

The use and non-use of sneakers

A study about the factors why collectors use and non-use sneakers



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ABSTRACT

Through the existing academic literature on collecting, there is already a lot of knowledge about why people collect and how they deal with their collection. Besides that, there is also knowledge about why people use or non-use products. However, the existing literature does address the non-use of objects that make up the collection. Nevertheless, a lot less is known about the use of objects that are part of a collection. In the sneaker culture, it is normal to have a collection of sneakers and use those sneakers also. This research aims to obtain a better understanding of the use and non-use of objects that are part of a bigger collection. The research answers the following research question:

“What are the factors that influence the use and non-use of sneakers?”

To get an answer to this research question, qualitative research methods were used, which consisted of semi-structured interviews and listening to and watching two seasons of a podcast. All of the participants are people with a sneaker collection. The majority of the podcast’s guests, who are all members of the sneaker culture, are sneaker collectors as well. Nevertheless, some guests are sneakers designers, operate a sneaker/streetwear store, or are well-known for their sneaker collection. The findings show that it is normal in the sneaker culture to use sneakers that are part of your sneaker collection. Besides that, a few reasons of the academic literature can be confirmed and a few new reasons for use and non-use are discovered in this master thesis.

Keywords: Collecting, consumer culture theory, hoarding, podcast, sneakers and use and non-use.

PREFACE

I am completing the Master Marketing program at Radboud University Nijmegen with this master thesis. After studying business administration alongside my law degree for a few years. I have fully engaged myself in the world of marketing this year, ending with my marketing thesis. Other abilities have improved as a result, and I expect to enjoy the benefits in the future.

Writing a master's thesis in almost half a year is not the most straightforward challenge I have ever faced in my academic career. However, with the assistance of my supervisor Paolo Franco, I was able to complete the task. As a result, I would like to express my gratitude for his extensive and informative feedback. In addition, I greatly loved the manner he mentored me and the fact that he was (virtually) always available and willing to assist his students. I would also like to express my gratitude to Marleen Hermans, my second examiner. Apart from the fact that I was able to take a course with her during my master's in Marketing, she has undoubtedly improved my academic writing style in this master's thesis.

Second, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone I have had the pleasure of interviewing. It was usually a pleasant talk, and I was able to gain insight into a world that was before (almost) completely unknown to me. They inspired me to look further and gave me helpful hints on how to learn more about the culture in which they live.

I hope you enjoy reading my thesis.

Mischa van Uden

Nijmegen, June 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

When using Nike's SNKRS app, it becomes clear that new sneakers are being introduced on a daily basis. Nike is currently one of the most popular sneaker brands, but there are many other brands that also regularly release new sneakers. The amount of new Nike sneakers each day is astonishing, and this trend is also visible in retail shops. The numerous sorts of sneakers in the shop used to change roughly twice a year, but today they change up to eight times a year (Hsing, 1999). So, there is an increasing number of sneakers on the market, and they continue to be purchased. Sneakers, in general, are becoming increasingly popular among everyday consumers.

Nowadays, sneakers can be obtained in different ways. Some sneakers are available in a normal way. These can be purchased at a physical store or acquired online through a web shop. Other sneakers are introduced in a different way; they can only be obtained through a raffle. These raffles are held for more exclusive and popular pairs of sneakers. But it is not just the high-end sneakers that are trendy, but also the general ones. One outcome of the widespread use of sneakers nowadays is the emergence of a completely new culture (Denny, 2021).

Many people in the sneaker culture collect sneakers and have collections ranging from a few pairs to over 1000 pairs. Jordan Michael Geller was the owner of the world's largest sneaker collection. With 2388 pairs of sneakers in his collection, the Guinness World Record was set by him in 2012 (Guinness World Records News, 2012). People do not merely possess a large number of sneakers for regular use, but also in the context of their sneaker collection. And that is where the excitement starts because something new can emerge from such a massive collection. People who collect such huge collections do, in fact, use the sneakers they collect (Scaraboto et al. 2016). This is a new point of view in the collecting literature

The major question is which sneakers they use and which ones they do not. What is the rationale behind their decision to choose between those sneakers? Is this decision subject to change over the years? Do they use sneakers that are only in fashion at that moment, or are there also sneakers for specific seasons or situations? The reasons why people choose to use certain sneakers, and whether that changes or not, can be influenced by a wide variety of factors. During this master thesis, several existing and new factors have emerged that influence the use of sneakers. This is the focus of this master's thesis.

The 'sneakerhead' consumer culture and its current widespread appeal among the youth in various parts of the world demonstrate the popularity of sneakers (Denny, 2021; Kawamura, 2016) Consumer culture is a topic that has already received a lot of attention (Arnould et al.

2019). However, little study has been done on the intersection of consumer culture and sneaker culture. As a result, there is currently an academic understudy of what the world of sneakerheads, sneaker culture and other aspects related to sneakers looks like. That is strange because as the sneaker culture grows in popularity, there is a compelling reason to delve deeper into it. In other words, it is time to conduct a qualitative study for one of the first times to uncover the link between collections and the use and non-use of sneakers.

In the academic literature, there is written about collecting, usage and non-use, and sneakers. However, the literature has limits, which is why using a consumer culture theory approach is ideal. This research tradition permits researchers to delve beyond the boundaries of marketing and incorporate theories from other academic disciplines. These articles, taken collectively, can provide a solid academic foundation for this master's thesis. Because it is impossible to cover all aspects of sneaker culture in this master's thesis, I choose to concentrate on the use and non-use of sneakers that are part of a wider collection. As previously said, this is an aspect that has been researched before, but never in combination with sneakers.

A foundation will be laid with this master's thesis that will bring new insights into the numerous themes discussed in this master's thesis. The following question will be utilized to arrive at these insights:

“What are the factors that influence the use and non-use of sneakers?”

The following context will be reviewed in order to address the major topic of this study. The current status of the academic literature underlying the subject of the use and non-use of sneakers will be addressed in Chapter 2, which will offer a theoretical framework. Various theories will be examined. First, it will start with the research tradition of the consumer culture theory (CCT). Next, various theories on collection, hoarding and use and non-use will be examined within this theoretical framework. Chapter 3 then discusses the methodological choices.

Subsequently, Chapter 4 will present the findings. The information underlying these findings was obtained by conducting a qualitative study. Consumers were interviewed, and the online environment was examined, including more than 20 episodes of a Dutch podcast on sneakers. The debate and contribution to the theoretical conversations around the use and non-use of sneakers will be found in Chapter 5. It will also address the implications of these findings for managers and markets. In addition, the limitations of the study will be discussed, as well as the possibilities for future research. The conclusion of the master thesis will be discussed in Chapter 6.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical foundation will be discussed in this second chapter. The theory will begin with a broad scope and narrow as much as possible to the subject of this master's thesis: the use and non-use of sneakers. There will be a section on consumer culture theory (CCT) first. This section is crucial to include because it describes how the issue is approached. The way humans gather and how collections form is a subject that CCT can address. After that, a broad overview of collecting will be presented. Following that, a brief explanation of the differences between hoarding and collecting will be given. Subsequently, the current notion of use and non-use will be examined. Finally, there will be a section on research suggestions. The treatment of these different aspects in this chapter will provide a solid basis. With this basis, a thorough qualitative research into the use and non-use of sneakers can then be carried out.

2.1 CONSUMER CULTURE THEORY

Consumer culture theory (CCT) is a marketing research tradition that involves a diverse variety of theoretical viewpoints that 'address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meaning (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). CCT is a study of consumer culture, which means they look at the interaction between consumption and markets, as well as the consumers' actual experiences and social relationships. CCT, for example, is concerned with the possession and use of goods and services (Arnould et al. 2019).

Marketing is brought into contact with theoretical concepts from other cultural studies through CCT (Arnould & Thompson, 2018). It is possible to do research on consumers, consumption, and the market utilizing the lenses that are available in other disciplines. These disciplines can be, for example, economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology and feminist studies (Arnould et al. 2019). Thus, ethnography from anthropology and sociology is used to balance the studies and experimental approaches of sociology and psychology. Alternatively, feminist studies could be used to investigate the topic of gender in consumer research.

Although not all researchers are aware of this method of study, it provides numerous opportunities to include other studies into marketing. This is evident in the sources employed for data about collection and use and non-use in this master's thesis. Apart from the fact that collecting is already a popular topic in marketing, there are a variety of other sources that are not necessarily related to marketing. These sources are more prevalent in socio-cultural fields.

Mainstream marketing researchers tend to see consumers as decision-making individuals (Arnould et al. 2019; Arnould & Thompson, 2018). With this in mind, consumers absorb information and use it to make informed decisions about buying products or services.

But consumers do not make their choices based only on processing information, according to the CCT scholarship. Consumers take more into account. CCT studies, therefore, look at consumers as self-directed, creative, and emotional individuals who also align their purchasing behaviour with meaning and self-actualization (Belk et al. 1989; Hirschman 1990; McCracken, 1986).

Using this view emphasizes the experiential, hedonic and symbolic elements of consumption, allowing room for the interpretive cultural side within consumer research (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Mick, 1986; Arnould & Thompson 2018). “For example, the purchase of a pair of sneakers may involve deliberations over its features that may make it comfortable, durable and adequate protection for the consumer’s feet.” However equally, “purchases may also involve intuitive feelings of being connected to a subculture (e.g., ‘sneakerhead’ culture), desires to collect dozens of pairs to the excitement of successful playing cultural competence and taste through the pairs worn when out and about” (Franco et al. 2022, p. 119). So, contrary to traditional marketing belief, a consumer’s decision to buy and use sneakers is not purely rational. That is the reason why this research tradition is used in this master’s thesis.

2.2 COLLECTING

Collecting is a topic that has received a lot of attention in the CCT world. Many distinct definitions of collecting have been presented in the literature, and various persons have attempted to provide a central definition. The Belk et al. (1991) concept of collecting is frequently employed. They use the following definition for collecting:

“... the selective, active, and longitudinal acquisition, possession, and disposition of an interrelated set of differentiated objects (material things, ideas, beings, or experiences) that contribute to and derive extraordinary meaning from the entity (the collection) that this set is perceived to constitute”.

The collection is considered by the collector as an entity, according to Belk et al. (1991), because of a perceived unity in its components. When you look at the collection as a whole, the objects are worth more than when you look at them singly. In the Netherlands, for example, stamp collecting is a tradition. People collect stamps from many countries as well as limited editions issued for particular occasions. When someone has all of a country’s stamps, their collection is worth more than when one of the country’s stamps is missing. So, while a single

stamp has the same price as it does in the shop, a collection of stamps provides a value that is more than the show value.

The majority of people who collect have their own collection. In addition, it is most of the time a solo job (Belk, 1995). As collecting is an individual activity, there is often competition between collectors. No matter how difficult it is to collect certain items, it is usually only a matter of time until others start collecting the same items. Collectors are then more successful than others when they have a better collection. This does not alter the fact that easily obtainable objects can also be part of a collection (Belk, 1995).

Aside from collector competition, new communities can be formed among people who share the same interest. Collectors can learn from each other in this community. Collections can be compared. In addition, collectors' status can be raised when their successful collection is recognised, and this gives collectors a sense of pride and fulfilment.

These are not the only elements that make collections unique; the items that make up the collection become out of the usual, non-functional, and 'special' or 'sacred' in certain ways (Belk, et al 1989). This is one of the reasons why collectors sometimes pay more for a collectable object than it is originally worth (Belk, 1995). The majority of the objects in the collection end up on the shelf or are withdrawn from everyday use.

If the items are not removed from this type of use, they are frequently handled with extreme care and only utilized on rare occasions (Scaraboto et al. 2016). When these items are not utilized so exclusively on rare occasions and are not kept with exceptional care, they are regarded as no longer part of the collection (Belk et al. 1991).

When viewed in this light, Belk (1995) claims that collecting sets itself apart from other consumer activities and patterns (Belk, 1995). Other consumption activities are largely meant for use, which is why they are not considered as collection activities. Another incentive for collecting is to invest, however when Duggleby (1978) refers to collectors, he does not mean those who gather a collection of objects exclusively for the purpose of making a profit (e.g., Duggleby, 1978; Avery and Colonna, 1987).

When the acquisition and possession of objects are done solely for the purpose of making a profit. Then the collected objects are unlikely to have the sanctity and harmony found in a true collection. When the objects in the collection and those intended to be invested are kept separate. In that case, a collector who is also a dealer in the same collectable may remain a collector. What is also clear from these definitions, and what has not been addressed before, is that ownership or possession of the objects is a necessity for collecting them, and therefore

the collection (Belk et al. 1991). This is different from hoarding, which is also a consumption activity that will be discussed afterwards.

The striking thing about the current literature on collection is that it is often not based on data obtained by the researchers themselves. The articles mentioned in this theoretical part often deal with what the concept of collecting entails and what exactly is not part of collecting. However, there is often a lack of empirical evidence based on data obtained by the researchers themselves. This ensures that with the study done in this master thesis, we can go deeper into the own obtained data. Because the data was obtained, there was also the possibility to look beyond the concepts that are only mentioned in the aforementioned articles. This can provide new insights that can eventually be considered in new insights regarding the concept of collecting.

2.3 HOARDING

Hoarding is similar to collecting, but it is not the same thing. Frost and Gross (1993) offer the following definition of hoarding: ‘The acquisition of and failure to discard possessions which appear to be useless or of limited value’ (Frost & Gross, 1993, p. 367). Hoarding is defined as a behaviour in which a person acquires a high quantity of items rather than a small amount.

Hoarding happens when the inventory of a consumer is higher than in the prior period while consumption remains unchanged (Stiff, Johnson & Tourk, 1975). Looking at the current inventory status in comparison to the prior stock can reveal how much hoarding is going on. It can also happen when the pace of consumption falls but purchases do not fall into line. During times of war, hoarding is common because people hoard so that their inventory grows and their consumption falls, allowing the supply to last longer. War is one example, but it mostly applies to times when customers anticipate scarcity. This could be for a variety of reasons.

In the academic literature, correlations are explored between consumers’ perceptions of long and short-term shortages, and the potential adjustment of consumption levels as a result. Hoarding can be problematic in everyday life because the products are not thrown and can eventually interfere with daily activities. Such conduct can be destructive not just to the individual, but also to those around him or her (Frost & Steketee, 1998). Indeed, this type of behaviour is so harmful that academic research has been conducted on its consequences on individuals (Frost, Steketee & Williams, 2000).

2.4 USE AND NON-USE

When people collect objects, they usually remove them from their daily use. However, before collectors remove the objects from regular usage, they have an option. Collectors have the

option of using or not using their collectables. Most of the time, the objects in the collections are withdrawn from daily use. Collectors sometimes use objects, but do so with great caution (Belk, et al. 1991; Belk 1995).

Franco joined Belk's thoughts on incorporating pieces from a bigger collection in 2015 (Franco, 2015; Franco et al. 2022; Belk, 1995). Franco, in line with Belk et al. (1989), calls the use of objects from the collection 'profane'. As a result, collectors do not use the objects in the collections. They put the collected objects on shelves, in boxes, or save them in another way to protect the objects after deciding not to use them. Aside from this reasoning, it is also noted that the 'sacred' and 'profane' objects are kept in separate locations (Belk, 1991). This makes it more difficult to use 'sacred' objects and clarifies the distinction between the collection and 'profane' objects. In the literature on collecting and using objects, there is one exception.

When objects are used in a non-ordinary way, only then is the object still included in the collection (Scaraboto et al. 2016). With beer and wine collections, Scaraboto et al. (2016) made a point. When these drinks are reserved for special occasions only. Only then does a collection remain because the objects are used in a non-ordinary way. This is in reference to Belk's description of how to handle objects from the collection (Belk et al. 1991; Belk, 1995).

Scaraboto et al. (2016) refer to research that has been conducted on how customers care for, display, and dispose of the items they use. They do, however, suggest that there has been little research done on the consumable objects that make up a collection. This research even looks at how consumers interact with their shoes as if they were curators of a museum. However, the non-ordinary usage of beer and wine is mentioned in the same paragraph, leading one to think that Scaraboto et al. (2016) believe that sneakers that are used frequently are not part of a collection because they are used. But in this case, the theory is already quite close to the study in this master's thesis.

All of these arguments are viewed through the lens of the non-use of the objects. Because using the objects is a negative action that has no effect on the collection. Collectors of a specific object, on the other hand, may use the objects in their collections. These objects may or may not still be part of their collection. Although it is unclear at this time. Looking at literature about collecting, as well as literature about product usage and non-use, is a useful method to think about collecting objects and their purposes.

Several articles have been written about product use and non-use. Trocchia and Janda (2002) investigated the various causes of customer non-use and came up with the following conclusions. The main cause for the products' non-use was the product's disappointing results (Trocchia & Janda 2002). Lack of enthusiasm was the second most common reason for non-

use. People became less interested in the product after purchasing it, which is why they did not use it. Unmet expectations was the third major factor. The difference between reason one and three is that the first refers to the production, while the third refers to the product itself.

The difficulties in product use, maintenance and contingency reasons were also mentioned in the study by Trocchia and Janda (2002). That last point implies that there were external forces at work to prevent the product from being used. The following causes were also discovered but did not make the top six: being displaced by present possessions, self-consciousness, and fear of damage (Trocchia & Janda 2002).

Another article about non-use is the article of Dai and Fishbach (2014). According to Dai and Fishbach (2014), there is a link between product non-consumption and desire for the product that is not consumed. They come to the conclusion that consumers will wait longer if they believe the reward for doing so will be larger. This is due to the fact that items for which customers must wait longer are more valuable (Dai & Fishbach 2013). Classical theories of need (Cabanac 1971; Lewin 1935) and satiation studies (Epstein et al. 2009; McSweeney and Swindell 1999) predict that the longer a period of non-consumption lasts, the greater the increase in wanting to use. This is especially true for basic needs, as they cannot be replaced.

A consumer who has not consumed a certain product in a long time may acquire a strong craving for it. This desire decides whether or not the product will be consumed once it is available. People's desire for non-consumption is influenced by a variety of factors, including the availability of substitutes. Substitutes are two or more goods that can meet the same requirement (Etkin and Ratner 2012; Kruglanski et al. 2002). There will be no consumption if there are no substitutes, and the desire for the product will rise. Non-consumption is thus characterized by the lack of the product and the presence of substitutes, according to Dai and Fishbach (2014).

However, if there are equivalents that can meet the requirements, the substitute can be used. If the substitute satisfies the needs, the desire for the original product will decrease. Substitutes must be visible all of the time to come to mind. The longer the substitute is used, the less the original product is desired, and thus it is not consumed.

Mellander and McIntyre's (2020) study is the third research on use and non-use. They discovered in their research that there are goods in customers' wardrobes that are not always readily at hand, as they put it. They see goods that are old, and there are reasons why people want to keep them, but they also see items that will be useful in the future. As a result, people have developed connections to goods that they will utilize in the future. Old items are kept due to their nostalgic worth; they take up space in the wardrobe, but they are actually memorabilia.

They serve as reminders of events that have passed us by and have lost some or all of their beauty, either due to their state of disrepair or due to the emotional value linked to them.

Clothes are kept in closets for the sake of care, memories, and the maintenance of social relationships. Consumers have imagined future scenarios in which they require the clothes, and they think about special outfits for special events, which are the reasons for clothes that are in the wardrobe and handed there for future use. Other clothes are stored in the closet and are not worn because they need to be repaired. They were once in use, but due to damage, they are no longer in service or must be repaired first. Others are not worn since they were purchased to reflect the type of person they hope to be in the future.

Another reason why people have clothes but do not wear them is that they no longer fit. For some people, this might be a motivator to lose weight in order to fit back into their old clothes. However, it is not just about the clothes not fitting. Some women, for example, claim that they cannot walk on high heels but have a pair in their closet. That is not only true for high heels, but women also claim that they believe a woman needs certain clothes or shoes in her wardrobe, and that is why they have them, but they do not wear them, because they don't fit.

The final reason, according to Mellander and McIntyre (2020), for not wearing clothes is that they are uncomfortable. It is possible that the clothes were uncomfortable or did not match the person's personality. We can observe that gender, body, and social life norms all play a role in detaching or adhering to certain outfits.

Aside from Mellander and McIntyre's article (2020), the study of Wu et al. (2017) is also on use and non-use in the fashion sector. This article discusses product aesthetics and how they affect whether or not products are used. Consumers are impacted by a variety of factors, and this is especially true when it comes to product design (Raghubir & Greenleaf, 2006; Yang & Raghubir, 2005).

A consumer's reaction to a product can be positive or negative depending on its external features. This suggests that although most people make rational purchasing decisions based on normative judgements when a product is well created, the design might overrule the reasoning of the buyer. As a result, product design might have an impact on the decision-making process (Wu et al. 2017). That is, consumers see some products as "too good to be used" and are therefore afraid that use will affect their aesthetic qualities. Consumers are more inclined to choose items that are more appealing during their decision-making process, according to a previous study (Reimann et al. 2010). As a result, the product's aesthetics have a beneficial impact on the purchasing process. However, the main question is if this has any good implications in the process following the purchase.

According to research in the fields of social psychology and consumer behaviour, the amount of effort put into a product is closely related to how happy the customer feels about it (Belk, 1988). This effort refers to how a certain item's creation and effort are viewed with respect to quality and preference (Kruger et al. 2004). People seek to know what causes a specific event, according to attribution theory (Kelley, 1967). As a result, it is argued that a product's visual appeal causes buyers to investigate why a particular product is attractive (Wu et al. 2017). Consumers discover that greater work was put into the creation of the product during this search, regardless of whether the effort was put into product design, physical product, or both processes.

Consumers are likely to detect the link between aesthetics and effort on an unconscious level. Consumers do not actively consider the favourable links between aesthetics and effort, but they intuitively understand these relationships when exposed to an attractive product (Wu et al. 2017). Wu et al. (2017) attempted to conduct research in the field of consumer behaviour by offering different items to explore the relationship between two constructs. The study found that the more aesthetically pleasing a product was rated, the higher the perceived level of design and product effort attributed to the creation of the product.

They also discovered that individuals are less likely to use a product that is highly aesthetic because they are concerned about the effort that went into its creation. These considerations also play a role when individuals choose to consume the product, destroying the efforts that went into its creation. Wu et al. (2017) believe that the product's aesthetic attractiveness has a negative impact on the experience's satisfaction.

2.5 RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

According to the current state of academic literature, there is a minimal amount of academic literature on the use and non-use of sneakers. There has been some research, also in related fields such as the fashion industry. Nevertheless, there is definitely an understudy. As a result, this master's thesis on the usage and non-use of sneakers has a lot of potentials. In addition to being an empirical study in contrast to the literature on collecting, there is also potential in terms of providing managers/marketeers with new perspectives. Marketers can respond to these habits if they understand why people use or do not use sneakers. This, I feel, is crucial not only for managers/marketers in the sneakers or fashion industries but also for managers/markets in businesses where usage and non-use are important factors. Think about cars, music, books, and sportswear for instance. They can change their strategies in reaction to the master's thesis funding.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methods of this master thesis will be detailed in this chapter. The research context will be discussed first in this chapter. This contains the history of sneakers and the sneaker culture. After that, the procedures utilized will be detailed, such as the data collection process, how the participants were discovered, and the data will be analysed.

3.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT

This section of the research context is intended to provide insight into the sneaker culture that has developed since the Industrial Revolution. The history of sneakers does not explicitly state that they are made for collecting. Shoes used to be used only for their practical function. But as time went on, shoes also said something about the personality of a person, social rank, and even sexuality for millennia (Denny, 2021). Sneakers are currently a component of many people's identities, and they can be both symbolic and fashionable. This is why there is now a complete culture around sneakers (Kawamura, 2016).

With this history in mind, some questions in the interviews were picked to see if the historical reasons for using sneakers are still the reasons why people use sneakers today. Apart from that, the history of sneakers has also been looked at to see if it has any influence on the collections people have today. After a few interviews, it became clear that the majority of the participants had little knowledge of the history of sneaker culture, owing to their youth. The podcast was also used as additional data for this reason. It was hoped that further information concerning the use of older sneakers would be shared via the podcast.

During the Industrial Revolution, the first sneakers appeared. These shoes were made using innovative processes. Because more shoes could be manufactured and people had more spare time, sneakers became popular. The sneaker began as a croquet sandal in the middle of the nineteenth century (Garcia 2006; Smith 2019). This was not your typical pair of shoes at the time. It was made of canvas and rubber and was the forerunner of the present sneaker. These shoes were designed for middle-class leisure activities and were not meant for ordinary use. Until that time, everyone's daily shoes were also the shoes they wore for their recreational activities. Normal shoes or boots were adapted with, for example, studs and bars for use in football from about 1981 (Williams, 2015).

Sports grew highly popular in Britain over the latter 25 years of the nineteenth century. Initially, sporting footwear was reserved mostly for the higher classes and nobility (Turner, 2016). However, imitations appeared at the same time and grew in popularity among the middle classes. As the sport grew in popularity, British sports equipment manufacturers took advantage

of it and began to make more and more shoes that suited the sport. This began with tennis, which was extremely popular at the time but has since extended to sports like boxing, golf, cycling, fencing, and hunting. Outside of these leisure pursuits, the shoes designed for these sports were rarely worn (Turner, 2016). As a result, shoes were developed that could only be used for specific activities, such as these sports.

Sneakers first appeared on the streets in the 1950s. Converse utilized Chuck Taylor to promote the All-Star, which made them famous, and Vans and Adidas used skateboarders and tennis players to promote their sneakers (Peterson, 2007). The sneaker became popular in the hip-hop genre after Puma enlisted Walt 'Clyde' Frazier to market it (Denny, 2021). The hip-hop scene began to emerge at that point. Sneakers grew in popularity, and the quality of the sneaker improved significantly, making it better.

Nike collaborated with Michael Jordan in the 1980s (Gwilliam, 2014). Jordan has a whole line of merchandise bearing his name. Jordan's become synonymous with sneakerheads. The new sneakers were inspired by certain games or moments in Michael Jordan's career. The popularity of sneaker culture grew as a result of the combination of the key shoe moment and Michael Jordan's celebrity status (Denny, 2021). At this time, brands are continuing to market sneakers by collaborating with athletes, artists, streetwear designers, and high-fashion houses. The background of the sneakers and the people who used them has grown in popularity.

Sneakers also became popular for a variety of reasons, including their comfort and utility, but there is another factor at play. As previously said, a variety of role models were recruited to promote specific sneakers. As a result, many subcultures adopted distinct styles or designs of sneakers (Denny, 2021). People could use this adoption to show which subculture they belonged to. Furthermore, particular sneakers are associated with specific eras, which is why sneakers evoke a sentimental response. Besides that, there are also sneakers, for example, that represent an unrivalled sporting success by an athlete who wore them, or a magical concert at which the musician wore them. The sneakers thus became part of people's identity.

Furthermore, limited editions of certain sneakers provide exclusivity, which further adds to the sneaker's popularity among sneakerheads. Because of the scarcity of sneakers and the intense fanaticism of sneakerheads, a culture emerges in which people are no longer only members of a subculture, but also members of the sneakers culture. Sneakers were not only popular among adults, but also among teenagers. The sneaker was 'cool', making it a great presentation for teenagers. The sneaker made the transition from the sports field to everyday life, and among the youth, it became a symbol of vitality and rebellion.

3.2 METHOD

The major purpose of this study is to look into the use and non-use of sneakers. It is crucial to understand how people collect sneakers and why they use some sneakers and not others. A qualitative research design was employed to discover answers on this subject. It is possible to learn about specific decisions, cultural meanings, social decisions, and concerns from participants using a qualitative research approach (Bleijenberg, 2015). Because it is critical that this issue be studied in greater depth, a qualitative research design was chosen.

The data is analysed utilizing an inductive technique in this study. There are no hypotheses about the use or non-use of sneakers at the time of writing. Some literature on product usage and non-use, as well as some from the fashion industry, can be found in the theoretical framework. As a result, when the data gathering began, there were only a few expectations but these were not always based on articles in which their own empirical research had been carried out.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

As mentioned earlier, two methods of data collection were used in this study. Semi-structured interviews are used to acquire the majority of the data (McCracken, 1988). These interviews were conducted with open-ended questions. Because open-ended questions and a semi-structured interview guide were utilized, there was an opportunity to ask additional questions not previously prepared in order to acquire broader and high-quality data (Bleijenberg, 2015).

Aside from that, it was possible for the participants to come up with new ideas that the researcher had not considered before (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015). The interview guide is attached in appendix 1. For this study, nineteen interviews were conducted during April and May 2022, with the majority of the interviews taking place via Zoom video conference. During these Zoom calls, there were sent pictures of the sneaker collections in the chat. The majority of the interviews were audio-recorded with consent and then transcribed, although others were not audio-recorded due to a lack of consent. After a few interviews, the interview guide was adjusted to better respond to the collection of the right data.

These nineteen interviews were conducted by four master's students, all of whom were working on their master's thesis on sneakers. Those four students had different topics, yet they all conducted the interviews. All of the questions for the various themes were discussed beforehand. Also, the other students altered their questions after a few interviews in order to get better data.

The second method of data collection was by watching YouTube videos. Because these movies already exist, they will be used as secondary data. It is becoming more popular to use current videos for study, including YouTube videos (Adami, 2010). The internet has enabled the utilization of an increasing amount of secondary data (Fisher & Parmentier, 2010). There can be a discrepancy between what people say and what they do, as Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) pointed out. For their opinions, you cannot just rely on interviews. You can improve your findings and conclusions by adding more data, as this master thesis with this podcast does. However, when you use secondary data, there are a lot of different aspects to think about. In this scenario, it is crucial to understand the context of these movies. What is the context, what was the purpose of the videos, and what is not covered in the films? (Jewitt, 2012).

The videos utilized in this master's thesis are podcast episodes. Sneakerjagers, a Dutch podcast, was used for this project. This podcast was picked because it is a part of a broader platform that tracks all of the latest sneaker trends. This podcast is one of their YouTube series, and it frequently delves deeper into the world of sneakers and sneaker culture. Other series on this YouTube channel focus, for example, on the most recent sneakers to hit the market. That is not relevant to this study, so it will not be considered. Sneakerjagers has a YouTube page where you may listen to these episodes.

Sneakerjagers has a little over 8000 subscribers on their YouTube channel. All of the podcast's episodes were recorded between 2020 and 2021. The podcast has 25 different episodes. The host (Valerio Zeno) and co-host (Non (only in season 1)), along with two guests discuss various elements of sneakers and other issues in these videos. As previously stated, this podcast was utilized because the interviewees were young and new to the sneaker culture. Aside from that, the majority of the participants' sneaker collections did not exceed 50 different pairs of sneakers. The guests on the podcast were often older, had more experience with sneaker culture, and had larger collections.

In table 1 the names are listed of all podcast guests who specified how often they use or do not use their sneakers in their collection. This is not to say that they were the only guests in the podcast; there were a lot more. However, not all of the podcast guests contributed information to the subject of this master's thesis.

Table 1*Overview of the podcast guests*

Number	Name	Season/Episode podcast
1a	Valerio Zeno	S01E01-S02E13
2a	Non	S01E01- S01E12
3a	Vriendl00s	S01E02
4a	Jamie van Heije	S01E02 and S02E02
5a	Donovan	S01E03
6a	Julian Jordan	S01E03
7a	Renee van Meurs	S01E04
8a	Chanica Kist	S01E04
9a	Pete Philly	S01E05
10a	Ginney Noa	S01E06
11a	Dennis Dude The Shoepimp	S01E07
12a	Geza Weisz	S01E07
13a	Josine Michels	S01E08
14a	Alain van Duuren	S01E08
15a	Boris van de Ven	S01E09
16a	Tim Beumers	S01E10
17a	Menno van Meurs	S01E10
18a	Jordi van den Bovenkamp	S01E11
19a	Daan de Greef	S01E11
20a	Matthijs	S01E12
21a	Melly Mel	S02E01
22a	Brainpower	S02E02
23a	Ted van Eldik	S02E03
24a	Pieter Pauwels	S02E03
25a	Michael Hubner	S02E04
26a	Jasper Lijfering	S02E05
27a	Rolph van Heyster	S02E05
28a	Frank van Outsole	S02E06
29a	Kraantje Pappie	S02E06
30a	Davy James	S02E07

31a	Timothy Sabajo	S02E08
32a	Benny Komala	S02E08
33a	Sef	S02E09
34a	Olaf Hussein	S02E10
35a	Mathieu Hagelaars	S02E10
36a	Nikki van Toorn	S02E11
37a	Andor van den Boom	S02E12
38a	Guillaume Philibert	S02E13
39a	Mike Nieuwstraten	S02E13

This raised the chance that the data from the podcast would differ from the data collected during the interviews. Before the interviews, it was assumed that the more sneakers someone had, the more unique sneakers they had, and that the more unique sneakers they had, the less they cared about their unique sneakers. If this is true, persons with more sneakers will use them differently than people with fewer sneakers, as will their consumer behaviour. That is why this master's thesis employs two different types of data. The combination of these two data collection approaches ensures that enough data in the field of use and non-use of sneakers is acquired to arrive at a unique theory.

3.4 PARTICIPANTS

It is critical to have a sufficient number of participants when conducting qualitative research. The participants for this interview are not chosen at random, as is typical in quantitative research (Maxwell, 2012). This is due to the fact that the volunteers were chosen based on their expertise in the topic, which is relevant to this study. Participants are required to be familiar with sneaker culture, have some knowledge of collecting sneakers, and preferably have their own sneaker collection in order to achieve the above conditions (Symon & Cassell, 2012). In my eyes, those participants are the ideal persons to interview for this master's thesis (Saunders, 2012).

Because the researcher's network only has a few people who fulfil all of the criteria, the majority of the participants were recruited through friends and the snowball technique. When a researcher does not have the right volunteers in his network, he can utilize this snowball technique to connect with them (Symon & Cassel, 2012). During the interviews, most of the participants were given the opportunity to show off their sneaker collection, allowing them to show the sneakers we were discussing. This allowed the researcher to see how the participants

dealt with their sneaker collections, as well as whether there were any discrepancies between the sneakers that were used and unused.

The interview's first questions were simple and open-ended, aimed at determining how the participants are in the world of sneakers and knowing their background and current lifestyle (Arsel, 2017). Following those questions, there were questions on four other subjects. Because there were four more students who investigated one aspect of sneakers. Sneakers and culture, gentrification, sneakers and reselling conflicts and sneakers and the cotton incident in Xinjiang, China were among the topics covered by those students. These students asked the same questions as those prepared for this master's thesis in all the interviews they conducted. This created a larger amount of data that could be used in all four studies.

Table 2

Overview of the participants

No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Occupation
1	Bram	Male	26	Between study and work
2	Guy	Male	24	Study: HRM
3	Ruben	Male	22	Study: Manager retail
4	Rens	Male	23	Study: Urban Forestry
5	Anna	Female	24	Looking for a job
6	Niels	Male	23	Work at NXP
7	Hein	Male	25	Work as a consultant
8	Pien	Female	24	Work as sales management trainee
9	Tonko	Male	20	Gap year
10	Roelof	Male	45	Work, unknown
11	Tim	Male	24	Study: Communication and multimedia design
12	Conny	Female	24	Study design for interaction
13	Rob	Male	24	Study: in his masters
14	Niek	Male	23	Works Dutch Land Forces
15	Mart	Male	23	Trainee at Swinkels Brewery
16	Sem	Male	31	Assistant Professor in Marketing
17	Theun	Male	28	Study: unknown
18	Bart	Male	24	Study Mechanical

19	Lumine	Female	21	Study Economics
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All of the individuals who took part in the interviews are included in Table 2. These names are all fictitious; they are not the real names of the people who were interviewed. To protect the genuine identities of the people interviewed, pseudonyms have been employed. The researcher is aware of both the true names and the ones they have been given in place.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

All of the interviews for this master's thesis were recorded (if there was consent), transcribed, and coded. To begin the coding, a table was created with the concepts from the literature. The disadvantage, however, was that there were not many concepts known from the literature that figured in the findings. The transcribed interviews were then searched for these few concepts. Statements that corresponded to the concepts were grouped together in the table and assigned the same colour. Connections between statements could be easily found by assigning labels and colours to the statements (Bleijenbergh, 2015; Goulding, 2005). A concept that originated in literature and also appeared in the interviews was aesthetic. In the interviews, statements such as: 'Because some sneakers are very awesome, they are only suitable for display cabinets, and they are never worn'. In this case, the colour for aesthetic was pink, and this statement in the interview with Bart was also given the colour pink.

Finally, a table with many diverse statements was developed, all of which were interconnected with underlying concepts from the literature, think about fitting for example. There were also statements that could not be linked to any of the concepts in the literature. However, these statements were also about the use and non-use of sneakers. These statements were also labelled, and after they were labelled, linkages between them were sought. New ideas arose as a result of this. An example of a new concept that did not emerge from the literature was adjusting the sneakers to the outfit. All of the statements that fit the concept of adjusting sneakers to the outfit got the same colour in the transcriptions and were added to the coding table. This way, a clear overview of all statements belonging to existing or new concepts was created. During this process, the names of the concepts were changed with some regularity, in order to have a correct number of statements per concept. The interviews were transcribed and coded entirely in Microsoft Word; no other tool was utilized for transcription or coding. The names of the concepts that were ultimately chosen as the overarching reasons for use and non-use can be found in the conceptual diagram at the beginning of the chapter on the findings.

The podcast data was analysed in a somewhat different way than the interviews. There is currently no knowledge about how to analyse the data from a podcast. Therefore, I looked for the simplest solution in my opinion. During the podcast, there was a lot of discussion about sneakers, but there was also discussion about other topics. As a result, not everything was relevant to this master thesis. Consequently, the season, episode, minute and second of a particular statement were documented. The name of the person who spoke was written down. The comment about whether or not to use trainers was then written down. As an example, this would then look like this S01E06, total time: 58:22, Valerio 1:10: I wear the air max 97 Silver Bullet, a shoe that always reminds me of Italy because they wear them so often there.

The coding of the statements of the podcast began after listening to all of the episodes and documenting the statements. The table that was developed based on the coding of the interviews was utilized for the podcast. All statements were labelled and assigned a colour based on known ideas and possibly new concepts. Two tables were prepared, one with statements and overarching concepts regarding the use and non-use of sneakers from the interviews and the other with the statements of the podcast. These tables were generated independently to indicate any variations between the data from the interviews and the data from the podcast.

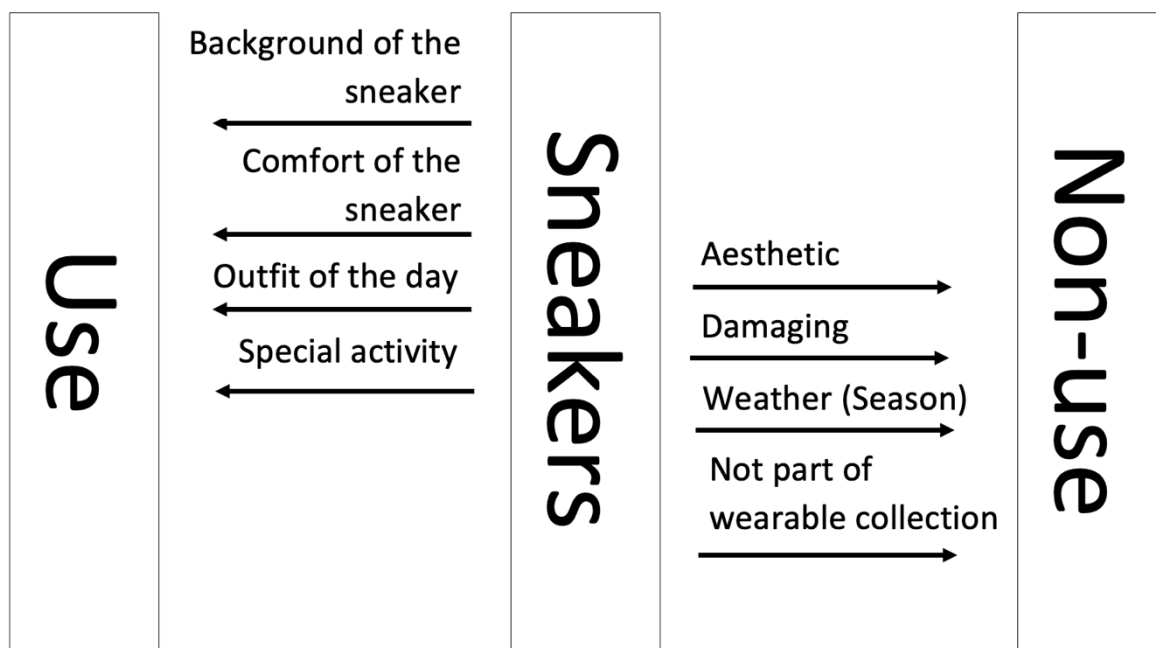
3.6 RESEARCH ETHICS

Ethics are very important in doing research. Therefore, all participants were asked in advance for permission to be interviewed and whether they wanted to participate. In addition, they were told in advance that the information they would provide would be processed anonymously. In other words, all the names of the participants in the interviews in this master thesis are fictitious. This was not done for the guests of the podcast, as that data is public for all, and these people are often known to the Dutch people.

They were then told what would be done with the information provided by the participants. Before the interview started, the participants were asked for their permission to record the interview using a telephone and a laptop. If this permission was not granted, the interview was not recorded. During the interview, participants were not obliged to answer the questions asked and there was always the possibility for the participants to stop the interview at any time. After the interview, the participants were able to see the transcripts on request. The findings of this data will be presented in the next chapter.

4 FINDINGS

The outcomes of the interviews and the data of the podcast will be reported in this chapter of the findings. As said in the methods, after the interviews were analysed, the findings were grouped into a few different concepts. People utilize or do not use their sneakers for a variety of reasons. The many reasons will be discussed further down. The reasons why sneaker collectors utilize their sneakers will be discussed first, followed by the reasons why collectors do not use their sneakers. In order to make the factors clearer, a conceptual diagram has been made that will be the guideline in this chapter.



The conceptual diagram that will function as a guide in this findings section

4.1 REASONS WHY COLLECTORS USE THEIR SNEAKERS

4.1.1 THE BACKGROUND OF THE SNEAKER

The first reason why people use the sneakers that are part of their collection is the background of the sneaker. The background of the sneaker includes a variety of reasons why individuals use their sneakers. The background differs from a special designer's sneaker, the manner collectors purchased the sneaker and the design of sneakers that refer to a specific city or land. When Hein was interviewed, he spoke about his unique Parra sneaker as well as sneakers from different cities. He stated that he really liked the sneaker designed by the designer Parra. In an interview, he explained the background of the sneakers as follows:

Hein: Yes, I do not know. I thought Parra was cool because it was a collaboration with that artist. That it was a collaboration between that artist and Nike. I think it is one of my favourite artists, so I would like to have it. In that respect, yes, but I do understand that if there is a story behind it and it appeals to you and you have it, you think you want it. There are also quite a lot of sneakers in America that come from those High School colours, or from a certain school. You have Michigan, which I think is yellow and blue, then you have those kinds of colours. I do understand that it represents a city or a school. I do understand that it can be a trigger for you to think: yes, I am representing my city or the colours of the city, then I understand that you are moving towards that culture, that you are part of hip-hop, that you are part of this city. I would understand that.

In the interview with Hein, it was stated that he really liked the designs of the designer Parra. To show that to the rest of the world, he likes to use the shoes designed by Parra. Whether Hein had more sneakers in his collection with such a background, he told the following:

Hein: No, I still have the Japanese ones. I think Japan is pretty cool, which is why I have the Air Jordans four because they are inspired by real Japanese stick work and things like that, so I think I am secretly sensitive to that. That must appeal to you on a personal level. Then I understand that you are going to wear a pair faster and at least want to have them.

Not only Parra is a source of inspiration for Hein, but also sneakers that have a Japanese background. From these statements, the background of certain sneakers is a reason for Hein to use them. However, there are several sneaker designers and what Parra is to Hein, is the designer Tom Sax to Jasper Lijfering. Designers are often a source of inspiration and a reason for sneakerheads to use certain sneakers. Especially when certain designers die, this creates extra demand for sneakers. From that moment on, the original sneakers no longer come out. That's a reason that the sneakers become extra special, a bigger collector's item, and a reason for sneakerheads to use them. By using them you can show that you are part of the real sneaker culture. The disadvantage, however, is that this demand also does something to the price. Ruben said: *“Yes, it always is. Yes, it always is but nowadays since uh Virgil Abloh died, it is just not doable anymore to buy an off-white sneaker when it comes out, then the price shoots up to 1000 euro”* More sneaker collectors would therefore like to add these designer sneakers to their collection. However, this is not possible because of the price that has been driven up by the death

However, as previously stated, the background of the sneakers is not only about the sneaker's designer; there are also reasons to use specific sneakers due to the purchasing procedure. Due to market scarcity, it can be difficult to obtain the sneaker of your choice. Some

sneaker runs are not very large, making it tough to find certain sneakers, let alone find them in the proper size. As a result, collectors may have to wait months, if not years, to obtain the sneakers they desire. Like Niek said: “*Off white dunks, that I really think I want to wear that I am proud of. A hard-to-get pair, you know, that is what I like to show off.*” Once he has added his sneakers to his collection, he wants to be able to use them as soon as possible. Tim also had a unique anecdote about the purchase procedure of certain sneakers:

Tim: Yes, it was uh my sister, who had won a raffle. Uhm. But the only condition is that you must pick it up in a shop. Although. Yes, and that was in London then. And then my sister asked them: Can I bring someone? Because she also participated. But she has not won yet. Yes, he said yes, fine. Take her with you. And after that, we actually flew to London together. But uhm. Was jumping off. Went to a shoe shop that was kind of big. Uh. Yeah, it looks like the Bijenkorf. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Uh. And yes, then shoes were actually picked up and after that, we made a day of it in London.

So, when his sister uses those sneakers because they had to go to the store, she remembers their vacation to London together. So for her, the way she got her sneakers is a reason to use those sneakers from her collection.

The design of sneakers that refer to a specific city is the last specific factor in this background section that will be highlighted. Daan de Greef discusses his unique Rotterdam sneaker, called ‘De Kakkerlak’ (The Cockroach), in this podcast. This is a nickname for Rotterdam inhabitants that has been adopted by people of rival cities such as Amsterdam. So, he claims that with this sneaker in his collection, he wants to show which city he comes from. Brainpower does this with his Amsterdam Nike Air max 1. By using these sneakers, they show which city they come from and that is one reason to use these sneakers from their collection.

However, there is a disadvantage to this. There are even collectors who doubt using sneakers when visiting cities such as Rotterdam, as Alain van Duuren said. There are three crosses under each other on the bottom of the Amsterdam Nike Air max 1. That is an Amsterdam symbol. When those collectors visit Rotterdam, they say that they doubt the use of those sneakers because the three crosses are visible. So, they like to have them in their collection, but they hesitate sometimes to use them. Thus, there is tension between the collector's item and the use of it.

Also, Valerio uses certain sneakers because these shoes stand for a city or country. In his case, it is Italy (and his family is partly from Italy): “*I wear the air max 97 Silver Bullet, a shoe that always reminds me of Italy because they wear them so often there.*” The use of these

sneakers, therefore, reminds him of his family's country. So, at times this is just the sneaker for him to wear as opposed to other sneakers in his collection.

Besides the just mentioned justifications for the background of the sneakers, there were also a number of other reasons revealed in the interviews and the podcast. These reasons were not mentioned much, but I think they are notable. Nike IDs were discussed among participants and in the podcast. Nike IDs are sneakers in which the consumer can compose the sneaker completely in terms of colours and materials. These sneakers are made specifically for that person and that makes them unique. This is also a reason to use them so that sneakerheads can show others their unique sneaker. Another reason to use sneakers was that it had been announced that an old sneaker was being re-released. Since the new ones have not been released yet, you can show the rest of the world that you have the old ones in your collection by using them.

4.1.2 COMFORT OF THE SNEAKER

The comfort of sneakers is a very clear reason why people use sneakers as part of their collection. People prefer to walk on comfortable sneakers, as Niels stated in his interview: *“some shoes run better than others”*, Andor said: *“I wear NB because they fit well”* and Julian Jordan said: *“For work, I often wear simple shoes that run well on the airports and so on, especially a lot of Adidas, which I find very chilling with their foam soles.”* Not only these three people claimed it was because of comfort, but a total of 13 people said it was because of comfort when thinking about using their sneakers. If people use their sneakers a lot during the day, for instance, because they have to walk a lot on them, then the comfort of their sneakers is an important reason to choose certain sneakers from their collection to use that day.

Despite the fact that collectors place a high value on sneakers fitting properly and being the correct size, many collectors purchase sneakers that are not the correct size. These sneakers, on the other hand, are not meant to be worn. They are frequently purchased with the intention of reselling them. Because these sneakers are not meant to be worn, this does not contradict the comfort argument.

4.1.3 OUTFIT OF THE DAY

The third reason found for using sneakers is because of the outfit of the day. Many of the people interviewed get out of bed in the morning and put on some clothes, then look at their sneaker collection and try to find a sneaker that matches their outfit. As Tonko put it: *“No not necessarily, it is about what clothes I want to wear that day. It has to match (...) Yes, it is important to me. I mean I am not going to wear a red jumper with yellow shoes or something”*.

This is how the majority of individuals start their day. Jordi van de Bovenkamp mentioned this about using sneakers as a man in the podcast: *“I find that with men the sneaker makes the outfit as a necklace or earrings do with women”*. In this situation, the sneaker should not only complement the clothing but also complete it.

There is, however, another group of sneakerheads. They do not consider the sneaker to be part of the outfit, but rather something that defines the outfit. Those sneakerheads first take a look at their collection of sneakers and decide which sneakers they wish to use that day. They may choose a specific sneaker for a variety of reasons. However, they select the rest of their outfit for the day after selecting their sneakers. Ruben had this to say about it: *“I wake up and look at my sneaker wall and then I think, yes, this is what I am going to wear today and then I build my outfit on that.”* For him, sneakers are so significant that his entire outfit is determined by the sneakers he will use that day. This is something Niels can agree with.

4.1.4 SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

There are a few special activities discussed in the interviews and podcast episodes that have an impact on the use of sneakers. People use sneakers that are part of their collection for a variety of reasons, one of which is comfort, which might be linked to a specific activity. Collectors will use their sneakers for special activities not only for comfort but also to protect them.

As stated in the research context, sneakers were originally designed for sporting activities. Sneakers are still utilized for sports activities nowadays. Theun, who is a basketball player, says: *“Yes, and when I am playing basketball, I will wear the basketball star's team to go with my sneakers.”* And Bram is also a basketball player: *“Yes. Like when I play basketball, I do not wear Nike Air Force, I wear Nike Air Jordan 11 or Nike Air Jordan 13”*. When they take part in a sport, in this case, basketball, which requires sneakers, both participants use specific sneakers. So, in this case, they use the sneakers from their collection that are most suitable for basketball. Skating is another activity where special sneakers are used. Because it is part of their identity, there has always been a contrast between basketball and skateboarding sneakers. You can still see this, according to Jamie van Heije:

Jamie van Heije: What I found funny lately is that you see a lot of people arguing that you can't wear skate shoes like the dunk sb if you are not a skater and the same goes for basketball and for the 90s and everyone is trying to claim their culture while it is slowly disappearing.

With this and the rest of the conversation, he was attempting to convey that those individuals who skate believe that you cannot use skating sneakers (SBs) if you cannot do a backflip. The

majority of sneaker collectors, however, are unable to skate or play basketball. As a result, those who skate or play basketball match their sneakers with their identity. They, therefore, ensure that when they are seen within that community, they also choose the sneakers from their collection that match it. However, people who are not members of that community, on the other hand, use those sneakers whenever they choose. For them, it is not specifically a part of their identity.

There are also an increasing number of sneaker events. These events attract all sorts of people who are interested in sneakers. These events are a reason for sneakerheads to go wild in the sneakers they use. They can show what special sneakers they have in their collection. Roelof said about this: *“Yes, maybe so. For example, this one, which I wore to a sneaker fair, you want to look good.”* Tim can confirm this. All the reasons mentioned above do not apply in this particular case. According to these participants, it is about people seeing that they have super-exclusive sneakers in their collection. That is the reason to use them for that specific event.

4.2 REASONS WHY COLLECTORS DO NOT USE THEIR SNEAKERS

Following the section above, all of the justifications are listed for using sneakers that are part of their collection that were addressed in the interviews and podcast. The non-use of sneakers, on the other hand, will be discussed further below. According to the participants and podcast guests, there are a variety of explanations behind this. To begin, there is the aesthetic consideration.

4.2.1 AESTHETIC

In the interviews, there is a lot of talk about sneakers and their aesthetic relationship. In the interview with Roelof, he mentioned one of these reasons: *“So, you have 10/15 pairs that you wear every other day or actually every day and then you have 20/30 pairs that are really your gems, and you do not wear them.”* As a result, sneaker collectors sometimes consider sneakers to be a type of art that is too beautiful or good to use. Bart also stated he does not use certain sneakers: *“Because some sneakers are very awesome, they are only suitable for display cabinets, and they are never worn.”* Bart takes it a step further by displaying his sneakers in cabinets. If he wants to use his sneakers, he must first remove them from the displays before putting them on. Those sneakers are not quite ready to walk in yet. In addition, the exclusive pairs of both participants are separated from the part of the collection that is worn. So, the sneakerheads are very proud that these sneakers are part of their collection, but don't want to use them.

In the episode with Brainpower and Jamie van Heije, they talk about how some sneakers are more of a collector's piece than a sneaker to use. According to Brainpower: *"I think so because the collector in me sees it more as a collector's item and does not attract it that quickly."* After Brainpower said this, Jamie van Heije confirmed the reasons for not using those sneakers but only having them in the collection.

4.2.2 DAMAGE

Another reason why collectors do not use the sneakers that are part of their collection is the possibility of them being damaged. One feature of sneakers is that they degrade more quickly as they age. In the podcast, Valerio and Non discussed this topic, saying:

Non: I used to walk on them a few years ago, but I do not dare anymore.

Valerio: You are afraid that they are going to crumble?

Non: Yes, exactly

So, one of the reasons why sneaker collectors do not use old sneakers is that the soles are of lower quality. The condition of the sole is described as 'crumbling'. However, these sneakers are so old that they have become a real collector's item, so they still like to keep them in their collection.

However, not everyone waits that long to put on their sneakers. There are enough sneaker collectors who use their sneakers but are always aware of what the day's plans are. So, if the sneaker collector is aware that the sneakers may be damaged on that particular day, he or she will avoid using them. For example, when sneaker collectors know they go to the forest or another place where it can be wet and dirty, they use mostly older sneakers:

Ruben: Yes, because when I go to the forest, for example, I do not wear my nice shoes, I wear a pair of worn-out ones. The same goes for when I go to kick a ball, I put on my football boots or my kick-off shoes. Because once you kick the ball, it is bad for the material, and what is on the ball can transfer to your shoe, and you get scratches or other colours on your shoe.

So, when there is a chance of damage because of the place where it will be walked on, these collectors do not choose the sneakers from their collection that they would like to keep clean and beautiful. In this case, they choose sneakers from their collection where they care less about getting dirty and damaged. This is the same for going to the café or a festival. These are also places where sneakers can get damaged faster. People do not use the special sneakers of their collection, but will use old ones:

Tonko: Yes, when we go out, we do not go out on the most special sneakers, because you do not want to spend the whole evening protecting your sneakers. If someone steps on your shoes, you cannot get angry, you know. You do not say you broke my 300-euro sneakers, you have to pay for them.

The fact that sneakers can easily be damaged in the café is a reason for Tonko and also for Valerio not to wear exclusive shoes from their collection. Like Ruben, they use other sneakers from their collection that are more suitable for this purpose. Sneaker collectors are generally very protective of their exclusive sneakers and do not want to damage them. Ruben said about this: *“Yeah, I just want to keep them nice. I always think it is a shame when I see that they are a bit broken”*.

However, when sneaker collectors know that their sneakers will not be damaged that day, or that they will be able to use them, they may choose not to use them. The reason is that they do not want to use their sneakers too often. The reason behind this is that when they walk too much on their sneakers, that can potentially damage their sneakers also.

Ruben: Actually, it is also true that you should not wear your nice shoes too often, because then they break down faster, so you have to change them a bit so that you can use them longer. Every time the weather is nice, and you walk in the same shoes, you just kick them off. You just change them constantly to have something new on your feet and to keep them in the best condition, so to speak.

Also, Lumine spoke about this, she said: *“Of course, I do not want my shoes to wear out”*. Rene van Meurs had questions in the podcast about this, because he said: *“I have a big problem with this shoe. It is my favorite shoe, so I really want to wear it, but I also want to keep it clean, so I do not like to wear it”*. So, the possibility that sneakers can be damaged by using them too much is a reason to not use the sneakers. Chanica Kist gave Rene van Meurs a solution to solve his problem, she responds to his question by: *“Then you have to buy them twice”*.

When sneakers are already damaged, this will be a reason to use them for activities when they become more damaged, as previously stated. Other collectors of sneakers do not use them at all. Bram answered the subject of whether or not he uses worn-out sneakers by saying: *“Yes. If that sneaker is too worn out, I do not wear them, I try to wear other sneakers”*. 5 participants that were interviewed can confirm this.

4.2.3 WEATHER

Weather damage is a unique type of damage and is the third reason to not use sneakers. Sneakers are easily damaged by the weather. The weather can harm sneakers for a variety of reasons. The material of the sneakers is one of the explanations. Several participants stated that they do not use particular sneakers from their collection when they know it will be a rainy day or that there will be mud on the streets due to previous rain. Hein had this to say about it: *“But then I tend to think that if it rains really hard and there is mud and I do not know what else, I will just skip them for now and put on other shoes, fine”*. As a result, rain or mud can affect how a sneaker collector dresses. They put on their old sneakers when they know it is going to rain. The sneakers they use at that moment are called ‘peat’. When Tonko talked about his sneaker collection, he said this regarding the top-shelf sneakers: *“Yeah, I mean you have got the three next to the purple shoes at the top that are all suede and if water gets on them, you just f*ck that shit up”*.



Figure 1: Tonko his sneaker collection. You can see the sneakers on the top shelf that are not used during rainy weather.

So, because the sneakers were made of suede, he did not use them when it rained. He also stated that he did not use the sneakers in the winter because they are from suede and had mostly light colours, as he stated: *“But of course, it will soon be summer, then it is more time to wear such a shoe, but they have been standing still the whole winter”*. As a result: Tonko had no preference for using particular sneakers in his collection when the weather did not permit him to do so, as in the winter period. Some people believe that sneakers are not shoes that are worn in the winter at all. They use sneakers in the summers and use other shoes in the winter. When it comes to the seasons of the year and the sneaker collection, Ruben says:

Ruben: And when it is autumn, you put on a few brown shoes. In the summer, I often see people wearing, uh, those coloured, lighter-coloured shoes. You do not go in the summer with black shoes on and that attracts heat, you best put on light shoes then.

So, the weather and certain seasons are a reason for sneaker collectors to not use certain sneakers that are part of their collection. However, this was not the only thing participants had to say about the weather. Some even claimed to have specific sneakers for different weather conditions. During his interview, Ruben also mentioned that he got rainy-day sneakers in his sneaker collection: *“Yes or I wear sneakers made for that weather, for example, waterproof*

gore-tex shoes or something". So, he used sneakers from his sneaker collection that were not the ones that were 'peat'. He used sneakers that were made for the type of weather.

4.2.4 THEY ARE NOT PART OF THEIR WEARABLE COLLECTION

The last reason why sneaker collectors do not use their sneakers is that the sneakers they own are not part of their wearable collection. There are a variety of reasons why people do not use their sneakers. A few have already been mentioned in other categories. The beginning of the part about damaging makes note of the crumbling soles. The sole is cracking due to the fact that the sneaker is quite ancient. So, people will not use them because they damage really fast. However, most people do not use crumbling sneakers at all. Davy James revealed in the podcast that he did not walk in sneakers before 2007. He stated: "*What happens to the sole is that it gets old, and you can see this in pairs from before 2007, and sometimes also in those from 2007, that they start to crack and crumble, or whatever you want to call it*". He does not walk on sneakers that are more than 14 years old since the condition of the sole is too poor to walk on. This was recorded in 2021. However, these sneakers are still part of his collection.

The second reason why sneakers are not part of the wearable collection is that they want to resell those sneakers. When sneakers are brand new and still in their original packaging, they can be sold for more money than when they are used. Some selling websites would not even accept used sneakers. StockX is one of the more well-known websites where people may sell their sneakers. These sneakers, however, must be unworn. If the sneakers are used, they will not be able to be sold on this platform, and the individual will have to search for another platform to sell his sneakers on. This is what Conny had to say about it: "*No, if I was going to resell, I would not be wearing these sneakers*". And also, Niek said about this: "*No, not really, for reselling, if I get them and I want to resell them, I do not wear them*". The sneakers that are meant for reselling are therefore in general not part of the sneaker collection.

Sometimes, however, there is a possibility that the sneakers will eventually be worn by the sneakerhead. In this case, the sneaker is part of the collection but is not used. Only when a final decision is taken on the possible use or reselling, only then it is definitively taken into or out of the collection.

A second reason why certain shoes are not part of the wearable collection is the fitting. Some sneakers do not fit for different reasons, including that they are meant to be for reselling. Some less common sizes are worth more than other more common sizes. There are two ways to look at this fit. The first is that the sneakers are either too large or too small. Tim stated in interviews that the sneakers no longer fit him: "*Uhm, yes, some shoes do not fit me*

anymore, they are too small. So, some of them are just sitting in the box and I cannot wear them, but most of them I really wear". So, because the sneakers do not fit, he does not use them. However, these sneakers do have a certain value for him, which makes them part of his collection. Sometimes sneakerheads like certain sneakers so much that they would rather have the wrong size in their collection than not have it. Often sneakerheads then go on to look for the right size, but until then, the sneaker is a real collector's item for them.

Another reason why individuals feel sneakers do not fit is that they might be part of a person's identity. When people have a certain identity, they believe that certain sneakers are inappropriate. As Jamie van Heije previously stated, skateboarders' identity is defined by their sneakers. Non and Valerio spoke in the podcast about how some sneakers do not fit their identity:

Valerio: I am wearing a shoe that I think is really underrated, I really love it I know you do not like it at all

Non: No, I like this one, but for women, you are a bit feminine, and you have a small size so you can have it. You can have it if you have small feet.

As a result, Non stated that Valerio's sneakers are inappropriate for him, He claimed that because of Valerio's identity, the sneakers he uses are fine. He believes, however, that the sneakers are not his because they do not accord with his identity. So, in this case, the sneakers are part of the collection, but because they don't belong to the identity of the sneakerhead, they are not used.

In this case, it was the height of the person that made certain sneakers fit them or not. Valerio is not the only one in the podcast who is a touch short and who takes that into account in his sneakers. Geza Weisz is a guest on one of the podcast's episodes. When he discusses the sneakers he uses, he also discusses his height. Geza Weisz claims that he is small and that certain kinds of sneakers make him feel like he is walking in really large sneakers.

Geza Weisz: Yes, I have very simple ones, I actually have these but the low version, which is what I was going to say. I prefer to wear low Nikes, or low sneakers in general because I like that. I do not have very long legs and that is why high shoes are boots. Then it is like, where are those big shoes with the little man going?

So, Geza Weisz does not use such sneakers, but that does not mean he cannot have such sneakers in his collection.

Another reason why people do not use their sneakers is that they own two pairs. One to use and one to keep on the shelf as a collection object. Frank had this to say about it: "*These*

are the only shoes I have left unworn, and that is because I have them twice.” Frank is not the only one who has doubled the number of pairs of sneakers in his collection. This is also something that Jamie van Heije does. Jamie uses his sneakers more when he knows he has two of them. He then wears out his sneakers completely because he knows he has another pair in his collection. So, Jamie van Heije chooses to use a pair that he has in his collection again, rather than a pair he only has once. This way, the types of sneakers in his collection remain the same and his collection does not deteriorate because of the use of his sneakers. Chanica Kist also said earlier that buying sneakers twice is a solution for not using certain sneakers. In the podcast, Jamie talked about buying his trainers twice: *“By the time I start working with them, I will either have 2, or they will already be written off in my mind.”*

Another reason why people do not use their sneakers is that they believe they are too pricey to use. Bram’s claim is as follows: *“Because those sneakers are more expensive, I do not want to wear them”*. Hein also discusses overpriced sneakers, stating that he believes some sneakers are too expensive to use, but that those sneakers are not currently in his collection. As a result, he cannot guarantee definitely that he will not use sneakers that are perhaps too pricey for him. Tonko, too, tells this story:

Tonko: Uh, nah I think I have thought about it once, that I had a shoe like maybe I would not wear it, but I do not think so. You buy them to wear them personally than if I really want them for myself, but suppose it can be once of wow, I actually want this really fat shoe of 1000 euros, but I would not be able to afford to do that, but my shoes are not that expensive.

So, in the hypothetical case when he owns extremely costly sneakers, he would not use them.

5 DISCUSSION

Throughout the previous sections, we have seen that the worlds of collecting, use and non-use and sneakers came a little bit closer to each other. Whereas academics writing about collecting often insist on the non-use of objects that are part of a collection, this is not so strict in the collections maintained by sneaker collectors (Belk, 1995; Belk, et al. 1991). This section discusses the conceptual implications that the findings have uncovered, as well as the managerial implications. Besides that, it also discusses potential future research topics that arise during the writing of this master thesis.

5.1 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The literature on collecting, hoarding and usage and non-use is discussed in this master's thesis. First, academics write about their collections not being used, and if they do utilize them, they treat them as a 'sacred' thing, according to the literature on collecting (Belk, 1995). The mainstream collections are made up of goods that are no longer in use and have been removed from daily use. People will not, for example, send a letter using stamps from their collection. This means that people keep and protect their collections on shelves, in rooms, in scrapbooks, or in other ways.

Sneaker collections can be displayed on shelves, in rooms, or in boxes just like any other type of collection. Nonetheless, as the findings show, sneakers that are part of a collection can be used. They cannot all be used at the same time, but there are some sneakers from the collection that are used on a regular basis throughout the year. To put it another way, sneakers from a collection are being used. If you look at the academic studies of Belk et al. (1991), which are mentioned in the theoretical framework, all the collectors of sneakers are not collectors. Sneakers, according to academics, are no longer part of the collection because they are not only used on special occasions or very rarely.

The participants, on the other hand, fully contradict this. All of their sneakers, they claim, are part of their collection. Some have claimed that the sneakers that are meant for reselling are not part of their collection, but that was never the objective when they were purchased. As a result, I believe that the concept of collecting should be broadened. The objects that are used regularly in daily life, such as sneakers, should be given their own category under the current thinking on collecting. Perhaps this also applies to other collectables such as music records or cars. I understand why academics say that it is not part of a collection, however, this does not apply to all types of objects in a collection. Franco et al. (2022) and Scaraboto et al. (2016) understand this because they also see that the collectable items can be used. What they

are really saying is that objects can be used, but that they should be handled with particular care. As a type of museum curator, people come to you with their collections. In the findings, we see that the sneakerheads are careful with their exclusive sneakers. Nevertheless, some sneakers also become 'peat' due to frequent wearing. Based on the findings, wearing sneakers is not in line with the curator described by Scaraboto et al. (2016). Indeed, in this case, it is more a case of regular use than that one special bottle of wine that Scaraboto et al. (2016) cited in their article.

Second, according to Duggleby (1978), collectors should not regard their collection as an investment, and if they do, it is not a collection. There is, however, one exception to this rule. That is when collectors segregate their share that is meant to be an investment from their part that is meant to be a collection.

A number of resellers were among the collectors interviewed for this master's thesis. These individuals stated that when sneakers are used in the sneakers culture, they become less valued, and that was not the aim. As a result, participants are less likely to use their sneakers, as evidenced by the data. However, some resellers do use the sneakers that were intended for reselling. This only happens at the moment that the collector chooses that he would rather have the sneaker in his collection than resell it. The investment and the collection are thus separated and the sneakers from the investment are only brought into the collection if the sneaker will no longer be resold. The behaviour of the collectors is therefore in line with how Duggleby (1978) described it.

Third, hoarding is discussed in the theoretical context. Following a thorough examination of the findings. Collecting sneakers is more about collecting than hoarding, in my opinion. Despite the fact that only one sneaker can be worn at a time. As a result, if you buy new sneakers, but do not put the old ones away, your inventory will increase yet your consumption will remain unchanged. That is the definition of hoarding, however, new sneakers are seen as a different product than the old ones. So, in the eyes of the collectors, there is no hoarding of the same product, but collecting of different sneakers. This can be seen, for example, in the rationale for the sneaker's background. Because the sneaker has a story behind it, it is a good excuse to use one instead of another.

Fourth, there are not many explanations for why people use or do not utilize objects about use and non-use. According to Trocchia and Janda's article from 2002, there are a few reasons why individuals do not use items. They talked about disappointing results of the product, lack of enthusiasm, unmet expectations, difficulties in product use, maintenance, and contingency reasons, displaced by current possessions, self-consciousness and concern about

injury (Trocchia & Janda, 2002). The aesthetic side of items is discussed in the article of Wu et al. 2017, which has a beneficial impact during the purchasing process but a negative impact on product use.

So, there are ten reasons why customers do not use their goods according to Trocchia and Janda (2002). Nine of these reasons are not discovered in this master's thesis's data. The aesthetic influence is the only reason that agrees with the existing literature. Participants stated that they regard some sneakers as works of art or that they consider them to be so unique that they do not use them. Participants stated that they do not want their sneakers to be damaged if they do not use them. I would argue that this is the same as maintenance because as sneakers become damaged, they must be cleaned and may be repaired. You can say that this is maintenance. However, I do not believe that the term 'maintenance' is appropriate in this circumstance. All the other reasons of Trocchia and Janda (2002), cannot be confirmed. However, they cannot be disproved on the basis of the data either

There are a few explanations given in Mellander and McIntyre's (2020) article on why people do not use their clothes or shoes. The following were the reasons they discovered: the clothes are old, but they keep them because they bring back memories, they are for future use, they do not fit or are uncomfortable. According to this master's thesis, certain sneakers are no longer worn since they are crumbling. People will not walk on these sneakers since they are too old. Those sneakers, on the other hand, are still in their closet.

The reason for future use was only stated by one participant, so it is not the most reliable confirmation. Someone bought a sneaker, and he thought it was only for the summer, according to the story. As a result, he did not put them on until summer. The third reason was that your clothes did not fit properly. There were two reasons why they did not fit. It was an improper size or did not match the person's personality. The findings of this master's thesis support both of these arguments for not using sneakers.

Finally, people do not use their clothes or shoes because they are uncomfortable, according to Mellander and McIntyre (2020). Only twice in the podcast was this reason confirmed by people who were guests in the podcast. As a result, those individuals will not use their sneakers since they are uncomfortable. People, on the other hand, frequently state that they prefer to use their sneakers because they are more comfortable. In this scenario, Mellander and McIntyre's (2020) reasoning is reversed.

The weather, the possibility of damage, the special activity, the fact that the sneakers are not part of their wearing collection, and the aesthetic are all reasons why people do not use their sneakers. These are the reasons that have been discussed thoroughly in the findings

section. These reasons are not the same as the ones given in the previous articles. Because sneakers are used in everyday life, even when they are part of a bigger collection, in this case. When sneakers are used, there is always the risk of them becoming damaged. Participants indicated they do not use their sneakers very often because simply wearing them can damage them. In addition, sneakerheads typically use their sneakers while walking. In other words, when they walk outside, they must use sneakers. When you step outside, there are a variety of environmental conditions that can affect the condition of your sneakers. As a result, the reasons for non-use in this master's thesis differ from those in the articles.

Besides that, there are also new reasons why people use their sneakers instead of non-use. People use their sneakers for a variety of reasons that are not documented in the literature, including the sneaker's background, comfort, outfit of the day and special activities. One of the reasons for the lack of reasons for the use and non-use of sneakers may be the way in which academics at CCT research collections. Indeed, many of the articles written by academics are articles that deal with the concept of collecting. However, they are not concerned with researching how people actually interact with their collections. They often do not have their own data to process. This could be a reason why many new reasons have been found in this master thesis.

5.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Consumers who buy products but do not use them can boost sales of those products, but there is also a downside to non-use. Managers must be aware of these undesirable consequences. Because they do not use the product, they are unlikely to buy it again. Unused products can also produce unattractive visual pictures, which can spread poor word-of-mouth to potential new customers. Managers can use the causes for non-use from this study, as well as the correlations with motivation to buy those items, to figure out why they are not using them. The influence of individual characteristics on product non-use has not been examined, according to the articles used for this master thesis, however, this could be a suitable future study.

The findings of this master's thesis can be applied in practice on the aesthetic level. These findings reveal a dilemma for marketing managers. Marketers strive to make their products as appealing as possible and to put as much effort into them as possible, but it is not as simple as that. Consumers will be favourably influenced by the product's appearance during the decision-making process. However, the data show that highly aesthetic products are used much less by consumers than less aesthetic products, and consumers also derive less satisfaction

from consuming a highly aesthetic product. Highly aesthetic products will be used later than less aesthetic products, affecting the period between purchases.

So, on the one hand, there must be a balance between aesthetics and short-term sales, and on the other hand, there must be a balance between the need to drive consumption, customer happiness, and long-term profitability. There are also very aesthetic objects that, rather than being used, have a decorative purpose due to their highly aesthetic profile. As a result, the recommendations of Wu et al. (2017) are not as easy as they had planned. Furthermore, their findings demonstrate that making items less aesthetically makes them easier to utilize. As a result, this may have an impact on product usage that is more environmentally friendly.

Besides that, the weather and the seasons are other factors that collectors consider when using their sneakers. Particular sneakers are used less frequently or not at all when it rains a lot and causes significant harm to certain materials. This is a novel justification that wasn't previously known for not using sneakers. Marketers can respond to this by releasing sneakers that can endure the weather at specific periods of the year. As a result, it is preferable to use suede-covered shoes in the summer and less-used sneakers in the winter. In addition to the weather and the seasons of the year, marketers can also respond to the climates that exist around the world. What at one moment is not a good sneaker to use in Europe, can at that moment be a good sneaker to use in Australia.

What managers and marketers can also consider are the activities that people undertake. For some activities, certain sneakers are ideal. It is, therefore, useful to know what people do in their environment so that the sneakers released in the shop can be adjusted accordingly. In places where basketball is popular, people will use more basketball sneakers. The supply of basketball shoes in the shop can therefore be increased. On the other hand, in places where people engage in other kinds of activities, more attention can be paid to that.

5.3 CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Although useful data has come out of the interviews and the podcast, and a better picture has emerged about the use and non-use of sneakers, there are also some legitimate limits to this study. This research was completed as part of my master's degree program in Business Administration. It is a master's thesis that took six months to complete. That meant there was not a lot of time to conduct the research. When there was more time, this research might be expanded, with broader literature and additional data. But that was not the case, so the study was time-limited, requiring decisions that met deadlines but did not necessarily enhance the quality of the research.

One way to better manage time was to subdivide the participants into different students. The interviews for this master's thesis were conducted by four separate students. All of the students were preparing their master's thesis on a topic related to sneaker culture. The participants were separated into four groups, with each group receiving the same questions from all four students. Despite the discussions about the questions and the appointments for interviews, the data is different between the interviews conducted by the various students. The other students never followed up when a participant said something intriguing; they only asked the questions that were assigned to them. But if they had followed up with more questions, the responses might have been richer and more nuanced. If one individual had performed all of the interviews, this might have been avoided.

The Sneakerjagers podcast is also included in the data. Valerio Zeno is the host of this podcast. He is someone who knows a lot about sneakers and tries to explain them as much as possible, but he is the one who asks the questions. As a result, the questions are being asked because Valerio is interested in the subject. The interview questions would have been different if all of these guests had been interviewed for this master's thesis. Several factors in the world of sneakers have been made clearer with the information learned from the podcast. These aspects, though, might have been better researched when they were conducted for this master thesis. However, this is always the case when information that was acquired by another party for a different reason, is used.

The final limitation is that the participants were exclusively young people/students. There may be distinctions between older people who have been involved in the sneaker culture for a longer time and younger people. It is possible that the data varies depending on how long someone has been in the sneaker culture. There are certain distinctions between the podcast guests and the participants, although these variances are not necessarily significant. As a result, when the participants were of a greater range of ages, the results could be different. However, the researcher's network had too few sneakerheads to choose between the various ages.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Interviews and the podcast were utilized to compile the data for this master's thesis. The length of time people spend in the world of sneakers and the number of sneakers they own are two major differences between interview participants and podcast guests. Each of the participants had a maximum of 50 pairs of sneakers. However, there were podcast guests who talked about collections of several hundred sneakers. When a person's collection grows larger, there can be significant variation in how they use the items in their collection. The data could not reveal a

significant difference because the podcast guests were not interviewed. Nonetheless, there were some disparities in the responses to questions about usage and non-use, as well as the types of sneakers in the collection. When a collection grows larger, it is probable that sneaker collectors' use and non-use behaviour differs.

Dai and Fishbach (2014) wrote a study about people's growing need for items even when they are not being used. This is not reflected in this master's thesis. Based on the data found, this is possibly a phenomenon that occurs in the world of sneakers. People frequently claimed that they had been hunting for certain sneakers for years while listening to the podcast. The need became more and stronger, and they could be satisfied when the sneakers arrived at their house. This cannot be proved based on the data from this study, but it is unquestionably a passing trend that is still being understudied.

The article by Mellander and McIntyre (2020) contains arguments for not wearing clothes and shoes. Two of the four arguments given there can be confirmed based on this master's thesis. The only two that could be confirmed were the fit and too old. Future use and discomfort are two considerations that could not be confirmed. However, only one or two participants mentioned these reasons. This could indicate that these two explanations are correct, but that they were not revealed during the interviews due to the asking. This could be proven in a future study by focusing more on future use and the decreased comfort of various sneakers during interviews rather than comfort.

One of the most confirmed reasons to use sneakers was because they are comfortable. The striking thing in this area is that collectors also buy sneakers that do not fit, so those sneakers are not in the right size. Despite the fact that the size is not the right one, some collectors still walk on those sneakers. Like Valerio who said the following in the podcast: "*I got my shoes from Japan in the past, but unfortunately they are a full size too big*". In this scenario, using a specific sneaker takes priority over comfort. However, this was not requested in the interviews, and only Valerio acknowledged it in the podcast. It is unclear whether this is a common occurrence or if Valerio is the only one.

When asked about damaging the sneaker during the interviews, a few participants had different perspectives from what was written down in the findings of this master thesis. Some of the participants believe that sneakers are designed to be used. As a result, people use their sneakers even on days when they know they may be destroyed. They believe that you can clean your sneakers, but sneakers are designed to be used, and that the damage that occurs when you use them is a natural element of the sneaker. Or, to put it another way, some people use all of their sneakers in this situation, whereas others have a reason to avoid using certain sneakers.

Do those who use everything fail to notice these factors, or do sneakers have a different worth in their eyes? This is currently unknown; however, it would be interesting to look into it further.

During the interviews, some participants stated that they do not use or would not use overpriced sneakers. The difference between the podcast's guests is that none of them indicated they would not use their sneakers because they were too expensive. There is currently no valid cause for the disparity between these groups. The only known distinction between these groups is that the podcast guests have more sneakers and have been involved in sneaker culture for longer. It is unclear whether this discrepancy is the reason they do not use their costly sneakers.

The issue of activity is one of the most difficult aspects of this master thesis' findings. The action has two sides that are diametrically opposed. On the one hand, there are unique activities such as sneaker events, where sneakerheads can display their most unique sneakers. On such occasions, sneakerheads use their most exclusive sneakers. However, there are some activities where people do not wish to use their most unique sneakers. They use 'peat' and ruined sneakers. When they go to a festival or the woods, for example. Sneakerheads still use the sneakers in their collections, but they do not walk around in the special ones. As a result, the most important question is: how does the use of the sneaker relate to the activity planned?

This research was done within the world of sneakers. Not much research has been done on this culture yet. In addition, little research has been done on the collecting literature on the use of collectables. The main idea at the moment is that objects from the collection are not used, but this master thesis has proven otherwise. This opposite is probably not only present within the collection of sneakers. I expect that the opposite could also be proven in collections of music (records), wines, cars, sportswear, and for example books. However, research on this is still needed. It would therefore be interesting to investigate whether the reasons found in this master's thesis also apply to these collectables.

All of the aforementioned product categories have been collected today. These are all items that are frequently used in daily life, quite like sneakers. On the other hand, little is known about how collectors handle these collectables. The arguments made in this master's thesis may also be applicable for some products. Differences are, however, also expected. At this point, it is unclear what the variations might be. Therefore, it would be extremely fascinating to look into the utilization of such collectables in the future.

6 CONCLUSION

This master thesis has answered the research question, “*What are the factors that influence the use and non-use of sneakers?*” Research has been done into the use or non-use of products, but never in combination with sneakers. Based on the data of this master thesis, various factors can be identified that influence the use and non-use of sneakers.

Sneakers can be a part of a broad sneaker collection. The objects that are part of the collection are no longer used, and if they are, they are not used on a regular basis, according to standard collection literature. The findings of this master’s thesis, on the other hand, suggest otherwise. Participants in the master’s thesis and guests on the podcast use sneakers from their personal collection. That is not to say that they use all of them, but sneakers are used on a daily basis and are not treated as sacred objects.

Apart from that, the following reasons are supported by collecting literature: the collection is not an investment, and certain items in the collection might be considered works of art. Based on the findings, the following arguments from the use and non-use literature can be confirmed: it is too old to use, aesthetic, or it does not fit (in terms of size or identity). Some arguments, such as the fact that objects are not yet used since they were purchased for the future are unconfirmed. Furthermore, comfort was proven, but not the non-using because of the object’s uncomfortable nature.

Moreover, there are other arguments from the literature that are not supported by the findings. Disappointing product outcomes, lack of enthusiasm, unmet expectations, difficulties in product use, maintenance, and contingency reasons, displaced by current possessions, self-consciousness, and concern about the injury. All of these issues, however, have never been addressed in the findings or in this master’s thesis, thus they cannot be rejected.

Aside from the well-known explanations in the literature, some novel justifications for why people do not use certain sneakers have arisen. It is about the weather, the risk of damage, and the fact that it is not part of the wearing collection in this case. Other than that, there are a variety of new reasons why individuals use their sneakers. It is due to special activities, comfort, the outfit of the day and the sneaker’s background in this situation.

To answer the main question, there are factors to use: special activities, comfort, outfit of the day and the background of the sneakers and factors for non-use: too old, aesthetic, does not fit, weather, the possibility of damage and not part of the wearing collection.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview questions:

1. Which sneakers are in your sneaker collection?
2. Which of these sneakers do you wear?
3. If you wear sneakers, how do you feel about these sneakers compared to the rest of the collection, are these worn sneakers still part of that collection or not?
4. What are reasons why some shoes are never worn and are just part of the collection and others are?
 - a. Does the activity affect the choice of wearing certain sneakers that day?
 - b. Does the weather affect the choice of wearing certain sneakers that day?
 - c. Does the possibility that the sneaker can damage affect the choice of wearing certain sneakers?
 - i. And when they get damaged do you regret wearing them affecting the reselling of these sneakers?
 - d. Are there other reasons then mentioned before why you wear or wear some sneakers not?
 - e. Can sneakers from the collection be included in the sneaker rotation and if so, what is the reason for that?
5. Are there special sneakers for special occasions, so that you only wear them on those occasions?
6. Are there certain stories behind the shoes that make you want to wear these sneakers or not?
7. How many sneakers are in your sneaker rotation and why this number of sneakers?
8. How do sneakers get into your sneaker rotation and does the process of sneakers getting into your sneaker rotation happen consciously or do unconscious factors also come into play?
9. Are non-human factors like the weather or factors like the activity you are going to do a reason to include or exclude certain sneakers in your sneaker rotation?
10. Suppose all circumstances were ideal for wearing sneakers, so there is almost no chance of your sneakers getting damaged or dirty, would that influence which sneakers you would wear and if so, would you wear all the sneakers in your collection or would you always leave some unworn?