of heritage	
Definition	Anchor Example
This category includes all statements made by respondents about the future importance of heritage.	"It's a bit outdated and not needed because it's more about values like sustainability, diversity, equality, stuff like that."
Sub-category	Is being coded if...
Founder as centre of 'new heritage'	participants see communication with the founder at the centre as a new way of heritage.
Brand values become more important than heritage	brand values are perceived to become more important than heritage.
Concept of heritage becomes irrelevant	concept of heritage is perceived to become irrelevant.
Personality becomes more important than heritage	brand personality is perceived to become more important than heritage.

Appendix E

Coding table

Interview	Participant	Quote	Paraphrase	Part	Category	Sub-category
1	3	A brand with a long lasting history that has kind of become part of the brand. [...] Of course, I think Chanel is to me a good example of that because it's like the history has become such a part of the brand and it's an important part of the story.	A heritage brand is a brand with a long term history, that has become part of the brand.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Long term history
1	1	To be honest, I don't really care about it that much.	Heritage is not important to participant.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Heritage perceived as not important
1	1	Like looking at my wardrobe, I don't think I have a lot of heritage brands.	Participant does not own a lot of products from heritage brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Limited ownership of heritage brand products
1	1	I like when brands use heritage in their marketing. [...]	Participant likes if brands use heritage in marketing, because of their history.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Positive attitude towards brand heritage
1	1	I like when brands embrace the heritage, but for me it's not like a purchasing criteria.	Heritage is not a purchasing criteria for participant.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Insignificant factor in purchase decisions
1	2	So I see it as an extra plus when I buy something and I like it and kind of affordable, but to be honest, there's many	Participant views heritage as an additional advantage when purchasing a product.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Additional factor in purchase decisions

		more criteria that I'm looking at when I'm buying something.				
1	5	I would say for me, maybe it's just like my personal opinion, but I sort of view heritage fashion brands as more sustainable almost because in my perspective they've lasted through time [...]	Participant views heritage brands as more sustainable because of their longlasting history.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Sustainable (long term brand)
1	5	and they will still be relevant like 20 years from now or something like that.	Participant thinks heritage brands remain relevant in the future.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Stable in relevancy
1	5	And I don't really consume a lot of heritage fashion brands [...]	Participant does not consume a lot of heritage brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Limited ownership of heritage brand products
1	5	[...] but if I were to do it, I would prefer it over something that doesn't have that sense of history to it.	Participant would prefer brands with history.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Preference of heritage over non-heritage
1	4	I don't have anything in my wardrobe now that I, from the top of my head, could think of that is a heritage brand.	Participant does not own products from heritage brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	No ownership of heritage brand products
1	4	I don't know, but I would say [...] that the marketing makes up most of it and that the marketing makes me interested in maybe doing a future purchase of this brand of a product.	Marketing utilises heritage, that makes it appealing to consumers.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Marketing utilises heritage
1	4	But I would say it's a sustainable brand in terms of equity or maybe funding, because	Heritage has a positive influence on a brand's equity.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Positive impact on brand equity

		you don't need to start a new brand, but you can use the history of the brand to continue the marketing.				
1	4	So maybe that's a more sustainable way of promoting oneself.	Heritage as a sustainable way of marketing.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Sustainable (long term brand)
1	3	No, I think it isn't necessarily now maybe what is one of my criteria when I look for a brand.	Heritage is not a purchasing criteria for participant.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Insignificant factor in purchase decisions
1	3	And I think what I connect to heritage brands is a lot of quality because for some reason in my mind it's like oh, they have had so many years where they're so old and they're still here, there must be a reason for that. And they've had all those years to strengthen their quality, enhance their quality.	Heritage brands are linked with high quality, because of their long history.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	High quality
1	3	So I think if I would choose between a brand with a heritage or not, I would be very tempted to go towards the brand with the heritage because I feel like they've had just way more time. Of course, depending on first I would choose whether the product I would prefer. But I think if then I would prefer that heritage brand because I feel like they've just had more time to enhance or to perfectionize what they make.	Participant would prefer brands with history.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Preference of heritage over non-heritage

1	1	And I think I associate younger brands a lot more with innovativeness than with heritage.	Participant associates innovativeness with younger brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Innovativeness is associated with younger brands
1	1	Thinking of Chanel, I find it a bit dusty in a way because they are so focused on their past that I kind of feel like they're a bit outdated, still timeless, but a bit dusty in a way.	Participant views heritage brands as timeless, but also outdated and dusty.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Heritage brands are viewed as outdated
1	3	I think for pieces that would be timeless, that I would say just a classic blazer or those things that are just kind of timeless pieces, I would prefer the heritage brand because I don't need the innovativeness [...].	Participant prefers heritage brands for timeless products.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Timeless products
1	5	I just assume that there is high quality to it.	Heritage brands are linked with high quality.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	High quality
1	5	So that's also a clear benefit for them, that they could potentially make things that aren't even that good in quality. But it just feels like it's a stupid consumer just go for it.	Heritage brands not necessarily have to have a high quality.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Not equivalent to high quality
1	1	Like luxury, I think it's more heritage driven, premium, maybe a bit. [...]	Luxury fashion is heritage driven.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Luxury fashion brands are heritage driven
1	1	[...] Fast fashion not at all.	Fast fashion is not heritage driven.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in fast fashion branding	Fast fashion brands are not heritage driven

1	2	I just thought about these basic hoodies that you could buy from H&M, like, all the time when I was young. And I remember that there were so many hoodies where there was just an 'established' and a year. And when I think about it, I think it's so funny because H&M definitely doesn't have a very glorious brand heritage from my perspective, but it still uses these tricks to trick the consumer.	Fast fashion brands use 'established' symbols without having brand heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Use of symbols / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Use of 'established' symbols
1	2	But I think it's so interesting because I never actively thought about it. But when you think of just normal fast fashion hoodies, you have these 'established' so many times.	Consumers do not actively think about fast fashion brands using heritage symbols.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in fast fashion branding	Fast fashion brands are not being associated with heritage
1	3	But I also think sometimes it says, like, 'established' and then like 1998. And then I just have to laugh because it's like, okay, now you're just purposely trying to look cool, like, oh, we've been around for a bit longer. I think this is kind of the topic we're supposed to talk about, but then it's like, you've been around for a bit longer. Come on, you cannot flex with this yet.	Participant does not view young brand heritage as authentic.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Young brand heritage is viewed as inauthentic
1	3	I think it's often, like, maybe quiet or like old luxury that uses heritage more. For example, Balenciaga. I don't know if they use their heritage. I'm not aware of it. But I think we	Old luxury brands use heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Old luxury fashion brands use their heritage

		know the example of Patek Philippe that uses it a lot.				
1	3	And I think that's more like old money luxury uses it way more than, like, newer things, which makes sense because they've actually been around for longer.	Heritage only makes sense, if brand has been existing for a longer time.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Young brand heritage is viewed as inauthentic
1	3	I think when I look at a heritage brand, like [...] Chanel, sometimes it could be a bit dusty, but for some products, that's what I want. Like what I said, like a luxury blazer or something, I think it bears the risk of coming across as old.	Participant views heritage brands as timeless, but also outdated and dusty.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Heritage brands are viewed as outdated
1	3	So I think it's a challenge for a heritage brand to find a way of incorporating that innovativeness and still a bit of youngness in there to kind of not be dusty and in that sense use it too much.	Staying innovative and young as a challenge for heritage brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Staying innovative as a challenge for heritage brands
1	3	I think I like the way Patek Philippe did. Like, they have this commercial where the person then gives the watch at the end or like it's for the next generation. I really like that because they gave it like a fresh new twist with youngness, but used their heritage in such a nice way.	Examples in marketing of giving heritage products to the next generation show that it is possible for heritage brands to remain young and innovative.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Communication of brand heritage	Passing down the history to the next generation

1	1	Yeah, I think there's definitely a difference in how perceived like very old heritage brands maybe like luxury heritage brands [...]	Old luxury brands are perceived as having heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Old luxury fashion brands are perceived as having heritage
1	1	[...] compared to younger brands trying to be perceived as heritage.	Younger brands are associated with trying to be perceived as heritage brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Young brand heritage is viewed as inauthentic
1	2	But I think in my view, they have this in common, even though it's fast fashion or luxury fashion.	Brand heritage pursues the same strategy in fast and luxury fashion.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Same strategy in fast and luxury fashion
1	3	I don't know, because you always have the shirts that have the 'established' and those kind of things. Compared to an H&M, I think they do it like Abercrombie does it better, but I think that's because they come from this old money luxury thing as well and just attach fast fashion to that. So I think they maybe have found a better balance in there. But the way it's perceived is, I think, a bit similar to a bit more luxury.	Heritage is associated with old money aesthetic, in both fast and luxury fashion.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Heritage is associated with old money aesthetic
1	3	And it's not necessarily about, oh, this actually has a heritage, it's just about this looks cool on a shirt.	Heritage symbols are perceived as cool without being associated with actual heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Use of symbols	Heritage symbols do not have to be perceived as actual heritage
1	1	For me it's probably longevity. Chanel stands out because they were founded way back in	Heritage is associated with longevity.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Longevity

		the early 20th century that makes an impression.				
1	3	I was about to say that core values wouldn't be as important to me, but then I thought, okay, the second a company changes their core values, I kind of consider the brand in a new way, so they have to build that heritage for me again. So if I see a brand that really changed their image and everything, then I think I would consider the change of the image, a new start of the heritage building.	Participant links core values of a brand with its heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Brand core values
1	3	But I agree, in addition to that with longevity, I think that's to me the most important part.	Heritage is associated with longevity.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Longevity
1	4	Do you think that the brand Levi's would have all of the attributes of this longevity? Because I was thinking about it and it's not like a luxury brand, I would say, but it's so old that people do have all of like give the brand all of the attributes of it being like high quality, long lasting and they know what they're doing in terms of producing jeans. But I don't think they themselves market themselves as a luxury brand as others would, but I'm not sure if others would agree. I just thought of an example	Levis is mentioned as an example of a non-luxury brand successfully using heritage in their branding.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Authentic brand heritage	Well-known heritage

		that has been on the market since very long, but maybe it's got a different core value than the other brands. Not sure.				
1	4	Yes, they do really good, they make really good jeans, but I don't think they've ever branded themselves as we are the number one jeans producer, because we're since like they do have brand heritage, but I don't think they use it in the same way as luxury brands because they're not a luxury brand.	Levis uses heritage in a subtle way, other than luxury brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Communication of brand heritage	Usage of heritage in a subtle way
1	1	I brought stuff to the cellar and I found an old box with a pair of Levi's that my dad wore in the 80's I'm sure you can get the exact same model still today and it's still banging. And they just managed to create timeless pieces that still kind of fit into every fashion era because they are just like a pair of Levi's. And I think that is a really good example of heritage.	Levis is perceived as a strong example of heritage by creating timeless products.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Authentic brand heritage	Timeless products
1	1	Not trying to position themselves as heritage, but actually being heritage.	It is considered good marketing not to position a brand as heritage, but to be heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Authentic brand heritage	Being heritage rather than positioning the brand as heritage
1	3	Although I think they do it a little, but I think they don't have to push it too much because almost everyone knows that Levi's are like	Levis use heritage in a subtle way, because their heritage is well known.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Authentic brand heritage	Well-known heritage

		the OG's. So that's where jeans actually started. So their heritage is such a big part of them that they don't necessarily even have to push it.				
1	3	Yeah, I think that the patch is quite like to me. That's quite the heritage thing because they started with that and it hasn't left the jeans since.	Levis uses patches on products as a symbol of heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Use of symbols	Patch on product to highlight heritage
1	5	For me, the most important aspect of heritage brands when just thinking about it, it's like consistency, I would say.	Heritage is associated with consistency.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Consistency
1	5	And I think Levi's is like a perfect example of an heritage brand. Because when I think of Levi's, I think of their sustainable and innovative things.	Levis as a heritage brand is associated with sustainable and innovative products.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Authentic brand heritage	Heritage brands can manage to stay young and innovative
1	5	But most of all, their consistency [...]	Levis as a heritage brand is associated with consistency	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Consistency
1	5	and the product quality and [...]	Levis as a heritage brand is associated with high quality.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Product quality
1	5	also their workwear, durable, long lasting kind of storytelling they have going on that they've had from the beginning.	Levis as a heritage brand is associated with a consistent storytelling.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Consistent storytelling

1	3	To me, H&M, honestly, maybe they do have a heritage but I vividly remember looking at the shirts and I've seen this other places, I don't know the names of the brands unfortunately, but H&M, I've had it that they looked at the shirt and I just had to okay, you can 2001 or something. I know it's not H&M but something like that. No, don't try.	Participant views young heritage as inauthentic.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Young heritage as inauthentic
1	1	Yeah, I want to agree because I can't think of any other example.	Participant can not think of examples of inauthentic brand heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Not able to identify example of inauthentic brand heritage
1	4	I think maybe we can't think of an example because we are not aware of them practicing this inauthenticity because I was also really thinking about I need an example, I was like I want to think and I couldn't think of anything [...]	Participant can not think of examples of inauthentic brand heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Not able to identify example of inauthentic brand heritage
1	4	[...] but maybe it's because they do it so well that we don't notice it.	Brands may practice inauthentic brand heritage so well that consumers do not notice.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Inauthentic heritage is difficult to detect

1	3	<p>Yeah, I think you have brands that use like in my head is the est a lot, but of course there's other I'm just using that as the example now. I think there's brands that use it and use their starting year and just make a story about that. Although it's a bit like sure this is not too big, but you also have brands that just put a date or something on a shirt or anything that is not even related to when they started. They just pretend like this is old, which is not like you can use genuine data, for example, or really fake it and just make it a cool shirt.</p>	<p>Some brands fake their founding date and pretend to be an old brand.</p>	<p>Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding</p>	<p>Extent of inauthenticity</p>	<p>Falsified founding date</p>
1	4	<p>Maybe something similar could be the fact that many brands put locations or cities and countries onto their clothing. And sometimes you think, do they just do it because they think we want to wear like, a California or USA t-shirt? Or do they actually have something to do with it? Maybe another brand. Could be Brandy Melville. They're actually European, but I feel like all of their clothes usually have an American flag on them. Not even the Swiss flag, although their shop thing, I think, has a Swiss flag. All of my clothes that I own from that brand have an American flag on it. So maybe they just</p>	<p>Some brands use symbols in their storytelling to communicate a different country background than they actually have.</p>	<p>Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding</p>	<p>Extent of inauthenticity</p>	<p>Falsified origin in storytelling</p>

		want to make themselves want to brand themselves in a way we think, oh, my God, America, American Dream, blah blah. But it's not really like who they are, so they just fake it.				
1	4	I'm so surprised about Abercrombie & Fitch and Hollister because I always wanted their clothes, but I was always like, no. And I'm so surprised that it's related because I always thought it was something really special and that they were actually old and from America, but it's all fake and we all believe their story, so I don't know.	Participant is surprised by Hollister's inauthentic brand heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage
1	1	To be honest, they have the complete opposite. To me, the Gucci example was the more surprising.	Participant is surprised by Gucci's inauthentic brand heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Gucci's inauthentic heritage as more surprising
1	1	The Hollister one didn't surprise me at all. I feel like their whole brand identity come across as inauthentic to me. I think no actual surfer ever bought something from Hollister, so it doesn't surprise me that their heritage positioning is also fake.	Participant is not surprised by Hollister's inauthentic brand heritage as the brand seemed inauthentic to them.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage
1	3	Yes, same. The Hollister one. I think it's also because it's been in the news a bit more about where Hollister and Abercrombie, like the founder and everything, so I think that's a	Participant is not surprised by Hollister's inauthentic brand heritage as it is related to Abercrombie & Fitch and	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage

		bit more commonly known and it doesn't really surprise me.	has been communicated in the news.			
1	3	I think they did a really good job, though, because I think a lot of people, like I said, keep on talking about the old money, but I hope you understand what I mean by that. I think a lot of people really were sensitive to that.	Participant sees Hollister's inauthentic brand heritage as successful, as they have managed to associate the brand with old money.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Successfully associate the brand with a particular aesthetic and storytelling
1	3	Gucci honestly also doesn't really surprise me. At first I was like, oh, wait, no, they were really saddlemakers. But then I was thinking that Hermes has more history in horses, so doesn't entirely surprise me, but way more than Hollister.	Participant is more surprised by Gucci's inauthentic brand heritage than by Hollister's.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Gucci's inauthentic heritage as more surprising
1	4	I would say now I'm even more not willing to buy something from Gucci just because they don't deserve that.	Participant would not buy a Gucci product after learning about their inauthentic brand heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Not willing to buy a product after learning about inauthentic heritage
1	4	Their marketing made it so well for them to seem as they for them to seemingly have this brand heritage. I've never really liked the brand that much because I thought it was a bit too over the top. So I would prefer more subtle luxury brands, but I'm not sure.	Gucci's marketing succeeded in making its fictional heritage seem authentic.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Gucci succeeded in making fictitious heritage seem authentic

1	4	Maybe now I'm also wondering, are they just trying to rip us off by acting as if they were such a brand heritage company and making us pay so much for luxury brands products, but they don't really have anything? I'm not so sure.	Participant doubts Gucci as a luxury brand, because of its inauthentic brand heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Inauthentic heritage makes consumers question the brand
1	1	I feel like it's a bit like if I may jump on that Gucci, I don't think it's that big of a deal because they only made up that story for a certain design aspect of their brand and it's not like a core element in my opinion. I never looked at Gucci and I was like oh yeah, they're actively trying to be perceived as saddlemakers. I wasn't aware that they were like they, that they said they were saddlemakers before and I just thought those like elements were just Gucci elements. I never thought of them as horse related	Participant does not see Gucci's fictional heritage as a problem because it is seen as a design element rather than a core element of the brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Not problematic if rather design elements than core element of the brand
1	1	While for Hollister saying that like oh, we have this long history of this guy who was in the 1920 and he founded Hollister, that is like the whole history behind what they're selling. If that's fake and perceived the whole business and whole brand is fake.	If the founding history is fake, the whole brand is perceived as fake.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	If founding history is fake, the whole brand is viewed as fake

1	3	I think it's a good shield, so maybe it's still an older brand. So still they have some history and they didn't need that saddle part. I honestly didn't know about that horse lake and saddlemaker part. Like I said, I connected that to Hermes but I think they didn't even need it [...]	Being an older brand is a protection against being perceived as an inauthentic brand, as they would not need additional heritage symbols.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Older brands are viewed as more authentic (protection)
1	3	[...] and they didn't push it as much as Hollister has.	Gucci has used heritage in a more subtle way than Hollister.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Do not view brand negatively if heritage is slightly bent
1	3	But I think they're able to keep that heritage still a bit more because they are an older brand and those kind of things.	Gucci was able to keep heritage image because of its long history.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Older brands have a long history to rely on
1	5	I agree Gucci actually has a heritage to rely on because they are an older brand and they are family owned and they have had pretty consistent style and core values and storytelling from the start.	Gucci has an actual heritage to rely on, because of their history, consistency and core values.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Older brands have a long history to rely on
1	5	So the horse part doesn't really affect me.	Participant is not affected by Gucci's inauthentic brand heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Not affected by Gucci's inauthentic heritage
1	5	But for me Hollister just seems like a fraud now because they're obviously a new company so why would they even try?	Participant considers Hollister to be a fraud	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic	New brands should not try to be seen as heritage

			because they are a young brand.		heritage of fast fashion brands	
1	3	I think for Hollister still people wouldn't care too much.	Participant thinks consumers would not care about Hollister's inauthentic brand heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not affected by Hollister's inauthentic heritage
1	3	Like I would care way more if I had a Gucci bag in my closet or Gucci something and then turned out that it was fake than for Hollister [...]	Participant would be more concerned about Gucci's inauthentic brand heritage than Hollister's if they owned a product from either brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	More affected by Gucci's inauthentic heritage than Hollister's
1	3	[...] because Hollister I'm like yeah, but this shirt is nice and it wasn't too expensive. For a high quality piece, I would care way more if I was being frauded than for a fast fashion piece.	Participant would care more about inauthentic brand heritage of a high quality than a fast fashion brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	More affected by inauthentic heritage if high quality piece
1	3	That I probably have also picked, because the vibe of the heritage was nice but I've probably picked a shirt because I just liked it and still I'm showing that heritage even though it's fake or not, so I wouldn't care as much to find that out after purchasing.	Participant would care less about the inauthentic heritage of a fast fashion brand because the product is bought primarily for its style.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Product style more important than heritage
1	3	Yeah, I think the effect, of course, both are still not authentic, still not real, but it really depends on I wouldn't be as much hurt or	Participants would not view a brand negatively if the	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Do not view brand negatively if heritage is slightly bent

		look at the brand negatively if it was just a bit bent.	brand heritage was just slightly bent.			
1	3	And I also think it depends on whether it's a luxury, like a high cost product, or just a cheaper, fast fashion.	The effect of an inauthentic brand heritage will depend on the price of the product, that is, whether the brand is a luxury brand or a fast fashion brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Effect depends on price point
1	5	Yeah, I just wanted to add to that. That's a really important aspect to me. I would say, like, the involvement of the brand. [...]	Effect of inauthentic brand heritage is depending on level of involvement of the brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Effect depends on level of involvement of the brand
1	5	So it's a low involvement. They are obviously more free to bend the truth or even come up with stories.	If it is a low involvement purchase, the brand has more freedom to bend the truth or use fictional stories.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	If low involvement brand, more free to bend heritage
1	5	But if it's like a high involvement purchase, it definitely matters. These little alterations.	If it is a high involvement purchase, even small changes to the brand heritage are of importance.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	If high involvement brand, minor alterations of heritage matter
1	2	I'd say looking at Abercrombie & Fitch or Hollister, you actually see these consequences right now because, as you said, it's been in the news. Many people now	Hollister has lost its reputation, in part, because of its inauthentic brand heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Hollister has lost its reputation partly due to inauthentic brand heritage

		know that it was some kind of a lie that we've all been told, and they don't have this big standing in the fashion industry, from my view, that they used to have, like, ten years before.				
1	2	And I personally asked myself, okay, do I really have to pay, like, €50 or €40 for a simple T-shirt saying Hollister, established 1922? No. And I think that's a potential consequence that people reconsider if they are willing to pay that much money. In my perspective, €30 or €40 for a simple T-shirt is a lot. Yeah. That people reconsider their opinion on the brand and are not willing to pay as much as before.	Inauthentic brand heritage has an impact on consumers' willingness to pay a premium price for a product.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Negative impact on consumers' willingness to pay a premium price
1	4	I think this leads to the damage of the brand's reputation.	Inauthentic brand heritage damages a brand's reputation.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Damage of brand's reputation
1	4	And if it would be even worse, it could just be a complete downfall of the brand and nothing would be able to help them to stay stable in the fashion industry because there are so many fast fashion brands that could just overthrow them or other brands taking the opportunity that have had heritage to	Inauthentic brand heritage could lead to a downfall of a brand, because other fashion brands could use their weakness.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Downfall of a brand

		prove that they actually do have it. So I think it could end very badly.				
1	4	No.	Participant would not trust a brand as Hollister with inauthentic heritage any longer.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Loss of trust in the brand
1	1	To be honest, if you make up your founding story and if there's 80 years plus in between the year you state you were founded and the year you were actually founded, it makes me think, like, your whole existence is based on making money. And, I mean, like, it's all business. Like, every brand is business.	Lying about the establishment of a brand will lead the consumer to believe that the existence of the brand is based solely on the making of money.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Fictitious founding story leads to assumption that company is solely profit-driven
1	1	But still, I feel like Chanel has, like, a story with a strong woman liberated. She made a brand and she sold it and it was part of her personality and also for Gucci, this whole family thing.	Heritage brands with a founder are associated with personality.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Authentic heritage	Founders are associated with personality
1	1	But what is Hollister then? Hollister is just like basically lying into your face to make you buy more, I don't find that creating trust in me.	Brands with a fictional heritage are not trustful.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Loss of trust in the brand
1	3	For me it really once again depends on the type of brand.	The perception of inauthentic heritage depends on the type of brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Effect depends on brand category

1	3	But if a luxury brand would lie, I would trust them way less. [...]	Participant would trust a luxury brand with inauthentic brand heritage much less.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Loss of trust in the brand
1	3	And it would be very disappointed because the heritage is one of the factors that makes me buy the brand.	Disappointed, because heritage is one of the purchasing factors.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Disappointment with heritage as a purchasing factor
1	3	For a fast fashion brand like Abercrombie, still, it would harm my trust. [...]	Participant would lose trust in a fast fashion brand with an inauthentic brand heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Loss of trust in the brand
1	3	[...] But because it's probably not one of the reasons why I personally would buy the brand, it wouldn't harm my trust as much and I perhaps would still consider buying something. Maybe also because I'm not too surprised about it.	Participant would still consider buying from a fast fashion brand with inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	No impact on purchase decisions
1	4	I think the perception of brand loyalty would completely change, which is very important for a brand to survive.	Inauthentic brand heritage affects the perception of brand loyalty, which is important to a brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Negatively affects brand loyalty

1	3	I think it depends on the way you do it. On the scale of doing it. Yeah.	Participant thinks depending on how a brand would do it, a brand could successfully use inauthentic brand heritage without losing its authenticity.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Depends on the extent of inauthenticity
1	3	I think Brandy Melville, if you don't lie about it, in the end, if you're transparent about who you are when you started, what your heritage or not heritage actually is, but then I don't know if you use it for storytelling without making it seem like that is the truth. So if you make a product that is I don't know if you make the commercials and everything like heritage, or you put a shirt that is very clearly like est something, but just being transparent about the truth, I think it is way less bad and it could still be relatively okay to use it. But I think like looking at all the responses, you wouldn't get away with actually being full on lying about it and not being transparent.	Inauthentic brand heritage could be used successfully, if the brand would be honest and transparent about the truth.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Could be used successfully if brand is honest and transparent about the truth
1	1	Yeah, I think it's elements. You can't fake your identity and I think Hollister, they fake their identity.	A brand cannot successfully fake their identity.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Brands can not successfully falsify their identity

1	1	Gucci, they fake an element. That's why Gucci gets away with it.	Inauthentic brand heritage could be used successfully, if it only uses fictional elements.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Not problematic if rather design elements than core element of the brand
1	1	So inauthenticity to a degree because I think many people even expect brands to be inauthentic to a certain degree, maybe, but yeah, don't fake your whole existence.	Consumers expect brands to be inauthentic to a certain degree, but not completely fake.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Consumers expect brands to be inauthentic to a certain degree
1	3	Like H&M could get away with putting 'established' something on a shirt because no one of us expects H&M to be a heritage brand.	A brand can successfully use inauthentic brand heritage elements, if it is not expected to be a heritage brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Brand can be successful if it is not expected to be a heritage brand
1	1	Yeah, but I wouldn't buy it if H&M all of a sudden tried to make up exactly about them being a heritage brand of 1915 from. The USA or some other countries. To me, they have their image and moving too far away wouldn't work for me.	A brand could not successfully use inauthentic brand heritage if it deviated too far from its own identity.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Brands can not successfully falsify their identity
1	3	What I'm thinking about is that it's probably hard for a new brand to build up that brand heritage. Because even if Hollister wants to be a heritage brand, that would kind of have to be rebranded later on when they're actually an older brand. So I think that is like a challenge within that.	It is a challenge for young brands to successfully build brand heritage.	Additional remarks	Participant perspectives on new brands and heritage	Challenge for young brands to build heritage

1	3	When do you start becoming a heritage brand or making that a thing? Because no one is going to buy it when you are 2020 heritage brand but the older you are. So it's definitely so related to the age of the company, then I would buy it. So I think that's just something that I'm like but when do you then.	It is unclear when a brand should start communicating its brand heritage in order to still be seen as authentic.	Additional remarks	Participant perspectives on new brands and heritage	Unclear when brand heritage should be built
1	3	So like in my eyes, if it's a new brand, you cannot really be a heritage brand.	A new brand cannot be a heritage brand.	Additional remarks	Participant perspectives on new brands and heritage	New brand can not be seen as heritage
2	6	I would probably think about the history with the founders, like what country, the culture of the company and everything.	A heritage brand is linked to founders of the brand.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Founding story
2	8	The values it carries [...]	A heritage brand is brand with values.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Brand with values
2	7	The longevity, how long it's been there [...]	A heritage brand is brand that has existed for a long time.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Long term history
2	7	[...] I think they all kind of the heritage kind of gives some kind of trust to the company that you can trust to the company [...]	Brand with heritage gives trust for consumers.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Giving trust to consumers
2	7	[...] the quality that it will give you because it's been there for a long time, you know that they have like a craftsmanship behind [...]	Heritage brands are linked with high quality, because of their long history.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of Heritage	High quality

2	9	[...] I would say mostly the age probably the more heritage, the older the company or the brand is, the more heritage you've got.	Degree of heritage is linked to the age of the brand.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of Heritage	Extent of heritage is linked to age of the brand
2	8	I wouldn't say important at all [...]	Heritage is not important to participant.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Heritage perceived as not important
2	8	because I don't purchase high end brands and it seems like high end brands are the only ones that actually push for brand heritage [...]	Only high end brands use brand heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Luxury fashion brands are heritage driven
2	7	If I think about if I'm justifying a price for buying a bag from Céline or then buying a brand like a high price point bag from another newer brand, then I think it does matter the heritage.	Heritage is important when justifying a price for a luxury purchase.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Heritage is justifying high price point
2	7	It gives me the kind of security that I know what I'm getting with this older brand and I know the value and the resale value that the bag has because the brand is so known and has been there for a long time.	Heritage gives security to the consumers, because the brand has been there for a long time.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Giving security to consumers
2	7	But when it comes to fast fashion, I don't think it does matter.	Heritage is not important aspect of fast fashion brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in fast fashion branding	Fast fashion brands are not heritage driven
2	7	I know that Levi's, they also use a little bit heritage within their tags where you can see when the brand was made and stuff. So that's also something that shows the quality of	Heritage gives security to the consumers, because the brand has been there for a long time.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Giving security to consumers

		Levi's, [...] but still it kind of gives you that security that you know that it's been there for a longer time.				
2	7	[...] if I buy fast fashion, it's definitely not the first criteria that I look for.	Heritage is not important aspect when purchasing fast fashion.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Insignificant factor in purchase decisions when buying fast fashion
2	9	[...] I don't care that much about it at all. (Fast fashion)	Heritage is not important aspect when purchasing fast fashion.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Insignificant factor in purchase decisions when buying fast fashion
2	9	[...] the more expensive the brand is, then maybe I care a bit about it more, [...]	Heritage becomes more important when you purchase more expensive brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions / Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Becomes more important with higher price point
2	6	I think also like low involvement products, you don't care that much, [...]	Heritage is not important for low involvement products.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Heritage perceived as not important for low-involvement products
2	6	I think that I would probably appreciate if I knew that they have a nice heritage, [...]	Positively perceived heritage would be appreciated by the participant.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Positive attitude towards brand heritage
2	6	[...] I'm not sure if they wouldn't have a very nice history. I'm not sure how much it would affect me if I really wanted something.	Inauthentic heritage does not affect purchase decisions.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Insignificant factor in purchase decisions

2	6	But I think that probably like the reputation of the history of the company do impact some purchases if it's like an expensive one.	Reputation of the heritage would affect the purchasing decision at a high price point.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Becomes more important with higher price point
2	7	I don't think I have bought anything based on their heritage. I mean, I don't think it has been the main factor.	Heritage not being the main attribute when purchasing fashion items.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Additional factor in purchase decisions
2	6	No, I think same because also just because it has a long heritage doesn't mean that the quality would be good.	Heritage brands not necessarily have to have a high quality.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of Heritage	Not equivalent to high quality
2	7	So I think that's something that the brands can really rely on if it's being part of their core identity.	Heritage is something that brands can rely when it's part of their core identity.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of Heritage	Brands can rely on heritage
2	7	[...] obviously Chanel is a brand that really uses their heritage of Coco Chanel in their perfumes and all these kind of elements that are being brought constantly in every collection. Same with Gucci also is really relying on their their past.	Luxury brands utilise their heritage in different elements of the brand.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Brands use heritage in different elements of the brand
2	7	[...] you can see like sometimes in what is it now, fast fashion brands kind of trying to imitate that with these hoodies of having established in 1989, [...] So you can see those references here and there.	Fast fashion brands imitating heritage by placing founding years of the company to their products.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Use of symbols / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Use of 'established' symbols

2	6	I think the high end brands do it quite a lot, but I don't see that other do it that much.	Luxury brands use heritage more than fast fashion brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Luxury fashion brands leverage heritage more than fast fashion brands
2	6	I think it's just a way to show that you've been around for a long time and that you're like a classic brand in a way.	Heritage is a way to show that the brand has longevity.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Longevity
2	7	I would just also maybe say that it's for those older brands that they don't stay as too stuck on their past, that they make sure that they're innovating, but still bringing those elements with them of their past or their heritage. So just making sure that they are being relevant to the current consumers even though they are bringing the heritage elements with them.	Heritage brands have a risk of not being innovative to consumers if they are too focused on heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Staying innovative as a challenge for heritage brands
2	7	So I think there's like a certain risk with it if they play too much on the heritage like Hermes or it doesn't become like an old women's brand because then they're going to lose their consumer base completely.	Heritage brands have a risk of not being relevant to the current consumers if they are too focused on heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Heritage brands are viewed as outdated
2	6	I think that's a challenge for many that they have to balance their heritage and also being up to date in today's society.	Heritage brands have a risk of not being relevant to the current consumers if they are too focused on heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Staying relevant as a challenge for heritage brands
2	6	I don't think that people care that much in fast fashion because I don't think that the target group doesn't care that much.	Fast fashion brands' consumers are not interested in heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Heritage perceived as not important for

						low-involvement products
2	6	[...] I think for high end brands that some people maybe like if we're talking about older person, if they have bought from the brand earlier in their life, give some kind of nostalgic feeling and some value, they more have like.	Older consumer could gain nostalgic feeling or get value from brands with heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Nostalgic feeling
2	7	A relationship with the brand instead of when fast fashion brands, you don't really create a bond with the brand.	Consumer's do not build relationship with fast fashion brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in fast fashion branding	No relationship building with consumers
2	7	It's not much that you get back and it doesn't really add maybe necessarily to the value. If a fast fashion brand has a heritage.	Fast fashion brands' heritage does not add value to the brand.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Not adding value to the brand
2	9	They try instead in order to highlight their heritage. They started this Adidas originals, like it's more heritage heavy [...]	Brands have created a sub brand to highlight their heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Use of symbols	Sub-brands to highlight heritage
2	9	They use separate logos as well, right? Separate when they want to be perceived as old and when they want to perceive as like new	Brands have created a different logo for the sub brand that highlight heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Use of symbols	Distinct logos to highlight heritage
2	7	I would probably say that for a lot of people who buy a luxury brand, I think the symbolism kind of plays a role.	Symbolism plays a role for luxury brand consumers.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Symbolism

2	7	I think it just creates more credibility for the brand, for the luxury brands, if they have like the they've been there for a long time and, you know, [...]	Extensive heritage creates credibility for the luxury brands through longevity.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Longevity
2	7	their core values and those core values haven't really changed unless they've been very questionable like 100 years ago.	Extensive heritage creates credibility for the luxury brands through core values.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Brand core values
2	6	I think we probably come across like, brands that is inauthentic several times, but I think it's hard to know that you don't respect the values so much.	Inauthentic heritage is hard to notice.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Inauthentic heritage is difficult to detect
2	7	Yeah, it's really hard to know. If you're not, how could you know?	Inauthentic heritage is hard to notice.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Inauthentic heritage is difficult to detect
2	7	Why would they be boasting about it that they've come up with a story about their heritage or something?	Brands would not communicate their inauthentic heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Brands would not communicate that heritage is inauthentic
2	7	So I think it's quite well hidden from a lot of the consumers and people are, quite frankly, don't have any idea of what's going on.	Inauthentic heritage is hard to notice.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Inauthentic heritage is difficult to detect
2	6	I think that we're, like, as consumers, we are generally trustful from the beginning if no one says otherwise.	Consumers in general are trustful from the beginning towards brands.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Consumers trust brands to be authentic
2	7	If it is that you're borrowing something, [...]	Elements of borrowed heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Borrowed heritage elements

2	7	[...] if it's a story that has been changed a bit [...]	Altering the heritage story of a brand.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Minor alterations of heritage
2	7	[...] or if it's just something that has been completely made up [...]	Brands creating fictional heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Fictitious heritage
2	7	[...] and then it just comes across that you're just very unreliable and you're just trying to make money out of your consumers instead of creating a trust between you and the consumer.	Brands creating a fictional heritage may cause brand lose its credibility with consumers.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer responses to Extent of inauthenticity	Fictitious heritage could cause brand to lose credibility
2	6	Yeah, I think if you romanticize your story a bit, then I don't think that anyone will reflect upon it.	Romanticizing heritage does not affect consumers.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer responses to Extent of inauthenticity	Minor alterations do not affect consumers
2	6	But I think that if you make a full fictional story, then that would be quite problematic. I think that people would care.	Full fictional heritage is problematic from consumer perspective.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer responses to Extent of inauthenticity	Fictitious heritage problematic
2	9	It is probably quite easy to trick the customer in believing your story. I guess to quite great extent, it's quite easy.	It is easy to mislead consumers with inauthentic heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Brands can easily mislead consumers
2	8	It's a weird thing if you're going to lie about it because nobody's going to catch you either way.	Lying about heritage is contradictory because it is hard to detect.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Inauthentic heritage is difficult to detect
2	6	I could probably have guessed maybe a Hollister because I know they have like this 1922 or many pieces and I probably wouldn't	Hollister's heritage does not come across as authentic but also is not something that participant reflected upon.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage

		think that they are that old, but I haven't reflected upon it.				
2	8	I've heard about Hollister but it's nothing [...] So for me I couldn't care less if they're lying about some years or there's.	Hollister's fictional heritage does not matter to the participant.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not affected by Hollister's inauthentic heritage
2	6	I think if you're making it like a good brand from a fake store but it's like kind of inspiration I mean, if we take Gucci, I mean, it's a bit weird, maybe, that they're stating that they are saddle makers.	Creating inspirational fictional heritage is considered suspicious.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Inauthentic heritage makes consumers question the brand
2	6	[...] if they have taken inspiration from horses and stuff and they are succeeding in using that in a good way, then I don't think that I care that much.	It does not matter to the participant if brands successfully incorporate inspiration from other elements into their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Not problematic if rather design elements than core element of the brand
2	7	So in the end, it doesn't maybe matter as much because it's been just tweaked the story.	Minor alterations of heritage do not affect consumers.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Do not view brand negatively if heritage is slightly bent
2	7	But with the Hollister, I just think it matters and it kind of doesn't matter because [...], to be able to sell us this story of you being a surf brand when actually probably no surfers would buy clothes from Hollister.	Hollister's fictional heritage would not appeal to real surfers.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Depends on the target group

2	7	[...] But it's just a bit like shady to be creating a story [...]	Lying about heritage is considered suspicious.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Inauthentic heritage makes consumers question the brand
2	7	[...] not being able to trust a brand [...]	Inauthentic heritage creates distrust.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Loss of trust in the brand
2	7	[...] within the luxury brand field, maybe taking away the loyalty that it's just a bit [...]	Inauthentic heritage within luxury fashion may negatively affect consumer loyalty.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Negatively affects brand loyalty
2	7	[...] you kind of expect like transparency is such a big thing of, [...]	Consumers expect brands to be transparent.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Consumer expect brands to be transparent
2	7	So it's just kind of a bit I don't know, it's a bit not nice that they are lying about things or just coming up with a completely fake story.	The participant does not like to be lied to.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Consumer do not like to be lied to
2	8	I don't think that's like a huge part of their trustworthiness in that sense, at least not from me. I do understand that people romanticize their stories and they romanticize all their work.	Romanticizing heritage does not affect trustworthiness.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Do not view brand negatively if heritage is slightly bent
2	6	I would probably say that I think that sometimes it can matter if it's known that a company has lied about something that some people might question other things like what they're stating.	Brand lying about one aspects makes consumers question if they are lying about other aspects as well.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Inauthentic heritage makes consumers question the brand

2	6	Because of course I don't expect 100% transparency of any company but I think that if they have stated something then it can affect me to think that they will lie about other things as well.	Participant does not expect brand to be completely transparent.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Consumers expect brands to be inauthentic to a certain degree
2	6	I don't know like Hollister, I see that more as a made up story.	Hollister's heritage is viewed as a fictional story.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Hollister's inauthentic heritage is viewed as fictitious
2	6	Yeah, I think I still perceive like was it Gucci that you had as an example, right? I think that I still perceive them to be authentic.	Gucci is perceived as authentic even though they have lied about their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Gucci succeeded in making fictitious heritage seem authentic
2	6	I think that I probably personally wouldn't care that much if they had faked the story a bit [...]	Participant would not care if the heritage is slightly bent.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Do not view brand negatively if heritage is slightly bent
2	6	[...] but I think that it can give extra value if the story would be authentic.	Authentic heritage adds extra value for the brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Authentic heritage	Adds value to the brand
2	6	I think that she likes horses so I think that she would go around and tell that story with happiness if she knew that it was true so it can give some extra value in relationship to the brand that would kind of be lost if it wasn't true.	Authentic heritage can add extra value to the relationship between the consumer and the brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Authentic heritage	Helps building relationship with consumer

2	7	[...] or the luxury brands, I think it does matter, but when it's been such a small little tweak or like a little coloring, then I don't think it matters maybe that much.	Consumers do not care if luxury brands slightly bend their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Do not view brand negatively if heritage is slightly bent
2	7	But if it would be a brand that has been created ten years ago and is asking for a very high price point price for a product and then they're coming up with like, yeah, we've been around for 100 years, it would matter	If a brand created ten years ago demands a high price for a product and claims to have been around for 100 years, it becomes significant.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Effect depends on price point
2	6	I also think that maybe the way that this kind of news gets out, if there is a scandal around it, like if New York Times would write about it in a very scandalous way, then I would probably perceive it more disturbing. I think that you kind of get affected about how big it is perceived to be a scandal or not.	How the news about inauthentic heritage comes out affects the consumer perception.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Effect depends on severity of scandal
2	6	Yeah, I probably would have gone to another brand just to get something similar just changed.	Brands being inauthentic could push consumers to purchase another brand instead.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions	Select another brand to buy from
2	9	The sign of the stores and everything. It just looks like fake for me as it is.	Hollister's inauthentic heritage branding comes across as artificial.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage
2	7	I maybe did not really question that. Especially because the people working there, the staff also told that story to customers.	Hollister's staff was persuading consumers with the heritage story.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage / Consumers'	Gucci succeeded in making fictitious heritage seem authentic

		And back then I wasn't really questioning that, so I wouldn't probably have bought the story.			views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	
2	7	I wouldn't say that they're authentic for sure. If they have created a fake story like Hollister, it comes across as fake. [...]	Brand creating an inauthentic heritage makes the brand lose its authenticity.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	If founding history is fake, the whole brand is viewed as fake
2	7	[...] But people might still want to buy into the brand because they like the aesthetic of it, of what it is creating. [...]	Consumers might still purchase an inauthentic heritage brand due to the aesthetic of the brand that is effected by the inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Successfully associate the brand with a particular aesthetic and storytelling
2	6	I think it depends a bit on how big the story around that heritage is. [...] But if they would state a full like if they would make a movie around their heritage and state all kinds of different things, then I would perceive it really inauthentic afterwards. I think it's a bit like how you use this heritage story.	The severity of inauthentic heritage effects on consumer perception.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Depends on the extent of inauthenticity
3	13	For me, actually, heritage has a lot to do with tradition. So the first thing that comes into mind is the tradition [...]	Heritage brand is linked to tradition.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Tradition
3	13	and also quality, because that goes the same way, basically. So yeah, if I would have to say like two bullet points that directly come	Heritage brand is linked to quality.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	High quality

		into my mind, it would be tradition and quality.				
3	12	For me, in the fashion field, it's also about craftsmanship, if you can call it this way, so that things are kind of produced not in a mass production, but maybe more individually.	A heritage brand is a brand that is linkec to craftsmanship.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Craftsmanship
3	10	[...] brand heritage is for me like big fashion houses. [...] I think you put it in your little text like Chanel or Dior that are for me like this real heritage brands and yeah, not H&M.	Heritage brands are usually established luxury fashion brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Well-known established brands
3	11	Yeah, and always comes with like a family feeling [...] the origin of the company, kind of.	A heritage brand is linked to founders of the brand.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Origin
3	12	I don't think that it's so important for me that the brand has to be there for like 100 years, because if there's something cool coming up, I'm also happy to buy a brand that I didn't know until then.	Long heritage of a brand is not an essential requirement for the participant.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Heritage perceived as not important
3	13	I would say it is important for me on certain products. [...] with the craftsmanship and quality and stuff. So if I want to buy something that I can be sure that it is of good quality and that I need it to be good quality, then I would say it is kind of important to just ensure that I know what it's made of and	The heritage of craftsmanship indicates a high level of quality.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Heritage perceived as important for high quality products

		where it was made and that it just has a good quality and is long lasting.				
3	10	Yeah, I think to be honest I would not depend my purchase on the heritage of a brand because sometimes I think certain houses I think I'm not sure right now, was at the Met Gala, Karl Lagerfeld said I think he is for me like brand heritage, but can also come with some negative points.	Heritage is not an important factor when purchasing the product.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Insignificant factor in purchase decisions
3	10	But I think, you know, for certain houses or for certain brands, like the quality is really good [...]	High quality is linked to luxury fashion brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	High quality
3	10	[...] because as you said in the definition of brand heritage, it's passed down many generations and you just know it got better and better.	A brand with long term history is linked to heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Long term history
3	10	[...] it doesn't have to be like 100 years of experience behind it.	It is not necessary for a brand to have 100 years of heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Authentic brand heritage	History does not have to go back a hundred years
3	13	I wouldn't say history in their history of development, but more like maybe their specific style or pattern. [...] like the handbags from, I don't know, Fendi with the pattern or Chanel as well. I think this is something that is also belonging to heritage, but just because of the looks.	Heritage can be recognised based on the specific style or patterns that brand embraces.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Use of symbols	Usage of specific style/pattern

3	13	It's kind of timeless and that's something I would buy because of heritage in that sense.	A heritage brand is linked to product being timeless.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Timeless products
3	12	when the bag I like is from Chanel or if it's from Gucci or what else, it doesn't matter really what kind of brand it is, but if I like the style I'm going to buy it.	A brand name does impact the purchasing decision, if the consumer likes the product.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Additional factor in purchase decisions
3	10	But I think this like what you said, the pattern of the Fendi bag, I think that made it an it piece and I think that little bit connects to this brand heritage.	Heritage can be recognised based on the specific style or patterns that brand embraces.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Use of symbols	Usage of specific style/pattern
3	10	Or the Chanel bags never get out of style because they are in the fashion world for ages and becoming an it piece and that's why I would buy it because I like it and you can just wear it with everything. But I wouldn't know, I didn't buy anything because of the brand heritage as of right now.	Those brands with timeless fashion pieces remain stylish due to their longstanding presence in the industry, which influences participants to purchase them.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Additional factor in purchase decisions
3	12	I think it's really often used as a kind of USP, so the communication is basically all around this heritage.	Heritage used as a unique selling point in brand communication.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Used as a unique selling point
3	12	And sometimes I think when you talk a lot about this heritage thing, that doesn't mean at the same time that the quality is really nice or something. You can talk about it all the time, but the meaning of it doesn't get any stronger, if you know what I mean.	Heritage does not equal good quality necessarily.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of Heritage	Not equivalent to high quality

3	12	So I would say it's a bit extended at some point, or from some brands.	Brand have a risk of overcommunicating heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Communication of brand heritage	Some brands may overcommunicate brand heritage
3	10	I would say sometimes the brand heritage stands in the way for involving the brand. So they have to have this heritage. They have to show the heritage right now on social media. So you have to put the heritage on small reels or anything to still be this brand. [...]	Brand have a risk of overcommunicating heritage and this will stop them from evolving.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Communication of brand heritage	Some brands may overcommunicate brand heritage
3	10	[...] And in my opinion, maybe that's why they can't really go further with a brand, because they always have to stick to this specific history.	Brands that have strong heritage have a risk of not being innovative.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Staying innovative as a challenge for heritage brands
3	13	I also think that especially for luxury brands, it is a super big topic because, as xx said, they are really claiming it because obviously they have it because they have been around for so long.	Luxury brands have strong heritage due to their long history.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Luxury fashion brands are heritage driven
3	13	[...] more complicated for newer fashion labels who are maybe of better quality or have as great variety or styles as the luxury fashion houses, but they simply don't have heritage and maybe it stops them a bit from extending their business.	Newer fashion brands with superior quality and diverse styles may face difficulties expanding their business compared to luxury fashion houses, as their lack of heritage can hinder their progress.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Young brand heritage is viewed as inauthentic

3	10	I think in luxury, brand heritage is really romanticized [...]	Luxury brand heritage is romanticized.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Heritage is romanticised
3	10	And I don't think that anyone would say this about H&M because the luxury is like this romanticized world. [...] And I think the brands are as well, and their heritage. I can't say anything about any fast fashion brand and their heritage. I have no idea about them.	Consumer are unaware of how fast fashion brands use heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in fast fashion branding	Consumers unaware of heritage in fast fashion
3	11	It's kind of not such a topic at all in the fast fashion, I guess.	Fast fashion brands do not use heritage in their branding.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in fast fashion branding	Fast fashion brands are not heritage driven
3	13	I don't know any I couldn't tell anything about fast fashion brands and their heritage	Consumer are unaware of how fast fashion brands use heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in fast fashion branding	Consumers unaware of heritage in fast fashion
3	13	And I also think this may be coming from because the luxury fashion brands, most of them have like a person and like a leader who did it. And so you basically have a story to tell, which is the story of the person who founded the brand. So you kind of automatically have something to talk about.	Luxury brand's heritage is linked to the founder and it is used as a central part of their communication.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Communication of brand heritage	Founder as centre of communication
3	11	And I'm not sure if it's just off topic, but you can see not the brand itself, but the pieces they are selling, like the fast fashion industry, like H&M, they're using kind of	Fast fashion brands using founding years are part of their heritage branding.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Use of symbols / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Use of 'established' symbols

		those, I don't know, the years, like the original years on the products as well.				
3	11	Yeah, and maybe that's the way they try to copy it, kind of, but not the brand itself.	Fast fashion brands copy heritage practices.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in fast fashion branding	Fast fashion brands are not heritage driven
3	12	[...] but I would say for me the most important aspect would be quality. So product quality.	Most important element of heritage is quality.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Product quality
3	11	Maybe that's the point that it's really hard to know if it's real or not.	The presence of inauthentic heritage can be hard to detect.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Inauthentic heritage is difficult to detect
3	11	If it's like the main point or the main market strategy of the brand, I would say it's much worse if you realize it's inauthentic.	It would be worse to discover an inauthentic brand heritage than a brand with no brand heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer responses to Extent of inauthenticity	Rather no brand heritage than inauthentic brand heritage
3	12	No, I just wanted to say that for me the most inauthentic thing would be if everything is built up on a lie. So maybe that some brand claims, okay, this person has founded the brand in 1912 and then it turns out that everything is a lie and the brand was founded in 2018 just as an example. [...]	Some brands fake their founding date and pretend to be an old brand.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Falsified founding date
3	12	[...] So this would be like a massive problem then.	The consumer is negatively impacted if they find out that a brand has lied about their founding year.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer responses to Extent of inauthenticity	Negatively affected by falsified founding date

3	10	I think also if the values of the brand so if they value for years and years talk about they want to have this small family and they talked about everything, what they value and they want to show in their brand. [...]	Fictitious brand values as a degree of inauthentic brand heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Fictitious brand values
3	10	[...] And if that's all bullshit and you know about that, then would be really inauthentic and I think it would be a huge problem for the brand if that happens.	Lying about the brand's heritage values negatively impacts the consumer.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer responses to Extent of inauthenticity	Negatively affected by fictitious brand values
3	12	So when you for example claim that you're producing products in Italy and that they are handmade and they are like produced in Bangladesh or something and that people are working under bad conditions there, [...]	Lying about production that is linked to heritage story.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Fictitious production facts
3	12	[...] this would be also something that really doesn't fit into my view of a heritage brand.	Fictitious production facts contradict idea of what a heritage brand should be.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer responses to Extent of inauthenticity	Fictitious production facts disrupt idea of heritage brand
3	13	I think I didn't know for sure the story of Hollister, but I knew that it was belonging to Abercrombie & Fitch and that they were kind of the same brand. But to be honest, for those kind of brands, because this is more like fast fashion, it's like not even I wouldn't be interested in knowing. [...]	Consumer does not care about fast fashion brands lying about their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not affected by inauthentic heritage

3	13	[...] to be completely honest with Gucci, it's different. That's where I'm like, yeah, okay, I mean, it doesn't affect me right now, but I think it's more kind of a scandal than for Hollister [...]	Participant is surprised by Gucci's inauthentic brand heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Gucci's inauthentic heritage as more surprising
3	10	I think for Hollister it's a bit more funny because the story is so made up by sailing through the Pacific Ocean to California. This really made up. I never heard of it before. I think it sounds fakey, so maybe they should work on another story.	Hollister's inauthentic heritage is viewed as fake and unreal.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	If founding history is fake, the whole brand is viewed as fake
3	10	With Gucci, I watched the movie and I heard that there are problems, but I never knew that they were like saddle makers. And I also think it's a little bit stupid to assume that nobody will find out. [...]	It is stupid for brands to assume that no one will find out about their heritage if they lie about it.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Brands are viewed as foolish to think consumers will not notice
3	10	[...] So they really made up a completely new story about their heritage to be saddlemakers. That is really not necessary because they did cool, really nice things.	There is no need for brands to lie about their heritage, if they did good.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Considered unnecessary to lie about heritage if brand is doing well
3	13	I think it doesn't really affect me or like the perception because as xx said, I think Gucci is still like, they do nice stuff and it didn't have to be like this story around it for me to think or to like the style [...]	Creating an inauthentic heritage story is unnecessary for Gucci.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Considered unnecessary to lie about heritage if brand is doing well

3	13	So I just think it's a little bit funny to make a big story for a brand that doesn't even is in the luxury field. I think it's just like, why, why would you, it's not necessary at all.	Creating an inauthentic heritage story is unnecessary for fast fashion brands.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Lying about heritage considered unnecessary for fast fashion brand
3	12	So this is something I mean, I never wore Hollister and Abercrombie for some reason, I don't know, but after this point, I was like, oh my God, I'm never going to buy anything. So this is really, I think, much more important than this whole story.	Hollister's inauthentic heritage negatively affects purchase decisions.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not willing to buy a product after learning about inauthentic heritage
3	12	But of course it's not cool and it's a bit ridiculous to invent such thing.	Creating an inauthentic heritage story is unnecessary for fast fashion brands.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Lying about heritage considered unnecessary for fast fashion brand
3	12	And for Gucci, I also don't really care if they're saddlemakers or not. So I like their bags, for example, and I don't care.	Participant does not care about Gucci's inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Not affected by Gucci's inauthentic heritage
3	13	I think that's the point, as long as it's not a story about human rights or working conditions or sustainability topics. I mean, obviously sustainability topics something else, but it doesn't really affect me.	Consumers are not affected by inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Do not view brand negatively if heritage is slightly bent
3	13	It loses a bit of the value. I think, for example, Gucci, they may have made up the story of being saddlemakers because they wanted to be more sophisticated and wanted to reach a certain group of people, like the	Gucci loses its value due to lying about their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Damage of brand's reputation

		more higher people from London, for example, what you told us.				
3	13	So I think the worst thing would be, I think, not for Gucci now, because they are so established, but for a newer brand, and if something like that happened, it could be that they attract the wrong people or lose loyal customers who bought the brand because of the story and because of this sophisticated feeling.	There is a higher risk for young brands to lose loyal customer or attract wrong people if lying about heritage like Gucci.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	The younger the brand the higher the risk
3	10	I also think that in general, for a larger group of people, if they know the brand loses a bit their seriousness because it is ridiculous to make up a story about "I'm a saddle maker" and that's why I want to put these little details on my things.	Gucci loses its credibility due to lying about their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Loss of trust in the brand
3	10	[...] it's a little bit ridiculous, they lose their seriousness and maybe that's bad for the brand because people say, no, I don't want to buy this anymore because it's like stupid.	Inauthentic heritage could affect purchase decisions.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not willing to buy a product after learning about inauthentic heritage
3	11	I think it also depends on the group of customers. I think Hollister, all the 16-15 year old girls would hear the story and they found out it's not real. I'm not sure if it affects them at all.	Hollister's consumers aged between 15-16 are not affected by inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Depends on the target group

3	11	But Gucci is a different thing, I guess, because of the loyalty and the kind of focus group of customers.	The loyalty of Gucci's consumers would be affected by an inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Negatively affects brand loyalty
3	12	Also in terms of the fast fashion brands, I think when you build up these whole stories about heritage, I think what is your aim is to have a story and a purpose and to make people buy it because of this, because there are so many brands out there and this is something then that's outstanding.	Fast fashion brands lying about their entire heritage is used to differentiate from competitors.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Authentic heritage	Used to differentiate from competitors
3	12	And the worst thing that can happen if somebody finds out that it isn't true, that he or she chooses another brand, then so this is what could happen then. I think nobody will be disappointed deep in their heart, but they will say, okay, it's really uncool.	Brands lying about their heritage have a risk of losing customers to their competitors.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions	Select another brand to buy from
3	13	[...] if it's just a story, I think it's just unnecessary to tell a fake story around the founding family or whatever. So it really wouldn't affect me.	Brands lying about the founders heritage is considered unnecessary.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Considered unnecessary to lie about heritage if brand is doing well
3	13	But if it's just a story about being a saddle maker or not, to be honest, I don't think it would make my decision differently.	A brand lying about a part of their heritage does not affect consumers purchase decision.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Do not view brand negatively if heritage is slightly bent

3	13	I would just maybe buy another brand, but maybe also not if it is something around like quality or as I said, working conditions and stuff, it would affect me more and I would rather maybe then reconsider and buy another brand.	Brands lying about their heritage have a risk of losing customers to their competitors.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions	Select another brand to buy from
3	11	I'm not sure. Maybe I would start to dig a little deeper. If it's the only reason they're prices are not justified, their prices, I would think twice about it actually.	Brands lying about heritage would make consumers doubt their honesty.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Inauthentic heritage makes consumers question the brand
3	13	I think this is something that is actually like a good point because if Gucci is telling the story about being a saddle maker, maybe for me it brings up more questions. So maybe they are being fake or dishonest about other things as well. So if it's a brand I really like and regularly buy, I would probably start thinking about other questions.	Brands lying about heritage would make consumers doubt their honesty.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Inauthentic heritage makes consumers question the brand
3	12	But they can easily continue this story and I think most of the people won't know because they don't have the time or they don't want to invest the time to make some research about it. That's why I think it's not a huge problem for them to continue like this.	Gucci is successful at creating inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Gucci succeeded in making fictitious heritage seem authentic

3	13	I also think because just based on the question that you asked us if we know any brands that are doing inauthentic or heritage use that and we couldn't name one. I think everyone is doing a great job to continue lying.	Brands are successful at creating inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	As consumers are unaware of examples, it is assumed that brands are successful in leveraging inauthentic heritage
3	13	I think there is a way for brands like Gucci and more luxury brands that have been around for so long because no one is really asking themselves about it. It's just like, yeah, it's there.	As a luxury brand, Gucci has more credibility and consumers won't question the brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Older brands are viewed as more authentic (protection)
3	13	For new brands, I think it could be, especially these days, a lot harder because the topics are not around the founding family or stories, [...]	Brands that are new should not incorporate heritage into their identity.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	New brands should not try to be seen as heritage
3	13	And I think if someone is making lies regarding those topics, it's like a whole different story. Then you do have a huge problem. So yeah, I think for the classics, they can just keep going because no one really cares anymore. They are so established [...]	Luxury brands have built credibility over years, meaning they can use inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Older brands are viewed as more authentic (protection)
3	13	[...] for young brands and labels, I think they wouldn't survive.	Newer brands have bigger risks of losing credibility if they lie about heritage.	Additional remarks	Participant perspectives on new brands and heritage	Challenge for young brands to build heritage

3	12	I would consult new brands to not go into the topic of because also I think things have become totally different for us. The purpose of a brand is more important, as we said, for example, sustainability and stuff, quality as well. [...] But if I would start a brand now, I would not go into this kind of topic or try to build a USP on this element.	New brands should not incorporate heritage as part of their unique selling point.	Additional remarks	Participant perspectives on new brands and heritage	New brand can not be seen as heritage
3	12	So I would say it's also a bit outdated except for the brands that have established this kind of heritage.	Concept of heritage is no longer relevant for new brands only for established ones.	Additional remarks	Future significance of heritage	Concept of heritage becomes irrelevant
3	12	I would just say if you have a label and you are the actual designer of the label, without having like a huge production behind you and stuff, there could be a chance of making you as the designer, the label as well. And that could turn into because this is innovation and this is also kind of heritage for me if you look at it now. So just like making the story around the person because the person is actually the brand, I would consider that heritage as well. And this is something I would advise because that's actually cool and nice.	A new brand with the founder at its core could also be considered as new heritage.	Additional remarks	Future significance of heritage	Founder as centre of 'new heritage'

3	12	It's a bit outdated and not needed because it's more about values like sustainability, diversity, equality, stuff like that.	The concept of heritage is no longer relevant to new brands, but brand values are.	Additional remarks	Future significance of heritage	Brand values become more important than heritage
3	13	For example, Anine Bing exactly did this. So she's the brand. It's also her name. Or maybe also people like Isabel Marant or something like this. It's all about the person there, more or less. So this is also something that works from my perspective.	A new brand with the founder at its core could also be considered as new heritage.	Additional remarks	Future significance of heritage	Founder as centre of 'new heritage'
3	10	I also think this is the new brand heritage that you have. This one person that you know what the brand stands for and who's behind it, who's like the brain behind it, but not this romanticized figure that you don't really know because nobody talks about it, but only about this whole huge heritage theme. So I think this could be more important.	A new brand with the founder at its core gives the brand more personality and reflects its core values.	Additional remarks	Future significance of heritage	Personality becomes more important than heritage
3	13	I think Stella McCartney is like a really good best practice or like a good example of what new heritage could look like. Because it is her name, she's the person behind it. And the brand also has her name, but she makes it a lot around this whole thing. Not using animals, leather to produce her things and stuff like that. So it's like the best of both	A new brand with the founder at its core gives the brand more personality and reflects its core values.	Additional remarks	Future significance of heritage	Founder as centre of 'new heritage'

		words, like having a core value and using your name to create a brand.				
4	14	The history behind the brand [...]	A heritage brand is linked to the history.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Long term history
4	14	[...] and tradition.	A heritage brand is linked to the tradition.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Tradition
4	16	All brands that are well known and well established in the market.	Heritage brands tend to be well established in the market.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Well-known established brands
4	17	Yeah, maybe brands that bring the history to the present basically. So they make use of historic pieces and stuff, so they bring them back, for example. Or they try to position themselves as like a brand which is quite old and has some iconic history or whatever.	A heritage brands use their history in the present branding practices.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Long term history
4	14	Also quality I would say, because if a brand is constantly developing and has always been there, they of course are better than the newbies or whatever.	Heritage brands tend to have good quality.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Preference of heritage over non-heritage
4	17	Yeah, maybe there is also some trust that comes with it. So maybe you trust the heritage brand or a brand where you know it has a heritage more than just any random other brand.	Brands with heritage give trust for consumers.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Giving trust to consumers

4	16	Also has a lot to do, like how you were raised when your mom were buying new clothes from special brands that are well known and old and kind of maybe stick to them.	Heritage brands tend to have long term relationship with consumers.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Personal connection to heritage brands
4	15	If the heritage is about well, if the heritage is just history, imagine if they have an heritage on being green and sustainable. Maybe they will influence me on being if I want to buy something green and sustainable, I know I can rely on them.	Heritage brand giving security for the consumers.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Giving trust to consumers
4	15	Otherwise I think heritage will only be like a subconscious thing. Oh, I know this, I know they have been around from a long time.	Participant thinks heritage influences subconsciously.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Subconscious influence
4	15	And also if heritage, I think if I know that as a rich heritage brand, I'll probably value it more than it actually is valid, meaning maybe I'm willing to pay more for their stuff.	Rich heritage would influence the participant to pay more for the products.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Willingness to pay higher price
4	17	So I think I like to consume or buy brands that stand for something and maybe add something, I don't know, some other level of meaning to wearing it maybe for example.	Participant prefers heritage brands that add value.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Added meaning
4	17	[...] I like to have brands that mean something to me, but maybe also to others.	Participant prefer heritage brands that they have personal connection with.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Personal connection to heritage brands

4	17	Brands that have a strong heritage in something maybe have an advantage over brands that are just new to the market [...]	Brands that have strong heritage have an advantage over new brands with no heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Preference of heritage over non-heritage
4	17	[...] and may just change again and again and you don't really know because they don't have this continuity yet.	New brands don't have continuity like heritage brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Continuity
4	14	For me, it definitely helps me to connect with the brand and definitely influence my decision when purchasing clothing or accessories.	It is easier for participants to connect with heritage brands on a personal level.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Personal connection to heritage brands
4	14	And I think when you have a positive perception of brand heritage, it can make you also more willing to pay higher prices for brands products.	Positive brand heritage influences consumers to pay more for the products.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Willingness to pay higher price
4	16	I think if it's like a well established brand and you know the heritage and everything, then it gives not a feeling like a better feeling if you purchase something because you kind of know what you get also [...]	Well established heritage brand gives consumers security when purchasing products from the brand.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Significance of brand heritage	Giving security to consumers
4	16	[...] and the quality and what the brand has been doing for the last years [...]	Well established heritage brand has highquality products.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	High quality

4	16	I think if I want to buy something sustainable and innovative, kind of, then I would go more maybe for brands that don't have this heritage because it's like a new trend with sustainable stuff.	Newer brands with no heritage are more innovative and sustainable.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Innovativeness is associated with younger brands
4	17	Heritage brands may have an advantage when it comes to stand for something, right?	Heritage brands have an advantage for additional meaning.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Definition of heritage	Added meaning
4	17	But sometimes it may also be a disadvantage if you are like a heritage brand, because you may also stand for something super old and stuff. So I agree to Lisa that you don't need to be a heritage brand to stand for something in the end. So yeah, it matters sometimes, but not always.	Heritage brands have a risk of being outdated.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Heritage brands are viewed as outdated
4	14	[...] I think the lack of a clearly defined brand heritage or the change could actually also cause consumers to lose interest in the brand or reduce their loyalty to it.	Brand heritage needs to be clearly defined by the brands for consumers to not lose interest.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Communication of brand heritage	Heritage needs to be clearly defined
4	14	So I think it's really important but also the fact I don't know who said it but to go and to be on track with the time and especially the target group since it's like changing we are addressing the consumer group of Gen Z in the next years fully. And as a brand, to be successful, you can't lose sight of the	Heritage brands may struggle to stay innovative and therefore, not relevant for the Gen Z.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Risks for brands utilising heritage	Staying innovative as a challenge for heritage brands

		competitors and you have to pay attention to the needs of the target group always.				
4	17	I mean, it may be like an extra attribute, which I know maybe one of many reasons to buy a product, but not the only reason. I mean, if the quality of the product is super shit and stuff or I don't know, or the price is just insanely high compared to other products, I would not consider it as the main factor.	Heritage may be an additional attribute when purchasing products.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Role of brand heritage in purchase decisions	Additional factor in purchase decisions
4	15	I have a feeling that all super high end brands try to do it if they have their heritage	Luxury fashion brands are heritage driven.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Luxury fashion brands are heritage driven
4	16	Because tradition and an old brand heritage and a long kind of story. I mean, it's kind of a success story. If you could stay in the business for so long without, for example, big drama, like big how do you say it in English again? I think that's kind of success story and you can kind of be part of it as well. So I wouldn't say that too much. And of course they can use it. Why shouldn't they?	Brand communication can be based on a heritage brand's success story.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Communication of brand heritage	Communication of success story
4	15	But I don't remember Zara talking about their heritage and probably they are around since God knows when and I don't see Shein. [...] The other ones does it really make sense	Fast fashion brands are not heritage driven.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in fast fashion branding	Fast fashion brands are not heritage driven

		to speak about heritage? Because then what can she say? Oh yeah, we have been using Chinese kids for 17 years, great, congratulations.				
4	15	So we know the old brands, normally they are the premium and luxury ones and they are the ones that actually use their heritage.	Luxury brands are heritage driven.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	Luxury fashion brands are heritage driven
4	15	Like, I don't know, imagine Off-White, for example. I don't see Off-White as having heritage. The only heritage that I see is that Virgil Abloh died, for example, their design, their founder, that's the only heritage that I see. [...]	Brand using the founder as part of their brand communication.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Communication of brand heritage	Founder as centre of communication
4	15	[...] But for the other ones I see the movies I know they have been here from a long time since they dress not pope, the shoes, right, they do the shoes for the pope or something like that.	Using movies as a way to communicate a brand's heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Communication of brand heritage	Communication through films
4	15	Maybe that's not even real, but that's the thing I know. And that's kind of heritage, see once again, it's again about the most premium brands. And the other ones, I don't feel like they can or either they do it well, maybe someone can and they never tried.	Luxury brands use heritage more in branding than fast fashion brands.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Luxury fashion brands leverage heritage more than fast fashion brands

4	17	[...] I agree to some degree, but I also think it's way easier, of course, for luxury brands to communicate a heritage brand or premium brands.	A luxury brand can communicate heritage more effectively.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding	It is easier for luxury fashion brands to communicate heritage
4	17	But maybe it's also the other way around a bit, that they were also, at some point, basic brands and they became luxury or premium brands because they developed like a specialization and based on that heritage. [...]	A shift from fast fashion brand to a luxury brand by specialization.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Communication of brand heritage	Specialisation
4	17	[...] And so I think there can also be to some degree like fast fashion brands or brands that are in between that develop or with a lower price point that develop or have a heritage and have like a specialization.	Brands can become a heritage brand by specialization in a specific product.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in fast fashion branding	Specialisation can lead to heritage
4	17	[...] for example Heinz or something, it's also like a crazy heritage brand and they make like tomato soup and ketchup if you want it like that. So it's also like super low price point but they're still very specialized and very well known for that particular product. And so I think also cheaper or like lower price point brands could have or communicate a heritage if there is some truth around it.	Low price point product may still have a well established heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Authentic brand heritage	Well-known heritage

4	17	I don't know if you would think for example about H&M or like Zara being like crazy specialized on linen shirts for example. As you said, just being known for hundreds of years of making great linen shirts, then why shouldn't they communicate it? But that's obviously not what they do. Fast fashion brands tend to just do this now and this then and so then it just doesn't make sense.	The brands of fast fashion are not as consistent and specialized as the brands of luxury fashion	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Heritage in luxury fashion branding / Heritage in fast fashion branding	Fast fashion brands are not as consistent and specialised as luxury brands are
4	15	Authenticity. I think the brand I like brands that no one uses and no one knows.	Participant thinks authenticity is an important element of heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Authenticity
4	15	They're small, but good quality is very good and they are very different.	Participant think that high product quality is linked to heritage.	Brand heritage in fashion branding	Key elements of brand heritage for consumers	Product quality
4	17	Sporty & Rich [...] I think they are just communicating in a misleading way. So they position themselves as like this super old brand from the if you would just see the imagery of the brand and also they use different I mean they even use stock material from other celebrities from back then and they get the whole inspiration from of course this time. [...]	As part of their branding strategy, a brand uses borrowed heritage as a means of identifying themselves.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Borrowed heritage elements

4	17	Sporty & Rich [...] I think they are just communicating in a misleading way. So they position themselves as like this super old brand from the if you would just see the imagery of the brand and also they use different I mean they even use stock material from other celebrities from back then and they get the whole inspiration from of course this time. [...]	A brand is using storytelling from the past to mislead consumers with its branding practices.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Brands use storytelling from other decades to mislead consumers
4	17	[...] And so I think to some degree it's cool. But they are for example a brand in my opinion that are just over exaggerating it. They're just pushing so many products and stuff and so it starts to be a bit like too much in my opinion.	A participant believes that borrowed heritage can appear excessive.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer responses to Extent of inauthenticity	Borrowed heritage can be exaggerated
4	15	Because maybe I came across some unauthentic communications from brands but I just don't know. They're real. I just don't know them. So for me it's authentic, right? I don't know. It's very hard.	Participant thinks that it is hard to notice inauthentic heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer difficulty in identifying inauthentic brand heritage	Inauthentic heritage is difficult to detect
4	15	[...] if they only tell white lies or [...]	Heritage brands telling white lies.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Telling white lies
4	15	[...] they really go deep on lies yeah, I was going to say that.	Heritage brand telling large scale lies.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Lying on a large scale
4	17	[...] I think when I think about authenticity or inauthenticity, I think a lot about honesty	Inauthenticity can be seen as brands being dishonest.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer responses to Extent of inauthenticity	Inauthenticity associated with dishonesty

		maybe. And then I think, of course there's a difference of brands that are honest and say the truth. [...]				
4	15	[...] And then there are maybe some brands that stretch the truth to some degree or probably all brands do that and tell a story around a bit. [...]	Brands having minor alterations on their heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Minor alterations of heritage
4	17	[...] And then there are maybe some brands that just totally lie and make stuff up. [...]	Heritage brands creating fictitious heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Fictitious heritage
4	17	[...] And then there are probably even companies that actually steal stories from other brands [...]	Brand's copying their heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Extent of inauthenticity	Copied heritage
4	17	[...] which is then probably maybe the worst. I don't know. And just copy something else.	Brand's copying someone else's heritage is considered worst type of inauthentic heritage.	Inauthentic brand heritage in fashion branding	Consumer responses to Extent of inauthenticity	Copied heritage seen as worst extent of inauthenticity
4	14	For Hollister, I could definitely imagine it, to be honest. [...]	Hollister's heritage appears inauthentic to the participant.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Hollister's inauthentic heritage is viewed as fictitious
4	14	[...] But for Gucci I never thought about this fact.	A participant never questioned Gucci's heritages authenticity.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Gucci's inauthentic heritage as more surprising
4	16	I think it was just like I mean of course you could tell that the companies are quite like the brands are quite similar and [...]	Hollister's heritage appears inauthentic to the participant.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage

4	14	No, I also can't remember but the thing is I never pictured in my head that it's like a brand with a long traditional brand heritage in the end because it was there like in the 2000 I think. [...]	Hollister's heritage appears inauthentic to the participant.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Hollister's inauthentic heritage is viewed as fictitious
4	15	The only brands that I think that have heritage are the high end ones that I know since I was little that I heard people talking about them because otherwise I don't feel like their communication of their just reached me because [...]	The participant believes luxury brands tend to have a heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Authentic heritage	Luxury brands tend to have heritage
4	15	[...] I didn't know where the hell Hollister came from. And now I know that they're lying because of you girls. Not because of them, because for them, they could have told me that they don't tell me because I don't know. [...]	Participant was unaware that Hollister lied about their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Surprised by Hollister's inauthentic heritage
4	14	But for a brand like Gucci it's quite disappointing I would say, because I would never actually imagine that a brand, a luxury brand like this would fake it. [...]	Participant found it disappointing that Gucci as a luxury brand would lie about their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Would not expect luxury brands to have an inauthentic heritage
4	14	[...] So yeah, it definitely will change my perception of it.	Gucci lying about heritage has changed participants perception.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Gucci's inauthentic heritage negatively affects brand perception

4	16	So I'm not really into the brand (Hollister) so I really don't care kind of but [...]	Participant did not care about Hollister lying about their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not affected by Hollister's inauthentic heritage
4	16	[...] for Gucci is kind of disappointing.	Participant found it disappointing that Gucci would lie about their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Would not expect luxury brands to have an inauthentic heritage
4	15	So I was already not considering buying them (Hollister) and now it's just more like great, not good job.	Hollister lying about heritage made participant feel even more negatively about them.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Hollister's inauthentic heritage negatively affects brand perception
4	15	[...] But I think it's worse for Hollister actually because they don't have the level. I can say it's worse to see Hollister for me than Gucci [...]. But maybe if people knew about Hollister they will stop buying it. [...]	Participant believes that Hollister's inauthentic heritage could affect consumers purchase decisions.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Not willing to buy a product after learning about inauthentic heritage
4	15	Gucci who will continue to be very premium and selected thingy [...] because Gucci, I know they don't really care and it doesn't matter because they will continue to be high end [...] But Gucci, the rappers still need to buy it so doesn't matter.	Participant believes that Gucci's inauthentic heritage will not affect consumers purchase decisions.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	No impact on purchase decisions
4	15	Maybe that's also a good point. It's even worse, right? They don't have the standpoint of Gucci and they still come worse. They lie more fiction. John Hollister, oh my God.	Hollister's inauthentic heritage is worse than Gucci's because they created a fictional story.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	If founding history is fake, the whole brand is viewed as fake

		Yeah, maybe that's even worse. But I'm just not a fan.				
4	14	[...] But if I'm being honest and I would say I would never buy it because of that fact, that's like wrong. So I think that's like the question would you still buy it?	Although Gucci used inauthentic heritage participant would still purchase from the brand.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Impact on purchase decisions / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	No impact on purchase decisions
4	14	Yeah, I would say I would expect from luxury brands to have like an authentic brand heritage, to be honest. [...]	Participant expects luxury brands to have authentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Would not expect luxury brands to have an inauthentic heritage
4	14	[...] Because in the end we are paying not always the quality, we always pay the name. So there has to be a background behind the name.	Consumers pay for the name, not always the quality and therefore expects background behind the name.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Authentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Heritage is expected to be authentic because consumers pay for the brand name
4	16	Yeah, I would definitely say that people like us, people who focus on brand heritage, then they are disappointed. [...]	Participant finds it disappointing that a brand would lie about their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Disappointment with heritage as a purchasing factor
4	16	[...] Then of course they would have face like problems with selling stuff or being it depends, of course, if it's high class brand or not, but they would definitely lose also their, [...]	Lying about heritage can result in lost sales.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Decline in sales

		[...] I would say, position maybe in the market. [...]	The consequences of lying about heritage could mean that the brand loses their position in the market.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Downfall of a brand
4	16	[...] Depends, of course, on how bad it is.	The consequences of lying about heritage depends on how severely the brands are lying about their heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Depends on the extent of inauthenticity
4	16	Yeah, I also think it definitely affects trust, right? So when you think about it that someone lies to you like a person or something, then you would also like, next time think a bit like, okay, do I still trust that person? And it's a bit the same with brands, maybe. [...]	A brand lying about heritage effects the trust of the consumer.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Loss of trust in the brand
4	16	[...] So if they lie on this level, maybe they also lie on other things. So you'd start questioning the brand, which could actually in the end then lead to not buy for maybe different reasons.	A brand lying about heritage makes participant question if the brand is lying about something else as well.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Inauthentic heritage makes consumers question the brand
4	15	I was just going to say that weirdly enough, obviously it's worse for Gucci, but I think that the impact will be less for Gucci because Gucci will still be in and people will still want to dress Gucci rather than Hollister if they could. [...] [...] That's why I know it's	Gucci lying about its heritage will have less of an impact on the brand because of its status.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Gucci's inauthentic heritage has less of a negative impact on consumers than Hollister's

		stupid, but maybe I'm completely wrong and maybe because I don't have any data or any source of information for this, but I think it's worse for Hollister also because they fabricated the biggest story, but because they don't have the status of Gucci. [...]				
4	15	[...] And maybe it's also harder for people to believe that Gucci is bullshitting them than all this that is bullshitting them.	Due to the status that Gucci has they can get away with lying to the consumers.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Depends on the status of the brand
4	15	Maybe I also kind of think the same because I don't know, you buy Gucci I don't think anyone bought Gucci to be like a horseback rider or something, to be seen like that. But no one does that still. [...]	Consumers do not purchase Gucci for the story related to the heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Product style more important than heritage
4	17	[...] It's more like a status symbol, of course. And maybe you like the designs, which are very specific, [...]	Consumers purchase Gucci more for the status symbol.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of luxury fashion brands	Product style more important than heritage
4	17	[...] but for Hollister, the designs are not crazy specific when you think about it. But they still completely played with this surfer boy surfer girl image. So back in the days, you would go in the store and everything would the story would be perfect, actually. So it was like a genius move to do it like that back then when the world was maybe not that transparent. So it wasn't that easy to just	Hollister created a fictional heritage narrative that people fell into before the era of easy access to information and social media controversies.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage / Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	Successfully associate the brand with a particular aesthetic and storytelling

		Google and find out, okay, that's actually all not true. And there were not people on social media or Twitter who would start a shit show about it. So back then it was way easier to just create these fictional stories which people also fall into.				
4	17	But yeah, it's kind of unoriginal when you think about it. It makes the brand totally unoriginal because it completely played with this surfer boy image and that's also why we bought it back then to some degree if we bought it to be seen like that. But would actually like someone who actually likes to surf and stuff ever buy this brand? That never happened. So the brand kind of loses its whole I don't know, it's completely built on this one single piece. Basically it loses its whole authenticity if you want it like that. [...]	The inauthentic heritage made the brand unoriginal.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Consumers' views on the inauthentic heritage of fast fashion brands	If founding history is fake, the whole brand is viewed as fake
4	17	Of course, I think both did it very successfully in my opinion. So both were crazy successful with it and I think Hollister is also still existing and they probably also make a lot of money. I don't know.	Brands can be successful creating an inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Inauthentic heritage has been successfully used by both brands

4	17	But I mean only because we stopped communicating it. People don't stop having the association with it. I don't know if I would have not known that they stopped communicating these things I would still think the same way but I don't know who is mainly buying it and how they position themselves otherwise today, so hard to say.	Even though the brands have stopped communicating their inauthentic heritage, consumer are still subconsciously influenced by it.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Although both brands no longer communicate their inauthentic heritage, consumers still associate it with the brand
4	15	Maybe they were both successful but I think Hollister made it better. [...]	The participant recognises that Hollister was better at creating an inauthentic legacy.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Inauthentic heritage has been successfully used by both brands
4	15	[...] Just while we're speaking about the awareness that now people have if Hollister instead of just creating a fiction, they've called it California Dream or Surfer Dream and then say that they are creating an ideal surfer, californian surfer brand or something they could actually build a fiction character. It's like saying the lie, but if you actually say the lie, it's less hurtful. People buy it more. It's kind of weird stuff. But if you say it, I don't know, maybe I'm just thinking too much. But yeah, they both were just successful for me, Hollister could have made it a little bit better.	The participant's recommendation for Hollister would have been to acknowledge the fictional heritage, which would have been more appealing and less deceptive to consumers.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Could be used successfully if brand is honest and transparent about the truth

4	15	If they can trick you into that? Yeah, of course. Because I just discovered this now. So obviously they tricked me, so I cannot say they were not successful.	Brands can be successful creating an inauthentic heritage.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	As consumers are unaware of examples, it is assumed that brands are successful in leveraging inauthentic heritage
4	17	I think it depends on the person, of course. So it's kind of like subjective matter. So some people care more, some people care less about it.[...]	Subjectivity plays a role in determining individual levels of concern.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Depends on the target group
4	17	[...] But I think brands can definitely do that. And brands did that always and will probably also continue to do that in all different categories if you think like that. And so I think brands can definitely do that. [...]	Brands have consistently used inauthentic heritage and are likely to continue to do so.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Brands can successfully leverage inauthentic heritage
4	17	[...] It's about comprehensiveness, maybe, and being consistent with it continuous and maybe having some kind of even if it's fictional but sense making to the story. And then if it's strong enough, of course, it just resonates with you and it can be super successful. And that's, for example, what Hollister I mean, that's what Hollister did, right? They were just super comprehensive around it. And if you would go into this shop	Creating a comprehensive and consistent heritage narrative, incorporating a coherent sense-making element even if fictional, coupled with resonating strength, can lead to immense success, as exemplified by Hollister's ability to craft a complete	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Creating a consistent heritage narrative with a coherent sense-making element

		and they built like this whole experience and would speak to all your sensors, basically.	sensory experience within their stores.			
4	14	It depends, I think, until a certain limit. So I would say like Hollister, I wouldn't label it as brand heritage but more like a vision or more like a lifestyle they sold. [...]	Participant thinks that Hollister did not have heritage but more a vision.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Evaluation of success in utilizing inauthentic heritage	Selling a vision rather than an inauthentic heritage
4	14	[...] But you have to be really careful what the brand heritage is going to look like. For example, if you say, I don't know, I'm a black owned company and you're not a black owned company, you're going to be in the cancel culture really quick	Brands need to be careful with inauthentic heritage as it can backfire.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Risks of inauthentic heritage	Backlash when inauthentic heritage deviates too far from identity
4	17	Yeah, maybe we are again on this continuum basically on like stealing something or copying something, lying about something, then stretching the truth and saying the truth. And so, yeah, if you're if you're moving more on the left side, I think it's kind of fine. If you're stretching the truth to some degree and not put up facts that are completely not true and false, I think it can definitely work.	There are various degrees of inauthentic heritage. As long as the brand stays closer to honesty, stretching the truth to some extent can be effective.	Responses to inauthentic fashion brand heritage	Tolerance of inauthentic heritage	Depends on the extent of inauthenticity