



Fashion system in Milan

Identify & Explore

Team Gingerbreads

Amarinder Arora
Martina Bon
Marco Finardi
Aurora Serra
Riccardo Torta

Institution

Politecnico di Milano

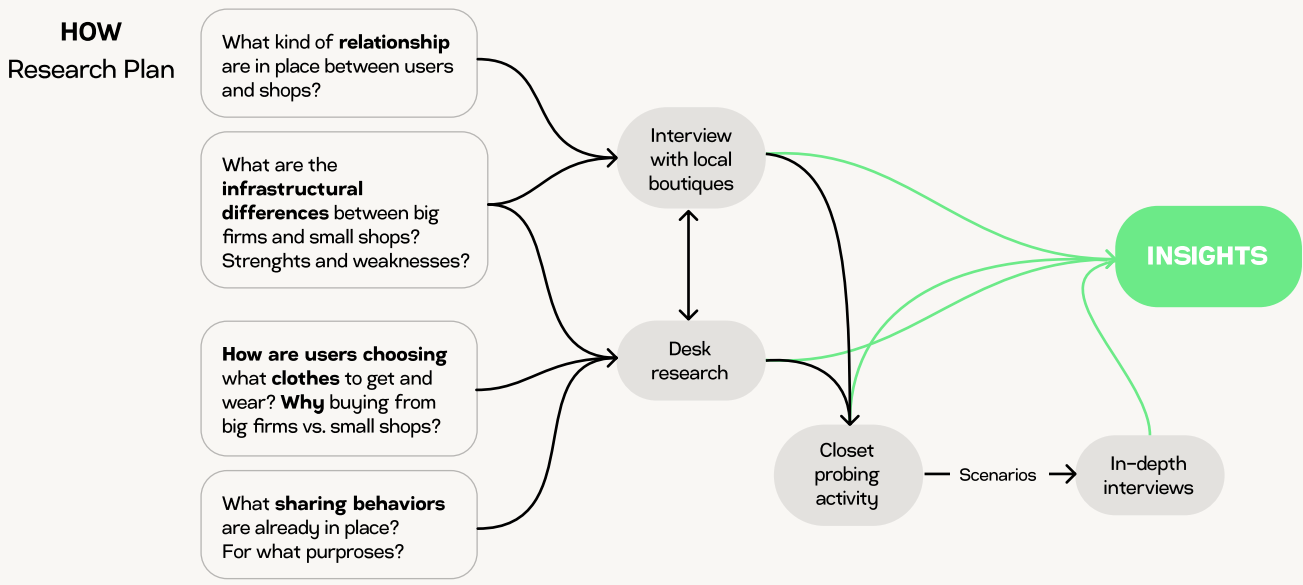
Location

Milan, Italy

In our proposal, we focused on slowing fast fashion down by empowering small boutiques.

Going forward into the **'identify and explore'** phase, we analyse and reflect on the choices we made using the 'WHY WHY WHY' technique. We confront our research with questions that need further investigation in order to **challenge and remove our internal biases**. This section is a synthesis of the three major stakeholders and the considerations we'll take forward to investigate and explore more possibilities.

WHO Stakeholder	Users People who buy clothes	Local Boutiques	Fast fashion brands
WHY Importance	We want to deepen our understanding of people's consumption patterns of fashion/ clothes consumption. The factors that drive their decisions. Also, what are the enablers and obstacles in their choices and decision-making.	We want to deepen our understanding on the factors that make small boutiques sustainable: environmental, socially, infrastructurally. Further, we need to enquire into the different business models that they leverage on.	We want to challenge our bias of fast fashion being unsustainable and evil. We want to do a thorough understanding of how fast fashion brands operate, specifically investigating into the positive impact that they are/might be creating in the fashion industry.
WHAT Questions	<p>Why people buy from big fashion chains?</p> <p>What makes people want to thrift?</p> <p>What are the needs, wants and desires of people when it comes to clothing?</p>	<p>What is the user demographic that buys from small-scale businesses?</p> <p>Are these businesses sustaining economically?</p> <p>What are their challenges and struggles?</p>	<p>What strategies do big brands employ to drive consumers?</p> <p>Are there any motivations in place to build strong customer relationships?</p> <p>How does their current infrastructure and supply chain look like?</p>





Digging Deep | Desk Research

Users

The desk research into user's behaviours and consumption patterns gave us a framework to build our enquiry upon. We investigated into different values i.e indicators that forms the basis of choice in acquiring clothes. This led us to digging deep into the forms of circulation of clothes that are currently practiced; analysing and drawing insights from this research gave us design probes to design our semi-structured interviews with users.

It was interesting to note that majority of the research drew attention to **retention**, **replacement** and **disposal** as three primary streams related to user behaviour.

The Choice Framework

The framework is grounded in the aspect of retention, and it helped us in understanding emerging themes and patterns around which we designed our probing activity with the participants. It covers essential attributes broadly speaking about needs, wants, motivations and desires of users.

PRIORITY INDICATORS

Functional
Care & maintenance and longevity.

Emotional
Attachment and aesthetic.

Conditional
Price, customization, colour, cut

INFLUENTIAL INDICATORS

Epistemic
Knowledge of personal style, material, needs and habits

Social
Fashion trends, choices made by friends, family,

Aspirational
Contentment, wants and desires

The Sharing Variables

The framework is grounded in the aspect of replacement and disposal, and it helped us in understanding different forms of circulation of clothes. The channels of flow informed us about new stakeholders of the system, as well as drew attention on the knowledge of consumers and their behaviours when it comes to sharing clothes.

FORMS OF CIRCULATION

LEARNINGS

Inside/ outside commercial exchange



It's difficult because of taste, gendered fashion, and trends

Inside/ outside household



Sharing is common inside families or close friends / inheritance

Shared use/ shared ownership



There is still a perceived norm of one owner = one user

Sharing timing (sequential, contemporary..)



People forget clothes, and there are often clothes that are useful but not wanted, in line with season or taste.

Fast Fashion Brands

The research primarily put focus on two streams: technical and organizational, and consumers. We emphasize on what the fast fashion brands are doing to be more sustainable, synthesize their initiatives, underline the outcomes and highlight the gaps and what's not working.

	WHAT	HOW	OUTCOMES	OUR LEARNINGS
Technical and Organizational focus	Lowering negative environmental and social impacts per unit through efficiency gains	Reducing resource use, and create closed loops for material flows	Reductions in energy, material & water consumption, and production of biodegradable clothes	The production and consumption of clothes is ever increasing, adding to fast fashion problems.
Consumer Focus	Transparency with processes socially and operationally	Giving full details and recycling initiatives of the item, and taking clothes as donations	Brand optimization of the cycle of clothing adding to brand reputation	Essentially selling less environmental guilt to consumers, and not building effective relationships Conscious consumerism isn't a priority retail therapy is very prominent

Local Boutiques | Primary Research

We interviewed new small businesses and went back to some old ones to better understand the dynamics and infrastructures that they rely on.

We created strategic tools to frame our enquiry. We focused on analysing their regular customers profiles to create personas. We created experience journey maps for these personas to map and dig deeper into each step that leads to the final sale of clothes.

The journeys enabled us to identify and contact the material suppliers, as well gain an understanding on the many smaller design services that the shops offer after the purchase. Moreover, we asked some retailers to map and visualize the stakeholders that are essential for their business and the relationship they share with them.



Insights

Collection and Production

There is a strong focus on personal customizations of items because it drives the business.

They share a strong network and relationship with local stakeholders (part of the supply chain).

Fair trade is a very important aspect of these businesses which accounts for affordability and quality.

Relationship with Customers

Maintaining a friendly relationship with customers is necessary as the business runs on regular customers and good word-of-mouth from them.

Social media is an important communication channel to maintain the relationship with customers.

There's a strong focus on the wants of their specific target audience.

Hopes

Reaching out to more people and enlarging their customer base

Expanding their business footprint in terms of service offering as well as new stores.

Challenges

Covid has affected the business in many ways. Sales have drastically reduced because most boutiques rely on an in-store experience

Clientele has changed owing to movement restrictions, as well as exponential increase in e-commerce offerings

Users | Primary Research

Objectives of the research

Get an overview of how different kind of people approach clothing and fashion. How this relates to the spontaneous sharing behaviours?

Recognize patterns and themes, especially on needs and pain points.

Go in-depth to understand habits and motivations that shape and enable these behaviours.

Methodology

Observation-based Activity

We asked fifteen people to do four different activities to get a sense of people's consumption patterns and their wants and desires around clothing.

Insights

It was interesting to see how different level of attachment people had with their closets. While some of them knew theirs very well along their favorite items, others were sometimes surprised at the items they found in them.

It was interesting to note that some participants edited their videos and rehearsed well to appear desirable, while others were casual about it.

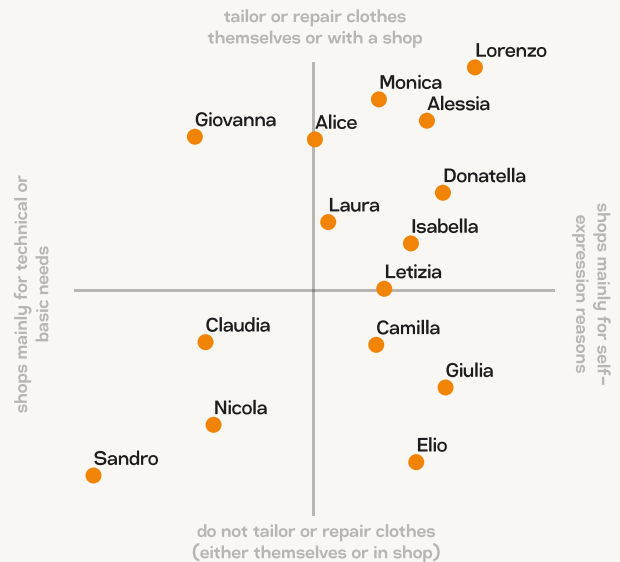
Question-based Interviews

The desk research frameworks, combined with our analysis of the observation-based activity, helped us in framing questions for the in-depth interviews. We developed probes to go deep with their motivations and choices. We concluded the session by presenting people with scenarios, and recording what would they do when in those situations.

Insights

Participants who are confident about what they look for want to experiment but ownership creates guilt owing to the fact that the bought items might not fully fit their style and they might not use them.

Even though the participants are environmentally aware, they often buy more items, even if second hand.



Next step: Personas

The observation-based activity and interviews gave us important characteristics and associated attributes to frame two personas. In the subsequent page, we introduce Conscious Camille and Olivia The Owner, and put emphasis on their needs, wants, and motivations they have as a consumer and business owner respectively. Taking reference from the scenarios we built for the in-depth interviews, we highlight pain points and challenges they have through experience journey maps.



Conscious Camille



Bio 27 years old // Junior employee in NGO // Milan, IT
 Likes to invests time and resource in expressing herself through “posh” clothes. She’s aware of the big impact that fashion industries have, and choose to regularly buy from second-hand stores, trying to not spend too much. To fulfill her constant need of change, she uses this channels also for selling online what she doesn’t wear on a regular basis.

Needs and expectations
 Save money
 Vary her closet, sell what she doesn’t need, to declutter

Goals & Aspirations
 Feeling that she is effectively using what she own
 Express herself through clothing
 Be part of a sustainable process

Pain points/frustrations
 Unavailability of good “cheap” items
 No one is buying her clothes on Vinted because it’s oversaturated
 No time to invest

persona

Actions

Camille is desperately looking for a dress to use at a wedding that is in 4 days since she tore off her special occasion one
 In the rush, she decide to buy something from Zara that can fit the dress-code
 After the wedding, the dress is sitting in her closet since doesn’t like it for the daily basis
 She decides to sell the dress on Vinted after her “6-monthly declutter”
 After a couple of weeks, the item is still unsold, occupying space

Touchpoints



Other people

Shop assistant

Online platform users

Emotions

Anxious

Decisive

Doubtful

Optimistic

Resigned

journey map

Olivia the Owner



Bio 44 years old // Boutique owner & Designer // Milan, IT
 Opened her store to sell her brand, and expanded her inventory to other established brands. She would love to attract clients and re-acquire foreign after COVID. She prefer to keep everything local and Made in Italy, creating friendly relationships with her partners and suppliers, in order to have fast and direct exchange of information for her business.

Needs and expectations
 Gain back foreign customers
 Communicate directly with suppliers
 Keep an informal and close relationship with her customers

Goals & Aspirations
 Recover after COVID emergency
 Find new stakeholders
 Expand into new locations

Pain points & challenges
 Doesn’t have the time/skills to manage everything or new opportunities
 Doesn’t realize the potential of after-service offerings

persona

Actions

Olivia sells an item of one of the collections she collaborates with on Instagram
 The customer later on message her asking for a tailoring job for the fit
 Olivia redirects them to a tailor and repairing shop nearby that she remembers
 A week later, the customer comes back to thank for the advice, saying that the service was better than expected
 Olivia starts contemplating how to create a well-rounded CX for after-selling

Touchpoints



Other people

Customer

Customer

Tailor shop

Customer

Emotions

Accomplished

Unsure

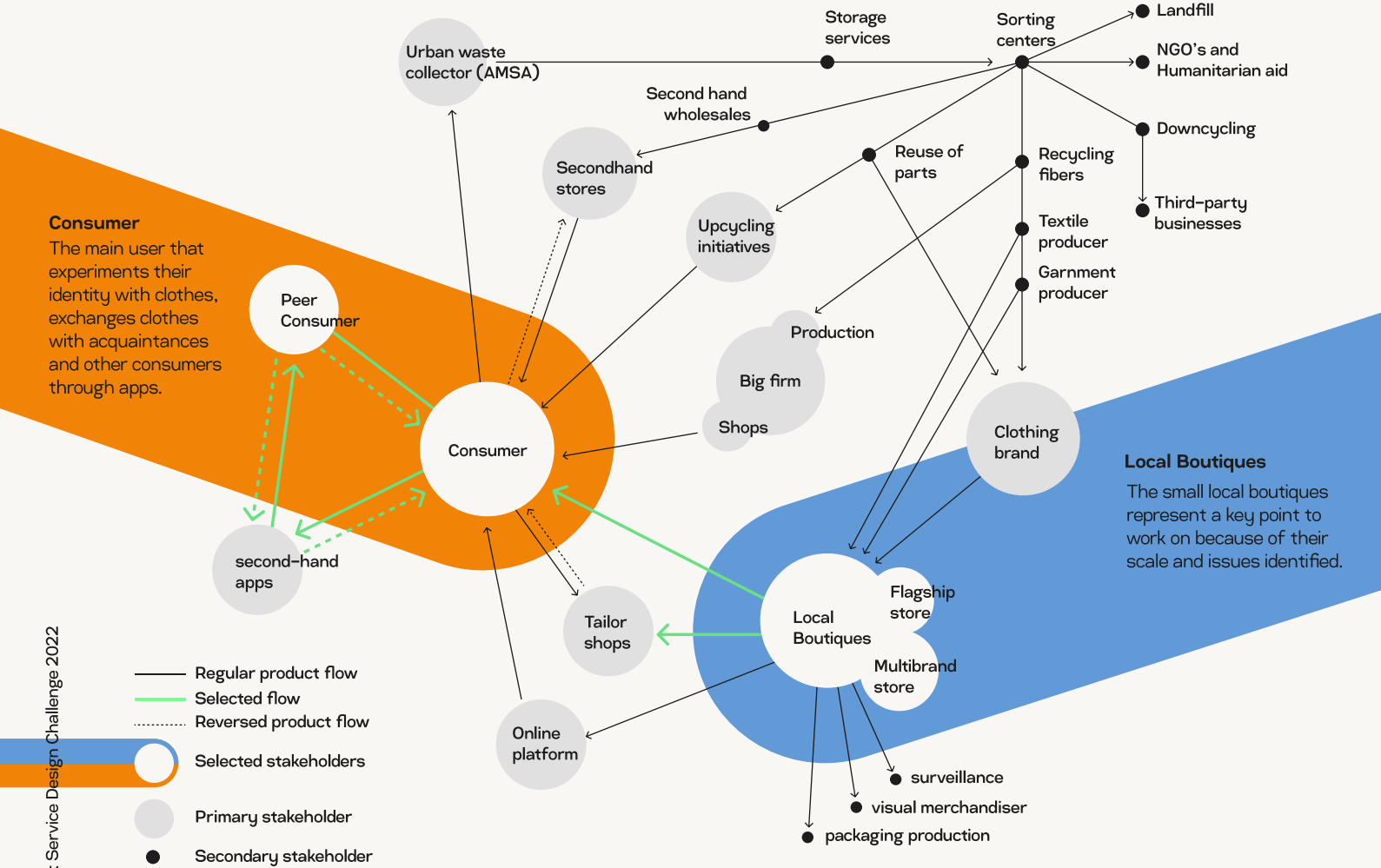
Helpful

Fulfilled

Curious

journey map

Ecosystem Map



Student Service Design Challenge 2022

Key Insights

Experimenting is difficult

Users that are comfortable with expressing themselves through clothes want to vary often their closet. They get to **try new clothes to experiment** and imagine new identities and see how it feels.

But don't want to spend too much, consume a lot of resources and space and **invest on something they are not sure they will like.**

Platforms are overloaded

Consumers that dedicate time to manage their clothes use **online platform to try to sell them** (e.g. vinted). They want to free space, get some money back, feel that they are using effectively clothes without generating waste.

But it requires quite some effort and platforms are overloaded so **they rarely sell something.**

Repairing opportunities

Local small-sized boutiques **redirect their customer to secondary services for tailoring** or repairing because they perceive it doesn't fall under their responsibility. They don't have time and resources to manage that process.

But they **lose opportunities** to make revenues and develop their relationships with customers, and **make the user experience complex.**

Small shops network

Local small-sized boutiques have connections with other local shops, tailors and repairing shops, logistic stakeholder. A **friendly and direct connection** allows a fast and direct exchange of informations and customers' requests.

But they **struggle in expanding their network** and find more suitable stakeholders if they want to update or change steps in their supply system.