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Bachelor thesis

Customer experience through packaging in an online context

Creating value to neo-luxury customers in Generation Y



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Abstract

The development of technology has contributed to a fast-growing market for e-commerce. Through e-commerce, the physical interaction has decreased, and new interaction tools have been implemented to gain competitive advantage. Packaging is one way to communicate with customers and often the first physical contact with brands when purchasing online. Packaging can create value and enhance the customer experience.

The purpose of this research, from a business perspective, is to investigate how designed packaging from an online neo-luxury brand affects customers within Generation Y (1980-1994) when the product is received. The study aim to provide an understanding of how the customer experience can be affected through designed packaging.

This study applied a qualitative research method with a deductive approach in order to answer the research questions and the purpose. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Swedish citizens within Generation Y that have purchased products from neo-luxury brands.

The result of the study shows several aspects of how packaging can contribute to better customer experience. When customers' expectations on packaging are surpassed, the customer experience is affected positively. Packaging containing tissue paper and gifts enhance the unboxing experience. Packaging is a way for companies to create value and affect customers' attitudes towards brands. Satisfaction is affected by expectations and packaging can contribute to a better overall experience.

Key words

Customer experience, e-commerce, Generation Y, neo-luxury, packaging, unboxing experience, value creation.



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1 Introduction

The introduction chapter is presenting an insight of the background of this thesis. Further presented in this chapter are the theoretical and marginal problems that have been identified, followed by the research questions, the purpose, delimitations, and lastly the thesis disposition.

1.1 Background

A popular trend called unboxing experience has emerged in online videos (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). It is about the process of recording the moment when the product is removed and unwrapped from the packaging (Forbes, 2020). These videos rarely contain any information about the product itself, it is about the unpacking phase (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). These videos are about the excitement of enjoying something for the first time (Forbes, 2020) and the high level of emotion associated with the opening phase (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). The unboxing experience can be used as a marketing strategy when customers decide to share their experiences (Forbes, 2020).

There are several different definitions of packaging and two of them are primary packaging and secondary packaging (Benjamin, 2018). Primary packaging is the packaging that is closest to the product and the main goal of the primary packaging is to attract and inform a customer. Secondary packaging is the “shipping carton” which has the purpose to protect the primary packaging (Benjamin, 2018). The main focus of this thesis is primary packaging and is identified here as designed packaging. Packaging is not just a function for logistic, it has turned into a sensory marketing tool (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoglu, 2017). “*Packaging is a term for material that has a nature to be used for containment, protection, handling, delivering and presenting goods from the producer to the consumer or user, as well as preserving the product*” (Dixon-Hardy & Curran, 2009, p.1). For e-commerce, packaging is a necessity in order to deliver the content in a safe way when transporting the package from point A to point B, and packaging provides a range of functionalities in modern consumption (Steenis, Herpen, Lans, Ligthart & Trijp, 2017). By creating a package experience that the customer receives as a positive surprise, the experience can change customers’ willingness to pay (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016). It is of importance for consumers how the package is designed due to the form and the easiness of opening, to increase value (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016).

Some clothing brands are using light, flexible plastic bags to minimize the cost of shipping and packaging. This shipping formation can be done since clothes are not that



easy to break, however, the first impression is affected in a negative way based on the plastic bags' cheapness (Dooley, 2014). Instead focus on communicating a sense of value should be an important part of a fashion brand. If packaging is of value for customers and makes a great first impression, it will improve the expectations of the product that is inside. The expectations the customer receives through the packaging will in return affect the product itself. This perspective affects the result of better customer experience (Dooley, 2014).

Customer experience is about the interaction between brands and customers. An individual's expectations should be matched with the customer experience that the customers receive through different touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Packaging is now more important than ever and has a role within touchpoints, as well as, a part of creating a positive customer experience (Tanderup, Reunanen & Kraus, 2019). For e-commerce, packaging can be the first moment when the customer physically interacts with the brand (da Hora Marques, 2019). An important area of packaging is the sustainable aspects that have grown during the last years (Nordin & Selke, 2010). The concept of sustainability seems to be increasingly important to consumers, however, it is challenging to get consumers to choose a sustainable package (Steenis et al. 2017). A reason for this could be the lack of knowledge from the consumer's perspective (Steenis et al. 2017).

The fashion industry has adapted the e-commerce conceptions later than others because of the circumstances to translate the in-store experience into an online environment (Blázquez, 2014). Entertainment is an important part for customers when purchasing clothes and brands have been focusing on adapting relevant technology and sensory elements to provide this value to their customers. Digital revolution has made consumers' expectations higher than before and they are now more aware due to the way of collecting information online (Blázquez, 2014). Customers have different behavior and each customer journey is different from one another. Packaging as a touchpoint is an important interaction between brands and customers (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). When purchasing fashion, it is important to feel, touch, see and try the products before the customer purchase, since it is difficult to evaluate online (Blázquez, 2014). Clothing is seen as a high-involvement product category and is related to a person's ego. Brands have evaluated these perspectives and are working with the development to bridge the gap between channels, different technologies, and physical stores (Blázquez, 2014).

Consumption of luxury brands and their products is more than just a way to tell who a person is, it is an expression of who you are (Solomon, 2017). Generation Y is more engaged with self-expression than former generations and Generation Y is valuing



shopping experiences in both online and offline contexts (Solomon, 2017). The definition of Generation Y is varying but approximately it is people born between 1980-1994 (Hockly, 2011). Generation Y, also called millennials has many characteristics and is focused on materialistic values and extrinsic values such as fame, money, and image (Main, 2017). Generation Y is known as open-minded, confident, self-expressive, and creative to new ideas and ways of living (Main, 2017).

The luxury market has been entered by Generation Y customers because of the neo-luxury (new luxury) products (Giovannini, Xu & Thomas, 2015). These products have higher quality, taste, and aspiration than similar products in the same section but not equally expensive than traditional luxury products. Brands have added lower price items to their assortment to make luxury more affordable and accessible to attract young adults (Giovannini, Xu & Thomas, 2015). When targeting these neo-luxury customers, it is of importance to understand their personality dimensions and consumption motivations. Luxury fashion has the character to build prestige, brand awareness, and exclusivity in a trendy way to the customers of the younger generation (Giovannini, Xu & Thomas, 2015).

1.2 Problem discussion

1.2.1 Theoretical research

Packaging has several different purposes and functions which makes it difficult to define. Primary and secondary packaging are connected to each other and are sometimes overlapping which can create confusion and ambiguity (Benjamin, 2018). Primary packaging is identified as designed packaging in this thesis. Since customers can order the neo-luxury product directly from the brand or from a reseller the designed packaging can therefore differ. From a reseller the customer can not always expect the designed packaging from the brand since the resellers can choose their own packaging (Jung, Kim & Kim, 2014).

Previous research has mainly focused on how packaging can affect a customer's buying decision in an offline context. Packaging is a component to create engagement between brands and customers (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoglu, 2017). The design of packaging is seen as a key component in creating experiences. Perhaps packaging has a small impact on the buying decision online. Packaging can be seen as a marketing tool and not just a function (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoglu, 2017). Tanderup, Reunanen & Kraus (2019) is highlighting that strong emotional experiences can be evoked by the design of packaging and the unboxing of a product. This is challenging to achieve since customers are different from one another. Unboxing can be crucial when building



strong personal relationships and connections with customers. Designed packaging can turn the tangible moment of delivery into a better experience (Owens, 2019). There is research on how senses affect customers' impression and how it affects a purchase decision in an offline context. However, it can be an important factor to create a surprising excitement when the packaging is received (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016).

Research shows the difficulty for a brand to affect and interact during a customer's journey online, based on that each customer has different behaviour and expectations (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello 2009). Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) are questioning the brand experience and the connection to brand-related stimuli. However, 60-80% of satisfied customers did not return to the company even though they were pleased with the experience. An explanation for this can be the lack of connection between brands and customers (Myler, 2016). Research shows that it is difficult to get consumers to choose sustainable packaging and implies that they have limited knowledge in this field. Some argue that it is the companies that have the capacity to make this field more sustainable, while some argue that consumers can be important actors (Steenis et al. 2017).

The definition of the Generation Y age range is interpreted differently. Since different academic journals suggest various age ranges of Generation Y it is difficult to determine which one that is correct. Hockly (2011) means that 1980-1994 is the age range of Generation Y while DeVaney (2015) claims that millennials are born between 1980 and 2000. Furthermore, research regarding neo-luxury has been difficult to evaluate since the area is quite new and the concept is difficult to define. The border between traditional luxury and neo luxury is narrow. Neo-luxury can be identified as brands that will deliver a high level of experience, symbolic and functional value at an affordable price (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). Traditional luxury is including high levels of core values of excellent quality, high prices, aesthetic beauty, uniqueness, scarcity, and authenticity (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019).

1.2.2 Managerial problem

In 2010 there was only 36% of companies competed in customer experience, compared to 2018 when it was 89% (Hyken, 2018). 80% of companies believe that they deliver a "super experience" but only 8% of customers agree with it (Hyken, 2018). This means that there are great opportunities to disrupt a competitor and gain market shares, but companies should develop this to achieve greater customer experience (Hyken, 2018). It has become more important for brands to develop the design and aesthetic of their packaging since they want to strengthen and create more earned media (Talbot,



2019). An advantage with packaging can be that it is a more believable source for the product than an advertisement (Talbot, 2019). If companies are viewing packaging as a logistic tool to get products from one point to another, they are missing an opportunity to influence how customers perceive brands (Owens, 2019).

There is limited research on how surprising experience and value is affecting customers in the packaging context online. Instead, there is research about sustainability, how to affect the senses through e-commerce, how to define the different behaviours, evaluations, and the self-identity of Generation Y (Nordin & Selke, 2010; Blázquez, 2014; Krishna, Cian & Aydınoğlu, 2017; Lazarevic, 2012). There is research showing that packaging does have an effect on the customer purchase decision process in an offline context (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016). There is an identified gap in the research on how packaging can add value when it is received from e-commerce.

1.3 Research questions

“How does designed packaging through e-commerce affect the customer experience from neo-luxury brands in generation Y?”

“What can designed packaging contribute to achieve greater customer experience in an online fashion neo-luxury brand among generation Y?”

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to describe the influencing aspects a designed packaging from an online neo-luxury brand has on a customer from Generation Y when the product is received. It is important to understand how the customer experience can be affected through designed packaging. The research aims to find the components that can enhance greater customer experience through a designed packaging.

1.5 Delimitations

Packaging is a wide term that can include several different purposes. However, this thesis uses the term designed packaging, which means the package that is inside of the “shipping carton” and is connected with the product. Secondary packaging (shipping carton) has the purpose to protect the designed packaging and the product. There are several other aspects of customer experience that this thesis does not take into considerations such as the delivery time and customer service. This thesis will be



focusing on Swedish citizens due to that the authors are Swedish natives, the population of Sweden are fashion conscious and is purchasing a lot from e-commerce (PostNord, 2020).

1.6 Disposition

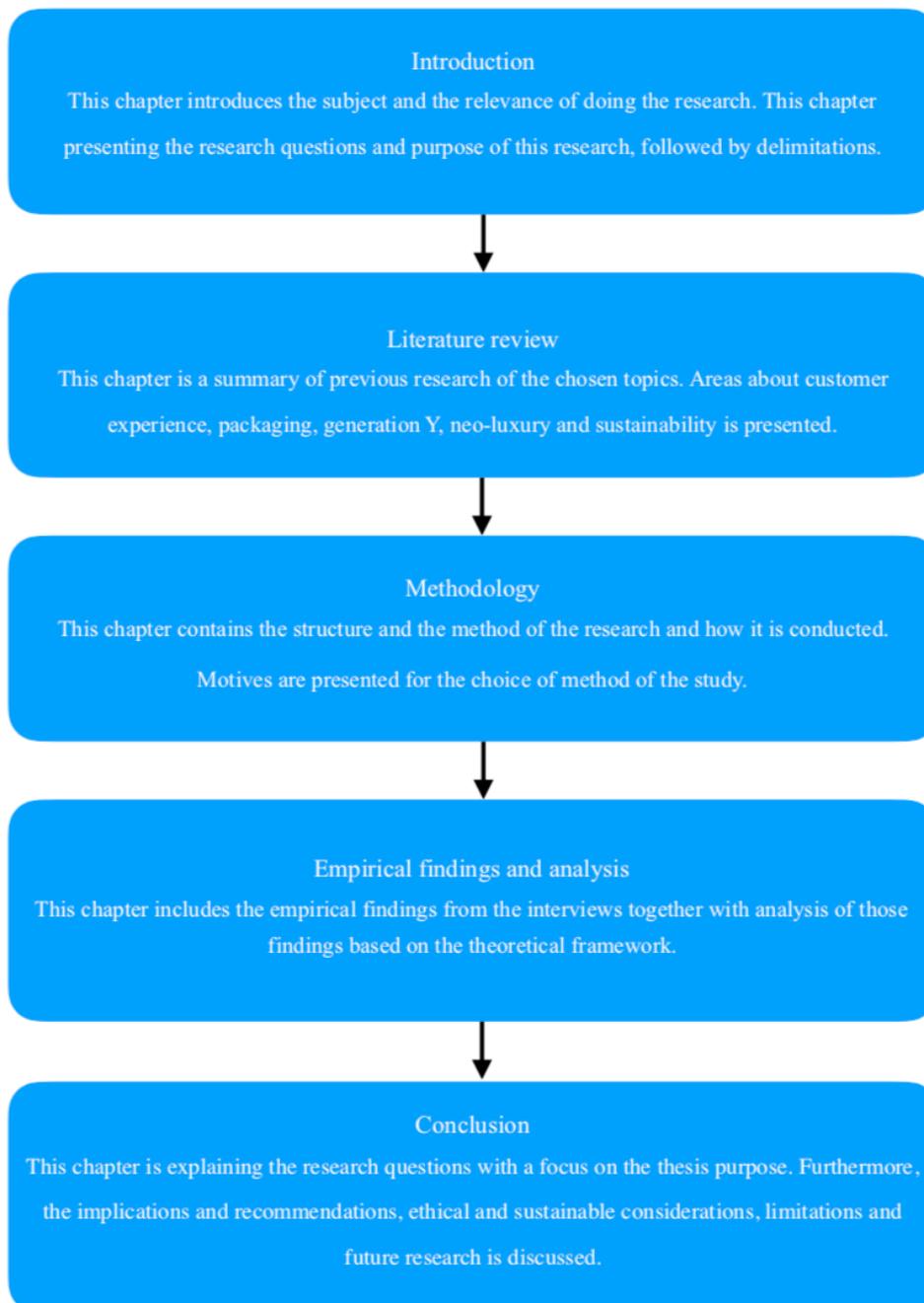


Figure 1, Summary of content



2 Literature review

The following chapter is presenting the theory that this thesis is based on. This chapter describes current theories regarding customer experience, e-commerce, brands and resellers, packaging, sensory elements, unboxing experience, Generation Y, neo-luxury, and sustainability within the packaging. The chosen topics creates an understanding in this field and help the authors to the implement the study.

2.1 The concept of customer experience

The concept of customer experience is an important aspect for brands to consider (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). As Schmitt, Brakus, and Zarantonello (2015, p.2), cited by Lemon & Verhoef (2016), claims about the customer experience “*Every service exchange leads to a customer experience, regardless of its nature and form*”. It is of weight to understand the customer and the journey each customer has since each individual has different behaviour (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). By designing customers’ experience and customers’ journey, brands can interact and renew the information to achieve sustainable and long-term relationships (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Total customer experience is a sum of the customer's shopping experience; product experience, communication experience, brand experience, and the consumption experience (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoglu, 2017). The number of online touchpoints is increasing and can affect brands in different ways since they want to have control over the customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Customers can now interact with other customers and brands in an easy way that has led to less control over the customer experience from a business perspective.

Expectations from customers are higher today than before since the digital revolution has made customers more aware and creates the possibility to collect information (Blázquez, 2014). Customer experience, when purchasing online, is affected by the whole process of the purchase and the touchpoints (Vakulenko, Shams, Hellström & Hjort 2019). To understand the holistic perspective of an online purchase, customer experience adds value for the customers and creates stronger relationships between companies and customers. When developing the customer value chain, a well-designed online shopping experience can be affected by a delivery experience (Vakulenko et al. 2019).

Customer experience and customer journey are connected to each other and within these stages it is important for companies to interact with the customers (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This process starts from pre-purchase to purchase to post-purchase. These three different steps include searching, past experience, previous purchase, and



external factors (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). New business practice has shown that customer experience covers all the offerings from a company, such as, packaging, advertising, reliability, ease of use, product, service features, and quality of customer care. This perspective is connected to the customer journey and it is important for brands to understand this, to be enabled to design and integrate with the customers under the purchase journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

2.2 E-commerce development

Growing of e-commerce has led to a new perspective of customer value and competitive advantage (Vakulenko et al. 2019). Physical stores have decreased and show that there is a reducing average length of time that customers spend shopping in the offline stores, some authors are pointing to e-commerce as liable for this (Blázquez, 2014). The relationship between customer satisfaction and online experience are associated with each other. The fashion industry has been slower than other areas to adopt the e-commerce conception and one main reason is the possibility to translate the in-store experience to an online environment (Blázquez, 2014). However, by creating an interactive and exciting shopping experience and evaluating fashion online has been enabled for customers, due to new information and communication technologies (ICT) (Blázquez, 2014). Hedonic elements, such as, enjoyment and satisfaction can influence consumers' emotional and cognitive states. The online world makes it difficult to touch and engage the physical product, there is recent data showing that emotion has a key role in online purchasing (Blázquez, 2014).

The development of technology has led to more ways for customers to interact with each other (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). E-commerce has changed business strategies due to customer use of Internet as a communication tool (Chang & Wang 2011). To create interactive online shopping, customer's purchase behaviour and value can be developed to improve the shopping environment by developing service and technology skills (Chen & Hung, 2015). It is a challenge for e-commerce to build long-term relationships with customers since it is easy to find several alternatives in the online environment. Service quality, customer satisfaction, and perceived value are factors of success for e-commerce to receive competitive advantage (Chang & Wang 2011). It is important for companies to have a customer-centered way of thinking since the development of packaging technologies and new packaging methods are launched (Hakola, 2013).



2.2.1 Brands compared to resellers

Retailers are providing platforms that connect sellers with buyers at online marketplaces (Tian, Vakharia, Tan, & Xu, 2018). When there is a reseller in the marketplace that is offering similar products as the brand, the competition is increasing. Although, if there is a reseller that not is offering a similar product or no reseller at all and the brand is offering a highly differentiated product, the choice to purchase directly from a brand is necessary (Tian, et al. 2018). A driven factor that offline resellers have added at the online marketplace is to expand their offerings of products to deliver more options for their customers because the online marketplace is well documented and profitable (Tambo & Hansen, 2012). Brands compete with competitors of other brands and with other digital stores that provide and sell the same brand (Tambo & Hansen, 2012). The Internet has evolved increasingly, and brands have adapted concepts to sell products online. An important aspect for brands is to create communities online, both consumer communities and brand communities, to build long-term relationships (Jung, Kim & Kim, 2014). Consumers' loyalty toward brands can be a factor that differentiates brands from resellers when customers are deciding which one to purchase from (Jung, Kim, & Kim, 2014).

2.3 The value of packaging

Packaging development is constantly improving and changing with new innovation solutions (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016). How the packaging is formed can affect customers' perception both in a positive and negative way (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016). Packaging has the possibility to make the first impression lasting and create positive reviews (Li, Huang, Yuan & Zhou 2018). Packaging can become a competitive advantage for brands, and it has become more than just a logistic function (Rundh, 2013). Packaging of the product that customers receive has changed and is a part of the overall experience. It is of matter to create packaging with characteristics that provide fascination and emotions of satisfaction (Tanderup, Reunanen & Kraus, 2019). Packaging is no longer viewed only as a function for logistics and preservation, it has evolved into a key marketing tool (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoğlu, 2017). A package can communicate the content and give the customer perception of the quality of the product (Rundh, 2013). Packaging can be an important aspect of the recognition, since it can be a part within marketing, advertising, promotional materials, and can reflect the general brand image (Kacavenda, 2018).

A study regarding customers' purchase decisions through packaging design of cosmetics, describes the material of the packaging as the most attractive factor of the



purchase decision (Mohammed, Bahgat, Medina, Gonzalez & Zahaira, 2018). Colours of packaging design are the second most attractive factor for customers. Package attractiveness is ranked as an important attribute that can affect the purchase decision (Mohammed et al. 2018). An experiment shows that packaging design creates an image of the brand and the quality (Mohammed et al. 2018). A group of people ranked four lipsticks from their packaging design without knowing the brand. The result was that the least expensive lipstick was ranked as the number one with the highest quality due to the packaging design. The lipstick looked sophisticated with golden packaging and the outcome shows that packaging is an important aspect of the customer purchase decision (Mohammed et al. 2018).

Product packaging affects the customer experience and the value perception for customers (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016). A package experience interacts with the customers and it is linked to the willingness to pay (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016). A recent study discusses the evidence that customers' willingness to pay has the possibility to increase after an experience with packaging (Kacavenda, 2018). The form of packaging is a factor that influences the emotional preferences of the customer and packaging can be a bridge between brands and customers (Kacavenda, 2018). Hedonic factors have an essential aspect of the design of the packaging and connection to the willingness to pay (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016). Interaction experience and packaging approach can affect customers' repeated purchases behaviour (Joutsela, Latvala, Roto, 2016).

Packaging design can be a critical aspect and unboxing a new product from the packaging is seen as a strong emotional experience (Tanderup, Reunanen & Kraus, 2019). The design of packaging can shape a customer's expectations and therefore it can be difficult to find the right design to attract the emotions among different customers and their different expectations (Tanderup, Reunanen & Kraus, 2019). If the package is difficult to open, the experience, the value, and the perception will decrease (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016).

Brand image is important because the packaging can make the customer confused since the imagination and what they receive could be different (Kacavenda, 2018). Design of the packaging is often a key component in all experiences and packaging creates product engagement and affects consumption (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoğlu, 2017). With verbal clues, packaging can set an intuitive expectation that describes the content. Effective package design can engage and thrill the customer, and packaging becomes the outfit of the product (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoğlu, 2017).



2.3.1 Sensory elements of packaging

In the marketing perspective, packaging is a critical aspect with implications for the multisensory customer experience and can affect attention, comprehension of value, perception of product functionality, and consumption (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoglu, 2017). Sensory aspects; smell, sound, touch, taste, and look can shape the holistic customer experience and the interaction between companies and customers (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoglu, 2017). The perspective of customer experience shows that holistic experience is including emotional, social, cognitive, sensory, and spiritual responses to all interactions with brands (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Without conscious awareness, the world is perceived through senses that affect decisions (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoglu, 2017). Krishna defines sensory marketing as “*marketing that engages the consumers’ senses and affects their perception, judgment, and behavior*” (2010 p.333).

Brand experience is divided into four dimensions; sensory, affective, behavioural and intellectual (Jung & Soo, 2012). A brand’s design, identity, packaging, environment, and communication are related to stimulus (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello 2009). Stimulus is evoked and a part of a brand’s experience which is connected to feelings, cognitions, sensation, and behavioural responses. When consumers are purchasing clothes, they are looking for entertainment, and therefore it is important for companies to adapt sensory elements and technology that is relevant and provides value for the customers (Blázquez, 2014).

Brand experience is varying in both strength and intense which defines as both positive and negative (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello 2009). The importance of creating positive experiences will last and be kept in customers’ memory and can affect customers’ loyalty and satisfaction towards brands. It is important for companies to understand what brand experience is including (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello 2009).

A study state that form is one aspect that can influence the customer's emotional preference and contribute to complete customer experience (Kacavenda, 2018). This is challenging for designers since it should evoke positive stimulation, sensory pleasure, and positive emotions (Kacavenda, 2018). If some of the aspects are achieved, customers can keep the packaging as a memory of the emotions they had when they received it (Kacavenda, 2018). Positive emotions and attitudes have an impact on brand perception. Firms should avoid excessive packaging, which can affect the brand in a negative way (Chen et al. 2017).



2.4 Unboxing experience

Packaging of e-commerce is the face of the brand and is the only moment where the brand physically can obvious itself to the customers in an online context (da Hora Marques, 2019). This makes packaging more than just a transportation tool and can create a lasting impression for the customers when expectations are surpassed (da Hora Marques, 2019).

Unboxing is a popular trend that has emerged in online videos (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). These videos rarely contain any practical information and reviews of the packaging of the product, instead, these videos focus on the process of unboxing. This phenomenon is not only in the range of luxury and tech products, the unboxing experience is important in many product categories (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). This increasing trend shows that unboxing has the potential to provide positive emotional experience due to the high level of emotion associated with the opening phase. It occurs in the pre-usage stage and has the potential to evoke an emotional response. Visual elements can be drivers to deliver brand image and product personality (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018).

User experience begins when a customer picks up the package. Unboxing can be described as a moment for the induction of emotion and raised expectations. The unboxing experience can add value through memorable and shareable experiences (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). An important role to connect with the customer's emotions is the user experience, this is the human impression and user experience is the evaluation of feelings that are connected to a specific moment with a product or service (Kacavenda, 2018). This can be affected by other customers' opinions and interactions to create an expectation for the customer and user experience can be defined as subjective, dynamic, and context dependent (Kacavenda, 2018).

Phenomenon unboxing is based on hedonic and symbolic factors. Identity, socialization, and aesthetics are important aspects of creating a perception of brands (Ilich & Hardey, 2020). Unboxing has positively grown into the social media world and customers have become more engaging to share pictures of designed packages. Design packaging is developing as a high-status feature and new content on social media, particularly through pictures (Ilich & Hardey, 2020). This has been developed into physical and tangible promotional and branding tools in an online context.

Design packaging can act as a two-way communication tool and encourage customer's identity. Packaging becomes more interactive and sensory aspects make the packaging more memorable (Ilich & Hardey, 2020). First physical touch when purchasing from



e-commerce can be the packaging, which makes the unboxing experience important for making the first impression positive and create a good attitude for customers (Ilich & Hardey, 2020).

Communications through social media make it possible for customers to communicate globally and to share their opinions with each other (Ilich & Hardey, 2020). Sharing pictures of designed packing online is a way to artistically appreciate enjoyment. It simplifies information by sharing on social media and co-creates a cultural value (Ilich & Hardey, 2020). The main motivation for using social media is to obtain content and inspiration related to the self. It is an effective way to socialize globally with both functional and emotional informative motives (Ilich & Hardey, 2020).

On social media channels digital consumptions through observing images of items can be related as window-shopping (Ilich & Hardey, 2020). This can through innovative and unique images affect consumer's awareness and desire that are personalized and reinforce the symbolic meaning. Opportunity to communicate about different products and brands' experiences and attitudes through social media can give customers more interest, learning, and intentions (Ilich & Hardey, 2020). Interaction between customers to customers have during a long time impacted the profitability of brands (Ilich & Hardey, 2020).

2.5 Generation Y and neo-luxury consumers

The definition of Generation Y is varying but the approximate age is between 1980-1994 (Hockly, 2011). Generation Y is of large size (around 31-70 million people worldwide) and therefore an important segment for marketers (Lazarevic, 2012). Generation Y tends to spend money and is of the possibility to be a dominating segment of the market in the future. Generation Y is known as disloyal against brands and it is difficult for brands to secure repeated purchases (Lazarevic, 2012). Generation Y is using brands as an extension of themselves and products that they are using, is a symbolic way to create a self-identity (Lazarevic, 2012). They are concerned about what people think about them and are more involved in their purchase decision than other generations since they have knowledge about social consequences of a wrong purchase. Generation Y is also well aware of the trendy social images and it is important for a brand to express a positive self-image (Lazarevic, 2012).

A proposal about the Generation Y individuals and their involvement is different depending on what type of decision the individual is facing (Parment, 2013). When it is a high-involvement decision they are putting more energy, effort, and emotions into it, compared to when it is a low-involvement decision it is the opposite. Generation Y



individuals came of age in a period of economic growth, the social media had a strong emergence and the disappearance of the modernist values (Parment, 2013).

There are managers with the belief that customers of Generation Y have unique and significant behaviour and is different in several ways compared to Generation X (born between 1963-1979) and the Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1962) (Jorgensen, 2003). A similarity that can be made between Generation Y and Baby Boomers is the size but almost every other aspect is very different (Valentine & Powers, 2013). The difference between Generation Y and Baby Boomers is that they are purchasing luxury at a younger age and are willing to spend more money (Giovannini, Xu & Thomas 2015).

Attitudes towards social response questions that a company should deliver are similar among the customers in Generation Y and this might be a reason why the generation trust companies more than the Baby Boomers. This might be a reason why the generation is purchasing and paying attention to messages that companies are standing for and publishing (Valentine, & Powers, 2013). As Valentine and Powers (2013) discussed the recognition factors of Generation Y is that they are individualistic, well-educated, technologically, sophisticated, mature, structured, and savvy. Generation Y has a distinctive need to brands with features of their own that is reflecting self-expression, which makes them feel cool and that they have a strong sense of identity (Valentine & Powers, 2013). Generation Y is also recognized by technological expertise, purchasing power, and that they will play a large part in the online retailer's successes in the long term. Clothes are one of the most purchase categories that Generation Y makes and therefore it can be of importance for neo-luxury fashion brands to interact with the generation. Due to the variety of electronic technology, instant global communication, media saturation, and the material excesses that the generation has grown up with can be a reason of their characteristics (Valentine & Powers, 2013).

Theories highlight some significant differences between Generation Y and Baby boomers in the relationship towards brands (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). Generation Y is more passionate about the brand that they like and tend to bring greater emphasis on the emotional value compared to price conscious Baby Boomers since they primarily expect value for the money (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). Different generations are looking for different meanings in luxury when they purchase or search for neo-luxury brands. It is of matter to investigate the brand image and the impact it has on customers' brand relationships and how they are created and nurtured. To integrate with the existing generational theories about the neo-luxury concepts can provide a clearer image of this (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019).



A neo-luxury customer can be an economically new rich person that makes repeated purchases of luxury goods. It can also be a customer from the lower or middle class who trade up in their purchase behaviours and product requirements. A neo-luxury customer request product of high-status luxury brands (Dioko, Canziani, Watchravesringkan, & Yurchisin, 2016). When differentiating traditional luxury customers from neo-luxury customers, social class has an important role.

“Thus, a neo-luxury good may be defined as one that has been systematically created to fill the gap between the traditional luxury good and a mass good, allowing consumers to perceive sufficient evidence of upgrades in product design and material quality to feel satisfied that they are purchasing upscale products.” (Dioko, et al, 2016, p. 43).

Neo-luxury customer purchase non-traditional luxury and is seeking for products from luxury brands. Traditional luxury brands are providing more affordable second line for neo-luxury customers. Hedonic experiences are connected with worthiness and belonging is a transformative aspect that the neo-luxury concept has a clear contrast compared to the traditional luxury. It seems like the consumers prefer luxury brands with a visually whisper compared to brands that highlighting the status. Neo-luxury can be conceptualized as *“products and services that possess higher levels of quality, taste and aspiration than other goods in the category but are not so expensive as to be out of reach”* (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019, p.2).

2.6 Perception of Sustainable packaging

Most discussed area of packaging is the concept of sustainability (Nordin & Selke, 2010). Packaging should integrate broad objectives of sustainable developments to a business consideration and implement strategies for minimum damage in a sustainable manner (Nordin & Selke, 2010). Packaging provides a wide range of functionalities in modern consumption. It relies on elements to maintain product quality, provide product losses, facilitate transportation, storage and provide market differentiation. After usage of a package, it often becomes redundant and adds to an increasing environmental burden, which contributes to raw material depletion, energy consumption and global warming (Steenis et al. 2017).

The historical packaging design was concerned with the safety of the content of the packaging and to have as little impact on the environment as possible (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). However, there is a shift from the historical packaging design to the styling of packaging and the momentary process of removal of the product from the package



(Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). Designers that aim to evoke an emotion have the opportunity to do that through packaging design (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018).

Packaging can have a valuable contribution to social, economic and environmental sustainability (Nordin & Selke, 2010). Sustainable packaging is facing the consumer behaviour, consumption trends, market segmentation and developments in distribution which is challenging drivers to achieve sustainable goals for companies. Brands have put efforts and initiatives to raise sustainability from an abstract goal to a priority (Nordin & Selke, 2010). It is argued that the balance between sustainability and profitability is an essential issue for companies and is affected by both packaging and marketing. This indicates that companies need to be aware of their position rather than focusing on good-looking packaging. A green brand positioning highlights the sustainability and natural product before the design (Chen, Hung, Wang, Huang & Liao, 2017).

The aspect of sustainable consumption has grown during the last years (Buerke, Straatmann, Lin-Hi & Müller, 2017). Concept of sustainability seems to be increasingly important to customers, however, it is challenging to get customers to choose sustainable packaging (Steenis et al. 2017). Customers concerns about the environment have made it important for companies to become aware of environmental aspects within their company (Chen et al. 2017). Customers could be important actors in the trend towards more sustainable packaged. However, customers have limited knowledge about packaging in a sustainable way (Steenis et al. 2017). Consumers rely on a wide range of beliefs and associations to form a judgment. A combination of structural, graphical and verbal elements contributes to direct objective environmental impacts and sends a signal of sustainability. Colours that are associated with sustainability can be used as a signal, such as, green colouring (Steenis et al. 2017). Customer behaviour regarding sustainable purchase is both personal dimensions and societal. Socially responsible consumer behaviour is driven by a sustainable society, while personally responsible consumer behaviour is more about physiological aspects such as self-actualization and satisfaction (Buerke et al. 2017).

A study shows that green brands do not directly affect of excessive product packaging. However, it can influence a customer negatively and affect green brands image and attitudes towards the brand (Chen et al. 2017). Eco-friendly packaging can not only be useful to decrease environmental issues, but it can bring other advantages as attracting green consumers, reducing costs for transportation, warehousing and meeting green consumers' requirements by using green materials (Chen et al. 2017).



2.7 Conceptual framework

As the theory has proved, there are many aspects of packaging that can be of matter when creating value in the customer experience. Therefore, it is important to cover all the main areas when designing the most suitable model.

Segments in this thesis are Generation Y and neo-luxury fashion operating in e-commerce. Generation Y aim to enhance their self-identity by using brands as an extension of themselves (Lazarevic, 2011). Generation Y is willing to spend more money on luxury products at an early age (Giovannini, Xu & Thomas 2015). Generation Y has knowledge of technology and is familiar with purchasing from e-commerce (Valentine & Powers, 2013). Neo-luxury customers are seeking products from luxury brands, but do not purchase traditional luxury (Dioko, et al, 2016). Neo-luxury products are associated with taste and quality but not as expensive as traditional luxury products (Giovannini, Xu & Thomas 2015).

Innovation solutions of packaging are constantly improving, and the customers' perceptions can be affected by the design of package in both positive and negative ways (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016). Further, the model explains the sub-dimensions of packaging, unboxing experience, sustainability and sensory elements. Unboxing can contribute with potential positive emotional experience and can be seen as a marketing tool (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). Sustainability is a discussed area within packaging. Design of the packaging can impact the perception of customers about how sustainable it is, and if this is something they value (Steenis et al. 2017). Sensory aspects can be evoked by designed packaging and create a hedonic experience (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). If a package is able to create a memorable and positive customer experience, the loyalty and satisfaction towards a brand can increase (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello 2009). The conceptual framework shows different aspects within the field of packaging that can create value that can enhance the customer experience. In the analyse and empirical chapter the authors will compare the conceptual framework with the empirical findings.

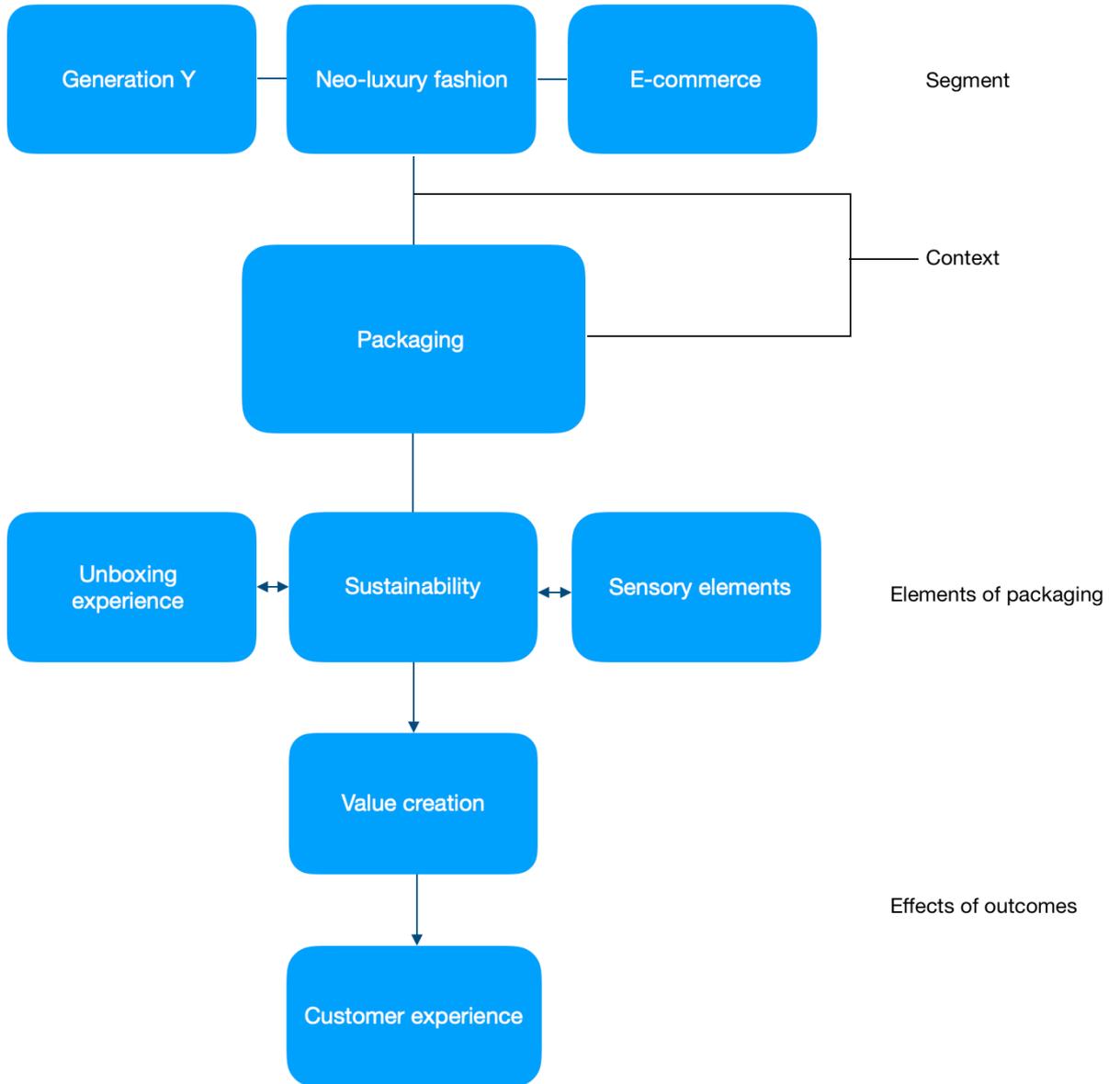


Figure 2, *Description of conceptual framework.*



3 Research methods

This chapter is including descriptions about the methods that are used to conduct the empirical findings and theoretical research. Method approach, research method, type of data, quality of research, and ethical and sustainability considerations are explained in detail to give a credible content.

3.1 Research approach

3.1.1 Deductive approach

To attain results of research, Bryman & Bell (2011) is proposing to use research strategies. They are describing two approaches; deductive and inductive. An inductive approach is theory from the outcome of research that generalizes conclusions from an observation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The other approach is deductive approach and is used in this thesis. The deductive approach is including different steps that start with theory, testing if the theories are relevant and include collecting information about the relevant topic (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Further, inducing hypotheses based on the theory that is collected and the last step is to either confirm or reject the hypothesis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this thesis, there is no hypothesis, instead, the deductive approach is formed with research questions.

Figure (3) is showing the deductive approach that the authors have chosen to use. A reason for this is that the relationship between theory and research is represented by a deductive approach which is the most common view (Bryman & Bell, 2011). When a set of data has been collected and reflected, the researchers can collect more additional data to establish conditions regarding if the theory will maintain. Bryman & Bell (2011) is mentioning that deductive approach can sometimes deliver unexpected findings. An inductive approach is the research outcome to draw generalizable inferences from observation and the inductive is more common to qualitative research and deductive within quantitative, but not solely (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Although, the approach in this thesis will be a deductive approach even that the research method will be qualitative. Figure (3) is illustrating the deductive approach that the authors have applied.

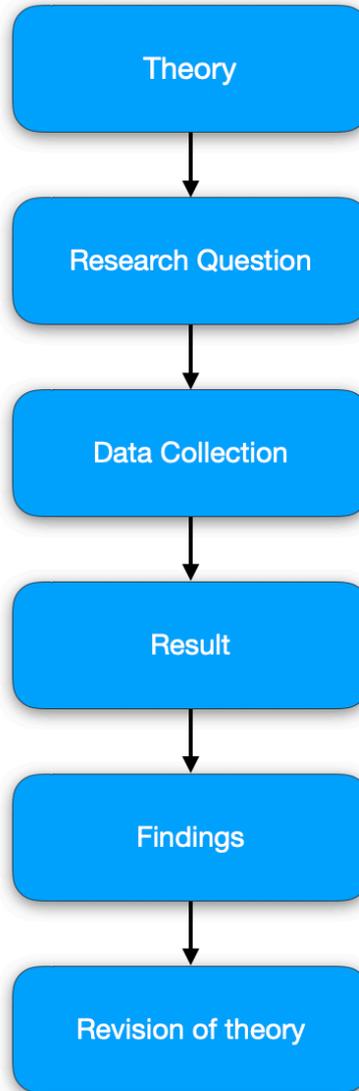


Figure 3. Inspired by; Figure 1, *The process of deduction* (Bryman & Bell, 2011, P.11)

3.1.2 Ontological and epistemological

Within ontological position the term constructionism claims that social phenomena and the meaning of it are achieved by social actors, meaning that the social phenomena and the categories within it are produced through social interaction (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this thesis, ontological and constructionism is relevant, and the term is including researchers' reports of constructions in the social world. Meaning, the authors of this thesis present a version of social reality that is specific instead of one that could be definitive (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Epistemological issues are including what is viewed as knowledge that is appropriate for the social world (Bryman & Bell,



2011). The epistemological issue involves what is or should be viewed as knowledge in a discipline that is acceptable and if the social world should and can be studied to the principles, procedures, and ethos that are the same as natural sciences. Within epistemological positions, there is a term, positivism, and it speaks for application of the methods with natural sciences that study social reality and beyond (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This thesis is connected with the ontological view to the social reality within the approaches about the investigation in the interviews to find clear patterns that brands can develop.

3.1.3 Practical approach

The objective of this thesis is to understand the value designed packaging can have on Generation Y when purchasing neo-luxury fashion online. Qualitative research with interviews is the method that was applied to see if the outcome of the respondents' answers is similar or different compared to the collected research. Research questions have changed during the process due to the peer-reviewed articles and have been narrowed down since the subject is wide. It was helpful to get a deeper understanding of the research that was known and what areas needed to be more investigated. After determining the research questions, it was clearer to find relevant articles but still a challenge. Since the research that has been collected was limited, the literature and the articles that were chosen have contributed to a wider and deeper understanding of the main subject. After much time spent on finding relevant research on the main subject the outcome of the collected research was relevant and of meaning. Furthermore, the use of a deductive approach and qualitative research has contributed to an understanding of the value designed packaging have to customers.

3.2 Research methods

There are two different types of research methods, qualitative research and quantitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In qualitative research the approach tends to be less structured compared to quantitative research. Quantitative research is structured to measure the reliability and validity of the concept (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Empirical findings in this thesis are conducted with a qualitative method. Interviews are the most common concept in societal science research since it is easy to understand and learn how individuals will respond regarding different questions (Blomkvist, Hallin & Lindell, 2018). Interviews have the possibility to deliver unexpected findings, which can be an important aspect of qualitative research. A qualitative method with interviews has been used in this thesis since it is easier to develop and get a clearer understanding about a phenomenon (Blomkvist, Hallin & Lindell, 2018).



3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews vary due to the researchers' strategy. There are two different ways to implement interviews; unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Unstructured interviews can be seen as an ordinary conversation. Authors during the interviews do not have any script to follow and instead implementing the interview by feeling and answers from the respondents (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In semi-structured interviews there is a list of questions made by the researcher to guide through the interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Questions may not follow the order correctly of the question guide since the answers can already be answered in another question. The authors include other questions if other interesting areas were discussed and interviews are flexible in both of these cases (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Interviews in this thesis are semi-structured since the questions were determined before and follow a list of main questions that were asked to cover the overall purpose of the thesis (See appendix 2). The interview questions have differed from the guide that has been formed. The authors decided if there were any additional questions to ask or if the respondents had any further questions or comments to fill in. Authors want informative and detailed answers (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In qualitative research the answers are interpreted and perceptive of the researcher.

3.2.2 Operationalisation

When the literature review and conceptual framework of this thesis were established, the formation of an interview guide with interview questions was conducted based on the conceptual framework. The authors' research questions worked as support to ensure that important topics were covered. Concepts in the operationalization schedule are simplified to clarify the relation between the conceptual framework and the interview questions. Table (1) provides a description of the interview questions in this thesis (See appendix 1).

With semi-structured interviews the authors can conduct richer and more detailed answers (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Follow-up questions that were non-scripted were asked by the researcher, following the format of semi-structured interviews. Further, the interview guide's purpose is to collect in-depth information about the concepts.

Interviews were conducted and questions were compiled in Swedish and then later translated into English. This was done due to that the authors and respondents are Swedish and to facilitate the conversations and avoid struggling with language barriers. The authors considered the possibility of errors when translating.



The interview questions are based on theory and are structured by using the conceptual framework. After the interviews were implemented, they were compiled and transcribed to facilitate the analysis of the data. To begin with, each question was analysed to find contexts between the respondents' answers. Some questions were easier to find clear connections than others. Further, the questions were analysed between each other to find patterns among the answers from the respondents. After the compiling of the findings, the answers were analysed in connection with the theory that was previously collected to see connections or disjoint between the theory and the findings. The analysed facilitated to answer the research questions in the conclusion.

3.2.3 Sample

Respondents in the interviews are people within Generation Y that have purchased neo-luxury fashion in an online context. The sample of the respondents is selected from the author's acquaintance. Since the authors needed to know if the respondents have purchased neo-luxury fashion and were within Generation Y, this approach was suitable. Respondents are selected with a convenience sampling approach, meaning that the respondents were available because of the accessibility (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Advantages with the sample of the respondent are that they are easy to contact, and the conversation was comfortable. Disadvantages with the convenience sample was that the authors already had an existing relationship with the respondents which can create angular answers. With findings from a convenience sampling it is not possible to generalize the findings, but it can indicate and help further research (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Interviews have been performed with one respondent at the time with the total amount of 30 respondents. The meaning of this was to gain a deeper and more honest understanding of what respondents answered (Bryman and Bell, 2011). There were as many men as women that were interviewed to give a more fair result for the research. However, the age range of the respondents can give a misleading result of Generation Y due to most of the respondents are born in the nineties. This outcome emerged because of the convenience sample selection process was conducted.

3.2.4 Interview design

Before conducting the interviews, a test interview was completed with a test respondent to investigate if the questions were misunderstood and if the information the authors were seeking was achieved. By conducting a test interview, error sources can be avoided (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The interview questions were not misunderstood, and the finding of the information was good for the research so the



interview guide could be used to the planned interviews. Interviews started with a presentation of the authors and the purpose of the study. This was conducted to give the respondents content of this study (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The average length of the interviews was between 20-25 minutes. Interviews have been online through video calls due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the situation the interviews could not be done face-to-face with the respondents. One of the advantages of video calls is the cost since it is cheaper to implement qualitative interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Through video calls, authors could read the respondents' body language and more clearly interpret the answers and the respondent's opinions (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

3.2.5 Data processing

Interviews have been recorded in order to more easily interpret the answers of the respondents and later on be able to rewind and listen to the answers. The respondents were asked if the interview could be recorded and the respondents gave their approval. The reason for this was to avoid misinterpretations, sources of error, and having the opportunity to transcribe the answers later (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The interviews were recorded by using an app, voice memos, during the conversation. During the interviews, comments were made to clarify the perception of the interview. The respondents were informed that the interview would be anonymous to give the respondents the opportunity to speak openly about the specific topics.

When the interviews were completed, the authors compiled the findings that were conducted. The material of the interviews was listened to and then written down verbatim, so the materials did not be misinterpreted. The interviews were conducted in Swedish to facilitate the participants in the investigation as all respondents have Swedish as mother tongue. Later on, the interviews needed to be translated into English. It is important to take various factors into consideration when the authors translated the answers. When translating into a new language, difficulties may emerge from grammatical structures that may be difficult to translate (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Because of this, the authors are very careful in the translation process.

The authors have implemented a practical approach to find patterns among the respondents' answers and then find connections or variances between the interviews and the theory that are written in the literature review. During the interview process, the authors could interpret patterns of how the respondents answered some of the interview questions. Some questions achieved saturated after a few interviews, such as buying behaviour and perception of brands since the answers were similar. While some



questions did not reach saturation after all 30 interviews since the answers did not resemble each other.

This table gives an overview of the respondents who participated in the research. Since the investigation is anonymous, only age and gender are presented in the table.

Respondents	Born	Gender
Respondent 1	1994	Female
Respondent 2	1993	Female
Respondent 3	1992	Male
Respondent 4	1993	Male
Respondent 5	1991	Male
Respondent 6	1994	Male
Respondent 7	1993	Male
Respondent 8	1990	Female
Respondent 9	1993	Male
Respondent 10	1992	Male
Respondent 11	1991	Male
Respondent 12	1989	Female
Respondent 13	1992	Female
Respondent 14	1985	Male
Respondent 15	1992	Male
Respondent 16	1992	Female
Respondent 17	1992	Male
Respondent 18	1992	Male
Respondent 19	1994	Female
Respondent 20	1994	Female
Respondent 21	1991	Female
Respondent 22	1992	Female
Respondent 23	1990	Male
Respondent 24	1994	Female
Respondent 25	1994	Female
Respondent 26	1994	Female
Respondent 27	1993	Male
Respondent 28	1981	Female
Respondent 29	1987	Female
Respondent 30	1992	Male



3.3 Types of data

3.3.1 Primary data

Data can be collected either from primary or secondary sources (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Primary data is collected through data that is obtained with a connection to the current study of this thesis and the purpose. The data is collected from qualitative research and designed from the interviews. The data is recently collected and up to date to be as knowledgeable as possible. The purpose of the interviews is to get a deeper understanding of the respondent who has experience designed packaging and if it has created value. The choice of semi-structured interviews is because the respondents can answer independent and express their experiences and perceptions, which will give the authors primary data (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.3.2 Secondary sources

Secondary sources are raw data collected from previous research to apply to the purpose of this thesis (Kumar, 2018). This contains transcripts from previous research or data from companies or institutions that can be of importance to answering the research questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Secondary sources were used to summarize topics in the literature review and to ensure that the information is valid. The results from previous research have guided the authors to gain experience and the right knowledge in the areas of designed packaging, customer experience, e-commerce development, sensory, unboxing experience, Generation Y, neo luxury consumers, and sustainability. In order to be able to deliver and mediate the right information (Bryman & Bell, 2017). In this thesis, to find academic journal articles the authors used search engines, “One Search” and “Google Scholar”. The literature review is used to summarize and locate the studies of the topics and was including opinions and articles with a providing and relevant framework. The main articles that are collected are from the last decade, but some are elderly but all of them are peer-reviewed in the literature review.

3.4 Quality of research

3.4.1 Validity

Validity is defined as “*the degree to which the researcher has measured what he has set out to measure.*” (Kumar, 2014, p.213). Validity can be referred to suitability to every step in the research process. The ability of validity is to measure the data that it



is designed to measure since it is associated with the procedure of measurement (Kumar, 2014). Bryman & Bell (2011) state that validity is in many ways the most important criterion of research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). There are main types of validity that are typically distinguished; measurement validity, internal validity, external validity, and ecological validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Measurement validity applies primarily to quantitative research and to the search for measures of social scientific concepts. Some writers argue that these concepts of validity only apply in quantitative research, while some argue have sought to apply them in the practice of qualitative research. With a slight change of the sense in the terms writers have applied the concepts to qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) argue that good-quality research is judged against the criteria of reliability and validity, however, these concepts are inappropriate to qualitative research and make it difficult for the researcher to demonstrate that their research is of high quality (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Further, there are some researchers that continue to use the concepts of reliability and validity to qualitative research, who believes that using these concepts is important to be able to demonstrate the quality of the research. While there are those who developed parallel versions of the concepts. Dependability for reliability, credibility for internal validity, and transferability for external validity (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

When designing the research, a key concern is to be familiar with the criteria that are used when assessing the research project. This helps to decide how the approach can be described and discussed with the quality of the research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). In this thesis the quality criteria that the authors discuss and consider are; dependability, credibility, transferability, and authenticity criteria. Dependability means in this context, that the authors have used a similar process during the interviews to produce a reliable and dependent account of the research focus (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Credibility criteria address the issue of ensuring that the representations of the participants' socially constructed realities are in correlation to what was intended (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The authors of this thesis addressed credibility by performing a test-interview in order to produce clear questions for the respondents. During the interviews the researcher has asked complimented questions in order to ensure the answers are correctly interpreted by the researcher. Transferability is to provide a full description of the research questions, design, findings, and interpretations so that the reader has the opportunity to judge the transferability within another setting in which the reader is interested in research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The authors have been honest and fair with the process of this research. Authenticity criteria are not conceived as a parallel but are specifically designed for the nature of constructivist/interpretive research. This



criterion is designed to promote fairness by representing all views in the research, to raise awareness and general learning (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Authenticity criteria have been considered when all opinions are represented in the empirical findings, and the authors have not been selected.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Bryman & Bell (2011) is mentioning some different principles to consider and define the importance of ethical consideration. Ethical issues will occur when a study is involving humans and the researchers of the study should understand the important factors of the ethical principles (Bryman & Bell, 2011). There are four different parts that Bryman & Bell (2011) is dividing the ethical behaviours into and the four principles are somewhat overlapping. The first one is harm to participants that can be harmful to self-esteem, physical harm, and stress (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This is clarified as the researchers must take responsibility for taking precautions, so the respondents are not harmed. The second one is, lack of informed consent and is a principle that means that the participant should receive enough information about the subjects so he or she can make a decision about participating or not (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The third one is if there is an invasion of privacy and is about the right each participant has and the researchers should respect this and not intrude on the privacy and have respect for the values each individual have (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The last one is if there is any deception involved and is when researchers present their research different from what it is. It can be that the researchers want to limit the participants understanding of the research, so the respondents answer the questions in a more natural way (Bryman & Bell, 2011). According to Vetenskapsrådet (2002) there is a basic individual protection requirement and it is a clear starting point for ethical considerations for research. These requirements can be specified into four main requirements; the information requirement, the consent requirement, the confidentiality requirement, and the use requirement (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). It is important for the authors of this thesis to follow these ethical considerations.

Arrangement of the interviews was considered with an ethical aspect and was including a structured form with questions connected to the main topic and the research questions. To present an ethical approach as possible for the respondents the following step has been included;

- Offer the respondent anonymity
- The collected data from the interviews will be confidentially and truthful
- The respondent has been offered access to the summarized data if requested
- There have been mutual respect and fairness



This thesis is written with connection to Linnæus University, Kalmar, and was not funded by any organization or company and the research that was received is not fraudulent data. Fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism is not a part of this thesis. The research is written with integrity and the presentations are honest. There are not any deceptive practices due to articles, theories and discussions.

3.6 Sustainability considerations

Sustainability is a part of this thesis but is not one of the main topics. It is included since it is a big part of packaging and what material the package is made of and how it is delivered. This thesis is written digitally, and the peer review articles were collected online, there is literature that is used but nothing is printed on paper. This thesis aimed to conduct the qualitative interviews and they were implemented later on in the process. Interviews were performed to the participant through video calls. Interviews were supposed to be performed in a face to face concept to receive more personal contact with the respondent. To perform this interaction the researchers were supposed to travel, and transportation was expected to be by train since it is the most sustainable way of choice. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this was not possible, and the interviews instead took place through video calls. However, the situation is more advantageous from a sustainability perspective. It is important for us to follow these ethical and sustainable considerations in the whole process.



4 Empirical findings & Analysis

This chapter presents the empirical findings from the interviews together with analysis of those findings based on the theoretical framework. This chapter has been disposed of a manner that follows the conceptual framework. There is no standard for qualitative documentation which makes reporting a complicated phase (Backman, 2016). In this chapter, empirical reporting and analysis have been implemented to avoid repetition.

4.1 E-commerce behavior

4.1.1 Online behavior among Generation Y

It is obvious that Generation Y is purchasing a lot online from e-commerce. The respondents find it easier and more convenient to purchase online because they can do it when it suits them. The respondents value online purchasing to find expensive items to a more appealing price, because they offer products at a lower price more frequently. It is common to have seen a product in a store but instead orders it online due to the price difference. The respondents might have tested the product in offline stores and know that it fits them. One advantage the respondents have mentioned when shopping in stores is, before purchasing products, they can try it and feel the quality.

Theory indicates that physical stores have decreased, and customers spend less time shopping offline, which match the respondents answer that they purchase a lot online (Blázquez, 2014). Theory shows that online concepts make it difficult to touch and engage the physical product, which has made the hedonic aspect an important key in online purchasing (Blázquez, 2014). The fashion industry has been slower than other areas to implement their brands to the online market. It is difficult to transfer the in-store feeling to an online concept. However, to technology development, companies have been able to improve the shopping experience online (Blázquez, 2014). This can be seen in two different ways; the respondents find an advantage to purchase in physical stores because they can see and feel the product. On the other hand, findings indicate, that the respondents are purchasing online which can be seen as a successful result for e-commerce. Theory indicates that Generation Y has been involved in the development of technology, which makes them accustomed to using technology. The generation is recognized as knowledgeable in technology and they have a significant role for the future online retailer's (Valentine & Powers, 2013). This can be a connection why the respondents purchase a lot online. Theory says that interactive online shopping can develop and improve customer purchase behaviour and create value, which has been developed due to technology (Chen & Hung, 2015).



4.1.2 Neo-luxury brands compared to resellers

When customers order online, they can either shop directly from the brand or from a reseller. There is a large variation where the respondents order from when they are purchasing online. It varies in the respondents' perception if they order from a reseller compared to directly from the brand. Theory indicates that brands are competing for market shares online since customers can purchase the same brand at several different websites (Tambo & Hansen, 2012). This is consistent with the findings that are collected. The reason where the respondents purchase from is the price and it is common for them to search to find the lowest price. The respondents think it is cheapest from a reseller because they often have different promotions or discount codes to offer. While some believe it is cheaper directly from the brand because they do not need any intermediaries in the sales chain. The theory believes that Generation Y is more committed and passionate about brands they like which gives them a more significant value for that brand. Because of this, the theory means that Generation Y is not price-conscious because they instead expect value for money (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). This is not consistent with the findings as price is the most important aspect when the respondents purchase online. Since the respondents search for the lowest price and believe that resellers can offer it on a larger scale, the respondents are purchasing from a reseller to a greater extent.

Range of goods is another aspect of where the respondents order their items. Range proves to be better at resellers where the respondents can purchase from different brands at the same time. The respondents are valuing this aspect because it facilitates their shopping experience. However, findings indicate that the respondents believe that it is overwhelming to purchase at resellers because it is more difficult to make decisions and to find the right products. The respondents believe that they do not always have alternatives to resellers because it is only the brand that is offering the product. This means that the respondents are shopping directly from brands because of the circumstances. Findings indicate that delivery time is one reason why the respondents purchase either from a reseller or directly from the brand. One opinion is that the delivery time is faster from resellers and easier returns. However, it is considered safer to order a more luxurious item directly from the brand. Theory suggests that Generation Y is disloyal against brands that are consistent with the results of the findings (Lazarevic, 2011). Findings indicate that respondents purchase where it is the lowest price, best selection, or best shipping, which indicates that the respondents are disloyal to a specific brand.

The respondents' experience that they receive more value for what they pay for directly from the brand. Findings indicate that resellers are not caring about their



customers compared to original brands that value and show loyalty to their customers more. They perceive that packaging is more exclusive and has better quality directly from the brand.

“It is of value to order directly from the brand when shopping gifts online to receive a better package to give away. It is more quality and luxurious within the packaging directly from brands compared to resellers” (Respondent 19, 2020).

Expectations of customers are higher today due to digital developments, this has resulted in that customers are more aware and have a greater opportunity to seek information (Blázquez, 2014). Findings indicate that price, range of products, and shipping are important aspects when shopping online. This is linked to the theory, which means that the ability to search for information online is better, which has made customers more aware.

4.1.3 Packaging experiences between neo-luxury brands and resellers

The respondents have experienced differences with packaging of their orders from resellers compared to directly from the brand. From resellers, the respondents feel that they receive the reseller’s packaging with the reseller’s logotype. Consequently, the packaging from a reseller does not belong to the brand the customer has ordered. Findings indicate that the material from resellers’ packaging is largely plastic, which does not give a sense of quality or luxury. The respondents indicate that when they receive a plastic package, they are not careful when they open it. The respondents perceived the resellers’ packaging as boring and as an advertising box, which gives them a cheap feeling. Findings signify, that resellers are not valuing customers' experience in terms of their packaging.

The respondents feel that they receive better and more thoughtful packaging when ordering directly from the brand. Findings indicate that the respondents receive their order to a greater extent in a carton and not in a plastic bag, which is experienced more exclusive. Packaging perceives as better quality and the packaging is of more value. It can be the package design where they can open the carton with a silk ribbon, a personal letter within the package, or a give away from the brand. The respondents feel that the packaging is more value-adding directly from the brand, as they feel more special as a customer. Theory suggests that there are several different options of retailers for customers when shopping online, which makes it important for companies to build long-term relationships to create loyalty (Chang & Wang 2011). The respondents believe that purchasing directly from the brand creates more value and a feeling of



stronger loyalty. However, the theory shows that Generation Y is disloyal to brands, which differs from the above analysis.

Respondent 6 (2020) mentioned that the brand John Hendricks, invests significantly more on packaging than for example the reseller Boozt. The respondent receives an appreciation letter, a give-away in the form of chocolate pieces from John Hendricks. This gives the respondent more value of the packaging experience and it feels more luxurious (Respondent 6, 2020). When a brand makes something personal within the packaging, it creates a feeling that the customer is important for the brand. Theory indicates that Generation Y uses brands and products as an extension of themselves, which is seen as a symbolic way of creating self-identity (Lazarevic, 2011). The respondents purchase from neo-luxury brands, which can be seen as a high involvement decision as they spend more money. In a high involvement decision, Generation Y engages, which can result in that the respondents valuing to purchase directly from the brand when ordering a more expensive item. The respondents believe that shopping directly from the brand provides more value and a better experience compared to resellers.

Theory shows that when it comes to a high-involvement decision, Generation Y tends to engage more compassion, energy, and emotions compared to a low-involvement decision (Parment, 2013). This may explain why the respondents choose to purchase directly from the brand as they feel they have more exclusive packaging. With good packaging, the overall experience is enhanced and the respondents are more involved in the buying decision and valuing the emotions.

4.2 Packaging

4.2.1 Aspects of good packaging

Packaging can have several different aspects that are of value for customers, there are some clear patterns among the respondents but there are also some different values and aspects that are of weight to highlight. The most common one is the feeling of luxury and findings signify that feeling of luxury is connecting with the colours white, black and grey on the package. Although, findings indicate that the respondents prefer earthy colours and connect it with the feeling of luxury. Logo and patterns on packages can contribute to a feeling of luxury, and the most common colours are gold and silver. The theory is suggesting that every service exchange can lead to customer experience, no matter what nature or form is (Schmitt, Brakus and Zarantonello, 2015). Total customer experience is connected with product experience, communication experience, brand experience and consumption experience (Krishna, Cian &



Aydinoğlu, 2017). Findings indicate that luxury is of value and when the packaging is reflecting the brand, there is a clear connection between the four experiences mentioned above (Krishna, Cian & Aydinoğlu, 2017). *“A good package is of quality and should feel luxurious, it should reflect the product that you have ordered”* (Respondent 30, 2020).

The main purpose of a package is to protect the product that is inside. Elements that depends to maintain product quality is within several functionalities; store, market differentiation, provide product loses and facilitate transportation (Nordin & Selke, 2010). Findings indicate that secondary packaging has the responsibility to protect the product and the primary packaging can create value. *“Shipping carton is the one to protect the product during the shipping and the package inside this the one with value”* (Respondent 2, 2020). Findings indicate that some brands use one package and the designed package becomes the package of value in both the shipping process and the one that protects the product. This strategy makes the designed package more exposed to damage during the shipping process.

The respondents are more satisfied if they receive a letter with a note, thank for your purchase, in other words, when it creates a feeling that it is personalized, and they feel appreciated. Packaging has become a part in the overall experience and been focusing to have a characteristic by providing fascination, emotions and satisfaction (Tanderup, Reunanen & Kraus, 2019). This is similar to what the findings indicate, that packaging can create a better or worse experience. However, the theory is mentioning that the material of a package is an attractive factor to the purchase decision (Mohammed et al. 2018). Although, it is not what the findings indicate. This can be because the findings are from an online perspective and the respondents do not know how the packaging will appear when they purchase online unless they have ordered from the brand before.

The respondents' value when they can open and close the package several times without the package getting jaded. A reason for this can be that they are going to save the package for decoration, storage, collecting or giving it away as a gift. By receiving extra gifts in the package as example sushi sticks, an extra bag for storage with the company's logo on it, candy or discount for the next purchase, is of value. *“When the brand walks the extra mile, I feel appreciated and that they care about their customers”* (Respondent 27, 2020).

There are some aspects that are creating extra value for the respondents, instead of using tape there can be a sticker and instead of paper or plastic, the product can be wrapped in tissue paper. The development of packaging is changing and improving constantly (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016). Packaging has different characteristics,



but the form can affect perceptions, it can make the first impression last and it can be a competitive advantage since it is more than just a logistic function (Joutsela, Latvala, Roto, 2016; Rundh, 2013). The package should reflect the product that is inside, and the package is like a shell for the product which creates the expectations when you receive it even though they know what is inside.

“I know what I purchased, and I know how it will look like, but I don’t know how it feels or how I will react when I see it. A package can contribute to a better experience, but it can also make the experience worse” (Respondent 7, 2020).

This is an example of how the designed package can create extra satisfaction and experience for the customers since they know the product, but they might not know how the package will look like. Findings indicate that the most common aspects a package should have are the feeling of luxury, protecting the product, sustainable matters, personalized, functional and exceed the expectations.

4.2.2 Aspects of bad packaging

Bad packaging can be perceived differently among the respondents and the material, design, and protecting the product are the most common aspects mentioned. Findings indicate that bad packaging is plastic bags. One reason for this is the sustainability issue and how it affects the environment in a negative way. Findings indicate that plastic bags reduce the feeling of luxury and are the most common delivery material for brands to use.

When both primary and secondary packaging consists of plastic, it creates a feeling of cheapness and brands are not taking responsibility for the environment. Plastic bags make it more difficult for customers to return the product because they need to use a lot of tapes to close it or they cannot reuse the plastic bags at all. However, findings indicate that plastic bags are flat and light which is of value since it is easy to carry.

If the product is delivered with a carton the expectations are higher as mentioned before, however, there are some negative aspects with cartons. If the size of the carton is too big in relation to the product inside, it creates a feeling of unnecessary material and ungainly to carry. Findings indicate that inside of the carton, some brands are using excessive plastic or carton to fill out space, which is annoying and unnecessary. The balance between profitability and sustainability is a fundamental issue for brands and is affected by marketing and packaging (Chen, Hung, Wang, Huang & Liao, 2017). The respondent suggests, making the carton smaller will benefit the process to bring home, less damage to the environment, and will reduce the feeling of cheapness.



Findings show the importance that the carton should be durable and not break when opening it. Furthermore, when they are opening the package it should be in suitable size to the product and the product should not be upside down. If the product has changed place in the package during the delivery, the thoughts about that the product is damaged is higher.

“When I purchased a shirt, the shipping package was a plastic bag and the primary package was also in plastic. When the product arrived, the shirt was so rumpled that I had to iron it before testing” (Respondent 4, 2020).

This created a negative experience, the respondent did not keep the product and it was returned to the company in the plastic bag with a lot of tape and disappointment. Findings indicate that the respondents receive what they pay for. When the respondents purchasing a lower-price product, they know they might use it several times and then throw it away (fast fashion) and probably receive it in a cheap plastic bag with none personal connection or extra value. Instead, when purchasing from a neo-luxury brand, the expectations are higher, on the product itself and the package. Findings indicate that the expectations of the package are higher when they are paying more for a product. Design aspects of packaging, such as colours, material, and patterns reflect the product inside. Findings indicate that the standard brown shipping package is a common denominator and is not a preferred package. One of the least appreciated packages is the brown packaged with a plastic bag inside of it since it creates a cheap and boring feeling.

Findings indicate that aspects that affect a negative experience of package can be if the package not reflect the product, is damaged and that each individual has different characteristics about what design they like and different values. Findings signify the importance of the lid of the package and the feeling of effort to open the package creates a feeling of interest and luxury.

4.3 Elements of packaging

4.3.1 Unboxing experience videos

The respondents refer to the phenomena unboxing experience, someone that is recording a video of themselves opening a package or a box. Theory mentions the phenomena as videos that review the packaging of the product and focus on the process of unboxing packages (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). Findings indicate that the respondents are familiar with unboxing experience videos and believed that these videos make them more eager to purchase. *“They are creating an experience, and this makes me more willing to shop, I get interested”* (Respondent 3, 2020).



Findings indicate that the respondents are affected by these videos. It strengthens the perception that the brand is luxurious and the respondents' attitudes towards brands get more positive. Brands that are successful with their packaging in these videos is caring about the experience and have put effort and thought into these videos, *"If I am about to order from a new company, I watch these videos to see if the products are handled with care"* (Respondent 23, 2020). Theory suggests that visual elements at the designed package help create a brand image and product personality (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). The respondents are mentioning this aspect, that the perception of the brand is affected by these videos. Further, the theory argues that customers' awareness is affected, and these videos have the opportunity to communicate about the products and brand experience (Ilich & Hardey, 2020).

The respondents are affected unconsciously by these videos and form their perception about the brand. However, findings indicate that respondents believe they are not affected at all, even though they are exposed to these videos, and respondents watch the videos for entertainment. The respondents are not actively seeking out unboxing videos but are exposed to them through social channels. Social media that is mentioned is YouTube and Instagram. The respondents have been exposed to these videos but did not know that the phenomena were called unboxing experience. Findings indicate that respondents have watched information videos about the product, where these videos were showing the packaging as well. Theory shows that Generation Y is putting more energy and effort into a high-involvement decision and watching these videos is a way for them to get information (Lazarevic, 2011). The Digital revolution has made expectations from customers higher due to the possibility to collect information and be more aware (Blázquez, 2014).

The respondents consider these videos as a part of the shopping experience. Package with many layers, where it takes time to get to the product is more appealing. *"When there are boxes, tissue paper, stickers so that there is more than one layer of the package to reach the product, triggers me"* (Respondent 25, 2020). Theory indicates that unboxing videos can provide a positive emotional experience (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). This corresponds with the respondent's answers that they are enjoying these videos and see it as a part of their shopping experience. The respondents are mentioning that all these "extra" values that companies are providing are affecting and perhaps younger generations that are following Influencers is extra exposed. The respondents argue that it is a marketing tool for companies and this trend is highlighting how important it is to package the products in an appealing way.

The respondents have one or more times shared with friends that they were satisfied with the packaging they received, by telling friends, sending a photo or video of the



package through their social media channels. Findings indicate that respondents do not share this information with a big scale of people, but to close friends and family. The respondents mentioned that they share their experience when their expectations are exceeded or something unexpected was brought along within the package. Theory shows the interaction between customers to customers can be profitable for firms and social media gives more opportunity for more interaction between customers (Ilich & Hardey, 2020). Analyzing the answers from respondents, it is clear that they share their experience of packaging with friends using social media.

Findings indicate that the respondents keep the package or free gifts in their home where friends can see them, and it is a way to share the brand. The respondents see the packaging as an indoor decor or a way to store the product when not using them. Findings signify some products come within a bag that has the brand logo on it and can, later on, be used by the customer. Respondent 27 (2020) argues that it is a female thing to save the packaging and telling their friends about it. Theory suggests that packaging can be a status symbol for customers to collect or to encourage one's identity. Packaging can be a two-way communication tool for the customer (Ilich & Hardey, 2020). The respondents are using a bag with a logo and it can be concordant with the theory that packaging can be a status symbol and confirm one's identity. The theory further mentioned that Generation Y is aware of the trendy social images and how a brand can enhance the positive self-image (Lazarevic, 2011).

4.3.2 Sustainable aspects of packaging

Sustainability is becoming an important question and is pressuring brands to take responsibility (Nording & Selke, 2010). Therefore, more brands are considering sustainability as an important aspect and the respondents are valuing it. Nordin & Selke (2010) is mentioning that companies should implement strategies that have minimal damage to the environment. Sustainability is an important and common question regarding packaging. Findings indicate that the respondents appreciate when brands take responsibility for the environment and use materials that can be recycled, ease of use if they are returning and when the package is not excessive. However, findings indicate that sustainability is not a crucial factor when purchasing online. Steenis et al. (2017) mention that the sustainability concept is increasing among customers but a challenge to get customers to choose a sustainable package.

“I can understand if a brand is using a plastic bag instead of a carton packaging, for example, when I have ordered a t-shirt. If the t-shirt is supposed to be in a carton it will probably be a lot of other materials inside to keep it “tight”, while the brand



instead can use a plastic bag that is cheaper and an easy solution” (Respondent 4, 2020).

Findings indicate when there is excess material than required inside the package it is perceived unsustainable. Chen et al. (2017) mentioned that excessive packaging can affect brands in a negative way and therefore they should avoid this. Respondents that have received an inappropriate amount of plastic or carton is probably throwing this away and the carton as well. It is possible for designers to evoke emotions through the packaging design and of importance to have as little impact on the environment as possible (Kim, Self & Bae, 2018). Findings signify, that it is of value when the package can be used again as accessories, storage, and giving it away or recycle it. Brands can send a notification with suggestions on how the package can be used again. Brands are developing sustainable matters and it has become a priority. Steenis et al. (2017) are mentioning that customers’ knowledge about sustainable packaging is limited since customers’ beliefs and associations form their judgments.

“The brand Asket that is selling clothes online, you can see how much emissions the product cause in each step during the process, including delivery, where the package is included” (Respondent 27, 2020).

To see in actual numbers what affects the product has on the environment creates awareness and they can compare the products. Findings indicate that the package is a small part of the process, instead, it is interested in the overall process, such as manufacturing. Findings indicate that packaging with a text note “the package is 100% recycled material” enhances the value. The respondents prefer carton compared to plastic packaging. A reasonable size in relation to the product inside and not excessive material appear more sustainable.

“I prefer to purchase from a brand that has a sustainable package rather than a brand that does not. I prefer sustainability rather than a good-looking package” (Respondent 22, 2020).

4.3.3 Senses affect expectations on products

Each individual has different expectations of how packaging can affect their perception of a product. The respondents experience colours, material, and design differently. The respondents expect better packaging when they are purchasing neo-luxury compared to fast fashion products. The packaging is an aspect of multisensory customer experience and can influence the comprehension of value, attention, consumption, and perception of product functionality (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoglu, 2017). Findings indicate that when the respondents are purchasing online, it is not



possible to touch and feel the product. Packaging can determine the expectations of the quality of the product. Findings indicate that the respondents understand that this is a challenge for the brands, and it is a fine line since each individual has different expectations and value recognitions.

“I believe that I get more impressed by good packaging and more expectant of the product. When I order online, I cannot touch the product and if it comes in a packaging (carton) instead of a plastic bag, it creates a better experience” (Respondent 1, 2020).

Findings signify when paying more for a product the expectations are higher compared to when paying less. If the brand is able to surpass their expectations with a designed package, the value and the overall experience is positive. According to, Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello (2009) it is important for brands to create a positive experience that the customers are remembering which can affect the customers’ loyalty and satisfaction. Findings and this theory are corresponding if the value of the packaging is exceeding expectations. When they are purchasing neo-luxury, they are expecting a better quality of the package. Findings indicate that if the package does not match the product inside, the respondents can feel fooled since they can judge the inside based on the outside.

“Packaging plays a big role in the product since I cannot feel and touch the product before I receive it, the packaging will be a crucial factor in how I will experience the quality. If the packaging reflects a feeling of luxury, the product and the material will also feel the same, but it is important that the package and the product match otherwise I will have a bad experience” (Respondent 15, 2020).

4.4 Customers satisfaction

4.4.1 Value creation

The respondents were asked if they can see that a package is worth saving, and answers showed that they found value in saving the package. Findings indicate that the package was worth saving if it fulfills a purpose. The respondents save the packaging in case they want to resell the product and the original package can enhance the value. Findings indicate that a mix of function and the luxurious feeling make respondents save that package. Theory shows that packaging can be an aspect that affects attention, comprehension of value, and the perception of the product functionality (Krishna, Cian & Aydınoglu, 2017).

If the respondents like the design of the package it can be used as interior decor. Shoeboxes are saved by the respondents and these packages can be used to store



products or for gift wrapping. Other packages that are saved by the respondents are packages for sunglasses and watches. Findings indicate that it is hard to throw away a package if it is well designed. The packaging becomes interactive and the sensory aspect makes it more memorable (Ilich & Hardey, 2020).

Findings signify that the respondents save packages because they feel a connection to the brand or if their expectations had been surpassed. Respondent 30 (2020) argues that females are saving the packages to a greater extent than males, due to the sentimental value the package has. Respondent 24 (2020) wants to identify with the brand and brag about the purchase from the brand. Ilich & Hardey (2020) indicate that design packaging is considered a marketing tool for companies and it can be a status symbol or an item to collect.

4.4.2 Expectations between neo-luxury brands and resellers

Customer's expectations of brands can be considered for one's overall experience of ordering online. Expectations and attitudes towards a brand can be affected differently. The respondents feel that they have higher expectations of the direct brand compared to resellers. When purchasing from a neo-luxury brand, they have different expectations depending on where they order. Findings indicate that they expect higher quality directly from the brand. Theory indicates that positive experience of a package is linked to the willingness to pay and customers tend to be willing to pay more if an experience exceeds their expectations (Joutsela, Latvala, Roto, 2016; Kacavenda 2018). The respondents expect more of a brand when they have ordered an expensive item, which can be linked to the willingness to pay more to have a good overall experience.

The respondents' expectations directly from a brand are higher because they usually paid a higher price for the products. Findings indicate that this is because the respondents think it is cheaper to buy from a reseller because they often offer discounts. If they purchased a product at a higher price, the respondents expect good-looking packaging and better quality. Packaging design consisting of colour, pattern, and material subconsciously affects the respondents, which can contribute to a more positive customer experience. Theory suggests that packaging has become more than just a function; it has become a part of the overall experience (Rundh, 2013). A positive experience will be remembered by customers, which can affect customers' loyalty towards a brand (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello 2009). The respondents believe that a good experience creates a relationship with the brand and their attitude and perception will be improved.



Packaging's impact on the customer's experience can be an unconscious aspect of the attitude to the product they purchased or their attitude to the brand. Findings indicate that the respondents expect more when ordering an expensive item directly from the brand, as it feels more exclusive. They expect more directly from the brand and to get an extraordinary packaging, for example, tissue paper or give away to get a more luxurious feeling. Good packaging directly from the brand provides a form of relationship with the customer because companies can not provide personal service when customers purchase online. Theory suggests that customers' decisions from where they purchase may be dependent on customer loyalty, which makes it important for companies to build long-term relationships with customers (Jung, Kim & Kim 2014). This can be seen as a link to the respondents' answers that they feel more loyalty to the brand compared to resellers. However, the theory suggests that Generation Y is disloyal toward brands, which also reflect the respondents' answers to purchase where it is lowers price (Lazarevic, 2011).

From a reseller, the respondents expect less because they usually spend less money on their order and they usually already know what to expect. From a reseller, customers can order goods from different brands at the same time. This can result that the respondents do not reflect on which brand they ordered from and instead of thinking that the order is from that particular reseller. When they have spent less money on an order it becomes more forgiving with poorer packaging. Findings indicate that the packaging has no impact on their expectations, as it is the content and the product that is of value.

When purchasing a more expensive product, the respondents expect a better overall experience, and one aspect in the overall experience is packaging. However, when buying a cheaper product or a product with a discounted price, the focus becomes more on the product itself than the overall experience. Expectations on a package can both contribute to a positive or negative experience. The theory of packaging design means that packaging design can affect customers both positively and negatively (Joutsela, Latvala & Roto, 2016). Packaging can communicate the contents of a package and create a perception of the quality of the product (Rundh, 2013). This can be a link to respondents expect more when they receive a good package. Theory shows that the design of packaging can shape customer expectations, which makes it difficult to create a design that attracts different types of customers due to their own expectations and feelings (Tanderup, Reunanen & Kraus, 2019). The respondents are mentioning that they have different expectations of different brands because of their previous experiences.



4.4.3 Higher expectations with higher price

The respondents have different expectations of packing when purchasing neo-luxury items in contrast to when they are purchasing items from a fast-fashion brand. Findings indicate that the primary reason is that they have spent more money on the neo-luxury product, which has made the respondents expect a greater experience and that packages are a part of what they are paying for.

” I have different expectations, I think that it should reflect the price and the brand. If I have spent more money, then I think that it should show” (Respondent 15, 2020).

Theory shows that neo-luxury customers can make repeated purchases and can be an economically new rich person or a person from the middle class who trade up purchase behaviour. High-status luxury brands are required by neo-luxury customers (Dioko, Canziani, Watchravesringkan, & Yurchisin, 2016). Findings indicate that the respondents are disappointed if neo-luxury products are delivered in a package that feels cheap and mentioned that plastic bags are a bad experience. Theory suggests that worthiness is connected with hedonic experience and neo-luxury products possess higher levels of quality, taste, and aspiration, but are not so expensive as to be out of reach (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019).

The respondents expect better quality if the product has a higher price and packages should be of higher quality. If the respondents purchase something that was cheaper, they are expecting nothing more than the product itself. The respondents expected products from fast-fashion brands to be packaged and delivered in plastic bags, however, this is not an issue, since they are expecting it. When purchasing neo-luxury items, the package should protect the product and be presented in a good way. For example, when buying a shirt, it is important for the respondent that the shirt is not wrinkly when it is delivered. The respondent experienced that a plastic bag did not protect the shirt from this issue (Respondent 4, 2020). Theory shows that customers have a perception of the brand image and if this is not correct, the customer gets confused. Packaging should reflect the brand image and work as a recognition aspect for customers (Kacavenda, 2018). Material is an important aspect that reflects and communicates the customers' perceptions of the quality of the product (Rundh, 2013). Theory suggests that neo-luxury customers seem to prefer luxury brands with visually whisper compared to brands that highlight status (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019).

Findings indicate that the respondents expect an extra gift or product from brands, when they are paying more for a product. When purchasing shoes, they value if there is an extra shoelace or a bag that they can store the shoes in when traveling. This is not expected when purchasing from a fast-fashion brand. Respondent 18 (2020)



mentioned, that brands can use algorithms, to receive a personalized gift. Although, this should be done with caution and care so that customers do not feel supervised and that the brand is intruding on privacy. The respondents thought that if they were purchasing an exclusive item, the journey from start to the end should be of higher value, and packing is a part of that journey.

“My feeling is that fast fashion brands do not have the same time as a neo-luxury brand to spend at packaging process. Fast fashion is supposed to be fast with orders and is handling a large volume of orders. When I purchase a neo-luxury item, I want the feeling of an investment and a spoiling feeling towards myself, and packaging is strengthening that feeling.” (Respondent 20, 2020).

Theory suggests that within the different stages of customer experience and customer journey it is important for brands to interact with customer to create relationships (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Material that often was mentioned from the respondents was tissue paper. This material enhanced the feeling of luxurious and contributed to a greater unboxing experience. The respondent feels that the company is gentle with the product and that the product is of higher quality.

4.4.4 Customer experience

When the respondents purchase online, they do not know the outcome of the packaging they will receive if they have not ordered there before. This might be because when customers order online, they only see the product and that is decisive of the point of purchase. Thus, packaging has no effect at the point of purchase. Respondent 2 (2020) believes that it could be a good aspect for companies to develop that customers can see how the packaging will look.

If the respondents would know how the package will appear when they order online, it would not be the reason why the purchase from a specific brand. The product is mainly the reason why the respondents choose to purchase from a certain brand. Price is the most important aspect when the respondent purchases. Further, it should be easy shipping, delivery, and return process. Theory suggests that Generation Y tends to spend money and future research believes that Generation Y will dominate in the market (Lazarevic, 2011). Generation Y tends to spend money and it can be deceptive due to that respondents are price seeking when shopping online (Lazarevic, 2011).

“Often when I know how the packaged will look; the packaging is not appealing to me. For good packaging, I want to get a surprise to reinforce the overall experience of an expensive item I have ordered” (Respondent 25, 2020).



The respondents believe that packaging can contribute to a positive experience if the package is a positive surprise. Findings indicate that the respondents have had an experience that was improved because of the packaging. Due to the enhanced experience the brand exceeds the respondent's expectations. However, packaging can contribute to a negative experience if the expectations are high and the packaging does not correspond to what the customer expects. A positive experience can contribute to higher expectations of the brand until the next time the respondent orders from the brand. This results in that companies always have to deliver valuable experience for customers in order not to reduce their trust.

The respondents believe that a package can contribute to a positive experience, but good packaging is not a reason why the respondents repurchase from the same brand. Findings indicate that it is not a crucial aspect for companies, but that good packaging contributes to a better overall experience. In the end, it is the price that determines where respondents choose to order from. Well-designed online purchase experience may be influenced by the delivery experience by designing the customer value chain (Vakulenko et al. 2019). The respondents mean that packaging can contribute to positive customer experience, but it is not a crucial factor in future purchase decisions. Findings indicate that the overall experience is the most important aspect to make a repeated purchase of a brand. To develop the customer value chain all factors in the overall experience need to be prospective, which the theory also suggests.

The respondents think that gifts or personal letter when purchasing from more expensive brands can enhance the overall experience. Sometimes, respondents feel that it is expensive to purchase from a particular brand, but if the delivery turns out in a good packaged, they either order from the brand again or receive a positive image of the brand despite an expensive price. Theory indicates that companies can interact and create information online to achieve a more sustainable and long-term relationship with their customers for enhanced customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Packaging can be a way to communicate with customers when ordering online and can be the first impression of the brand. The respondents believe that they have had a positive experience of packaging, which is connected to the theory that packing can communicate with the customer and improve customer experience.

4.4.5 Impacts on repeated purchases

The respondents consider that a good package of a product can contribute to repeat purchases from brands. Findings indicate that package can contribute to a better overall experience and form the judgment or attitudes toward brands. If the attitude of customers is friendly it can benefit and contribute with repeated purchases. Good



packaging can generate a feeling of luxury and more value for respondents and make them feel like important customers. Theory shows that Generation Y is known as disloyal towards brands which indicates that repeat purchases should be difficult for brands to secure (Lazarevic, 2011).

“If the ordering is inconvenience and there is long delivering time or other parts of the process that is not a good experience, the package would not be enough to make it right” (Respondent 19, 2020).

If respondent 15 (2020) knows by previous experience that the packaging is very satisfying and good, it can be a reason to choose that company again, especially if that respondent is choosing between two different companies to order from. Respondent 15 (2020) further argues that packaging can create a relationship to some degree and the respondent becomes loyal towards the brand and choose to support it. Findings indicate that respondents’ value when brands make the packaging personalized with positive notes and extra value, which can contribute to repeated purchases from the company. Collecting boxes from a particular brand and that some packages made the brand memorable are other aspects for the respondents that affected the decision of repeated purchases. Material is another aspect, whether or not, the packaging can contribute to repeated purchases. If the packaging did not contain plastic it felt better and they tend to feel less guilty, and this could contribute to repeated purchases. Findings indicate that a good package experience can contribute to a repeated purchase to some degree, however, the respondents believe that the product itself is the primary reason. Findings indicate that price affects the decision concerning where to purchase from, rather than the package. The respondent highlights that if they are dissatisfied with the packaging and if the item inside is damaged during the shipping and the package did not protect the product, they are not ordering from that brand again.

4.5 Analysed outcomes of the empirical findings

Figure (4) describes the findings of differences between expectations of purchasing directly from a brand compared from a reseller. The perception of price differs from where the respondents purchase which creates different expectations regarding packaging. As long as the expectations is surpassed, the value will increase and packaging can therefore, enhance customer experience.

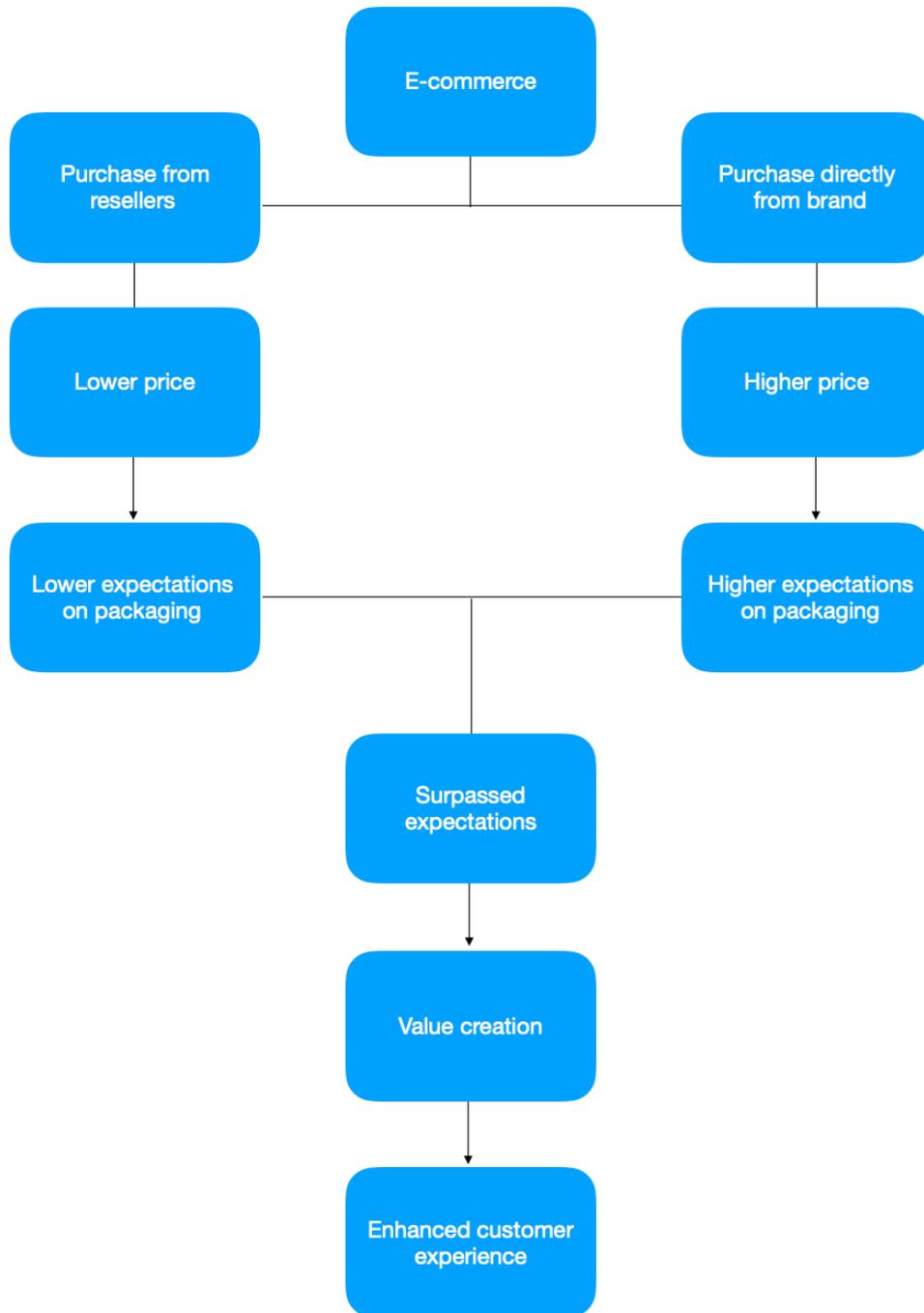


Figure 4, *Analyses of expectations.*

Figure (5) describes factors that affect the customers value. Personalized letters, gifts, packaging design, colours, materials and when it reflects the product and the brands image is of value for the respondents. Value creation can lead to improved attitude towards the brand, repeated purchases and a long-term relationship between brands and customers.

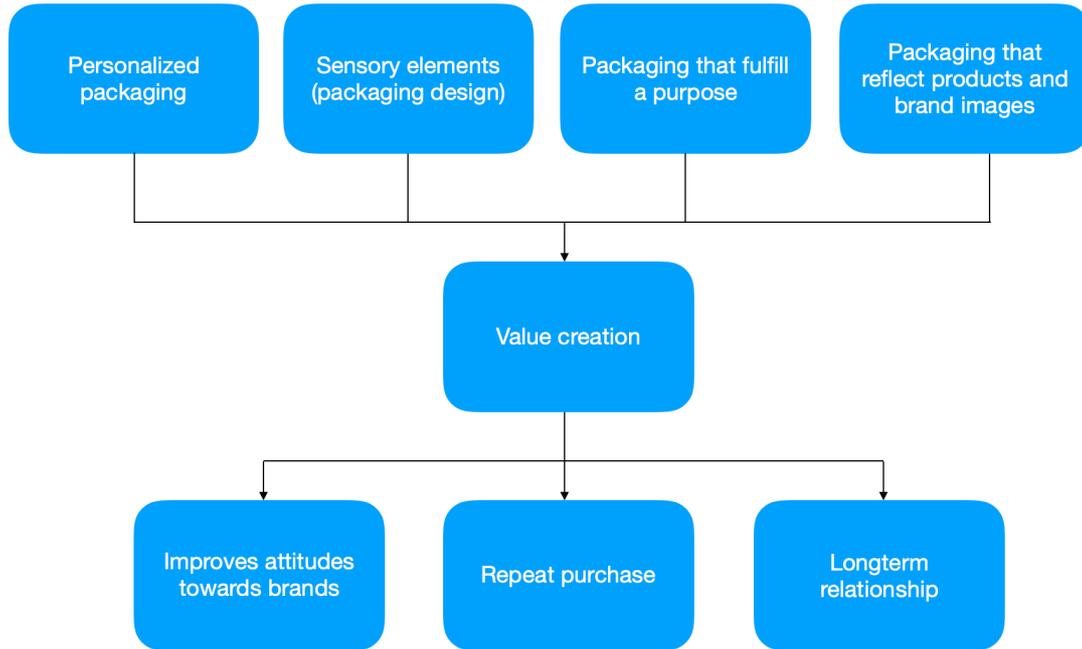


Figure 5, *Elements of packaging that creates value.*



5 Conclusion

This chapter is explaining the research questions in-depth with a focus on the thesis purpose. Furthermore, the implications and recommendations, ethical and sustainable considerations, limitations, and future research is discussed.

5.1 Conclusions

Conclusions are made primarily in connection to the research purpose to understand how packaging can affect and achieve greater customer experience, by answering the following research questions:

“How does designed packaging through e-commerce affect the customer experience from neo-luxury brands in generation Y?”

Based on the thesis's first research question, packaging affects the customer experience. Packaging affects expectations on products, concerning quality, material, and satisfaction. When customers' expectations are surpassed the customer experience is affected positively. The material of the package affects the experiences, plastic is perceived as cheap and not exclusive, while a carton is perceived sustainable and luxurious. Customers are valuing when it is carton instead of plastic and without excessive material in the package. With carton, the perception is that companies are valuing the product inside more and it is presented in a better way. The unboxing experience is greater with a carton instead of a plastic package because the plastic often becomes ruined when opening it. Unboxing experience videos as a marketing tool affect customers both consciously and unconsciously, customers become more eager to purchase and receive knowledge about the packaging design.

Customers have different expectations and experiences when purchasing from resellers compared directly from brands. The result of this is affected by purchasing products at a higher price directly from brands. Higher prices increase the expectations on packaging which can be a critical aspect for neo-luxury brands. Findings show that Generation Y is price sensitive and seeking products at a discounted price. Price and range of products are the main factors that influence the choice of purchase. The outcome of this is that price is a deciding factor when purchasing online and not packaging. However, packaging is affecting the satisfaction of the overall experience. Expectations are a main factor of the customer experience and become affected in a positive way if the expectations are achieved or surpassed.

“What can designed packaging contribute to achieve greater customer experience in an online fashion neo-luxury brand among Generation Y?”



Based on the thesis's second research question, packaging should contribute to a feeling of luxury and reflect the product and the image of the brand. Findings show that a logo can create a way for customers to identify themselves with brands. It is in correlation with the previous theory that suggests that Generation Y is using brands as an extension of themselves and has become a symbolic feature to create self-identity (Lazarevic, 2011). When the packing is personalized with a thank you letter or a gift the packaging creates a greater customer experience. Packaging needs to fulfill a purpose to create value or to achieve greater experience, the purpose can be to save the packing as indoor decoration, use as a gift box, or storage. Further, good packaging improves attitudes toward brands and can influence repeat purchases. Packaging can contribute to an improved brand image and create stronger relationships between customers and brands. A good packaging consisting colours, patterns and materials adds value for the customer and make them feel special.

Findings indicate that when purchasing online, the customer does not know the outcome of the package, unless they have been purchasing there before. Furthermore, packaging can contribute to a surprising and good experience when the expectations are surpassed. However, if the packaging does not exceed the expectation it will create a negative customer experience. Packaging is an aspect of the overall experience and creates value. Unboxing experience, sustainability, and sensory elements of packaging can contribute value creation which creates a better customer experience. Better customer experience creates and maintains the relationships between brands and customers.

5.2 Implication & recommendations

5.2.1 Managerial implications

This research can serve as a guideline to gain a deeper understanding of the essential aspects of packaging that can contribute to creating a better customer experience. E-commerce has become a part of society, which has contributed to more choices for customers to purchase from. The growing market has contributed to more competition for companies and packaging can become a competitive advantage. Packaging can create a more positive customer experience and improve the customer's attitude toward brands. It is difficult for brands to create a suitable and good experience for every customer, due to the customer journeys may differ from one another.

This research shows that packaging does affect the customer experience and therefore is an aspect for brands to consider. There is dissent from brands and customers regarding if a positive experience is delivered. With this research the gap can be narrowed down and an opportunity to gain market shares for companies. To avoid a



negative customer experience, it is important for brands to develop their packaging to meet or exceed the customers' expectations. Packaging can help brands to create customer relationships and develop branding. With e-commerce, the physical interaction with customers has decreased and packaging is the first physical contact with companies. This is a way for companies to create value and strengthen their relationship with their customers. Companies can create a greater customer experience by designing the packaging more personalized for the customers with thank you notes or gifts. This research indicates that the characteristics of Generation Y do not correlate with theories, and companies should take this into consideration. Furthermore, the findings did not show any differences between women and men, therefore packaging is an aspect for all companies to consider.

5.2.2 Theoretical implications

The majority of research regarding how packaging can create value is from an offline perspective and the effect packages have on point of purchase (Kacavenda, 2018; Mohammed et al. 2018). This research aims to contribute to the understudied aspects of what a designed package from an online perspective can contribute and how it can create value for the customer. This study has shown how companies can enhance the overall customer experience when a customer's expectations are surpassed. The industry chosen for this research was neo-luxury, however, companies in similar industries can use this research to create value for customers (Dioko, et al, 2016). Generation Y has been characterized by previous theory that they are disloyal to brands and tend to spend money at a younger age than other generations (Lazarevic, 2012). Findings indicate that Generation Y is price sensitive and when they are purchasing online, they are searching for the lowest price. Based on this, the generation becomes disloyal to brands. This can interpret that Generation Y not is willing to spend as much money as the theory suggest since the authors find them price sensitive (Lazarevic, 2012). Since it is difficult to interpret the characteristics of Generation Y, it should be further researched and discussed.

5.2.3 Ethical and sustainable implications

This research indicates that sustainable consideration is an important aspect for customers within Generation Y. A discussed area; who is responsible for sustainability and environmental aspects. Is it the company that should take responsibility for packaging in a sustainable way, or is it the consumers who have to be more questionable? The brand, Asket, is providing information about traceability as manufacturing and raw materials that each product they are selling is contributing



(Asket, 2020). Further, the brand is showing information about what each step in the process is costing. This is a way for the brand to contribute knowledge to their customers about sustainable considerations. Good packaging can affect a customer's impression and contribute reused and saved packages. Reusing or saving packaging can be seen as a successful environmental aspect. If a package is easy to recycle, the chances of recycling packaging will increase. Excessive product packaging can contribute to a negative experience of packaging, which decreases the overall customer experience.

5.3 Limitation

This thesis is conducted with qualitative research and deductive approach. The advantages of qualitative methods are to receive in-depth answers and disadvantages is that it can be difficult to generalize the results. The interviews were conducted through video calls due to COVID-19 pandemic but were supposed to be implemented face to face, to be able to interpret the respondents more clearly. The majority of the respondents is born in the early nineties, which can create an incorrect interpretation of Generation Y. The authors have not taken social-economic factors into consideration, but the sample is divided into equal men and women. The theory regarding packaging is mainly from an offline context, the authors have implemented this research into an online context which can give misleading interpretations. The authors have identified a gap and then implemented relevant research, in this thesis, that brands can use and develop further.

5.4 Future research

To strengthen the empirical findings and gain a wider sample of Generation Y, a quantitative study could be implemented. The quantitative research would contribute with a large amount of data from relevant respondents and a more generalized result. Other generations can be investigated to understand what differs and how e-commerce brands can develop value creation and positive customer experiences. The collected data from this study can contribute to further research regarding designed packaging and that customer experience is of importance for both theoretical and practical aspects. Suggestions for further research is how packaging within different segments of the fashion industry or packing within other industries can create positive customer experiences and value creation. Further, research about package design, format, and colour that attract customers can be investigated in an online context.



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7 Appendix

7.1 Appendix 1

Table 1 *This table provides a description of the interview questions in this thesis.*

Concepts	Interviewing question	Reasoning
Packaging evidence (sensory)	1-3	In order to understand which attributes that can affect if the respondent thinks a package is good or bad.
Sustainability	4-5	To understand if this is an aspect that is important for the respondents and what they believe is a sustainable package
E-commerce behaviour	6-12	To get a general understanding of the respondents' e-commerce behaviour
Unboxing Phenomena	13-16	By asking question regarding this social trend we get knowledge if this is something these respondents within gen Y are influenced by and if this is an effective marketing tool.
Neo-luxury	17	To understand if there is a difference in expectations from the respondents concerning the packaging when purchasing from a neo-luxury brands a contra fast fashion brand.
Customer experience	18-19	By asking questions about the experience a packaging can contribute with, we can get a clearer and deeper understanding on what role design packing has.
Other	20	General comments from the respondent



7.2 Appendix 2

Interview questions

Initial questions;

Age and gender?

Packaging

1. What aspects do you value from a good packaging (what is a good packaging for you?) Describe the packaging (e.g. colour, form, material, logo etc).
2. What is a bad packaging for you? Have you ever received a bad packaging? How did it affect you?
3. Do you think packaging can affect the expectations of a product?

Sustainability

4. What is a sustainable packaging for you?
5. Is it an important aspect for you?

E-commerce

6. Do you purchase a lot from e-commerce?
7. When you order online, do you order from a reseller or directly from the brand? And why?
8. Have you experienced a difference between a reseller and a brand with packaging?
9. Do you have different expectations on how it is packaged depending on where you order it from? (Reseller or directly from brand)
10. When you shop online, do you know how it will be packaged?
11. Is this a reason why you shop from there?
12. If no, has the packaging contribute to a positive experience?

Unboxing experience

13. Have you heard about the phenomenon unboxing experience?
14. If yes, do you use to watch those videos?
15. Do you become affected and inspired?
16. Have you recommended/told another person about an experience that you have received from a good packaging?



Neo-luxury

17. Do you expect a design package when you order from a neo-luxury brand compared to fast fashion brand?

Customer experience

18. Do you see a value in the fact that a package is worth saving?
19. Do you think a positive experience of a packaging can contribute to repeated purchase of the brand?

Other questions/respondents thought

20. Is there anything more you want to add or any thoughts/opinions you have?

7.3 Appendix 3

Work process and individual contributions.

During the thesis, the group members have worked most of the time together. This was of advantage to be able to discuss subjects and topics in-depth. However, this has taken more time since a lot of discussions has emerged but has contributed to deeper understandings. The collaboration and the atmosphere between the members have been good during the whole process and if there have been any imprecisions or discussions the members have worked it out, so all parts were satisfied. The topics in the thesis have been divided between the group members and have always been done to the deadline. The members have worked on all the topics together, but the members have had greater responsibility in some. If the members part did not meet the expectations and requirements, the group evaluated it together and the member redone it. The thesis has been a process with successes and setbacks since the authors have not done this kind of thesis before. The method chapter has been a struggle for the group and has been redone and improved several times. In the method, the group members have collaborated as much as possible to make the method good.