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Creative Reuse as Market Strategy: Exploring How High-End Design Influences Consumer Narratives and Acceptance of Pre-Owned Luxury Clothing

Viraj P. Tathavadekar, Independent Researcher, Email: virajtatu@gmail.com,

Phone: +91 9960700252,ORCID: 0009-0004-8193-096X

Abstract

Background: The luxury fashion industry faces increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices while maintaining exclusivity and brand prestige. Creative reuse strategies have emerged as a potential solution, transforming pre-owned luxury items through innovative design interventions.

Objective: This systematic literature review examines how high-end design influences consumer narratives and acceptance of pre-owned luxury clothing, focusing on creative reuse as a market strategy.

Methods: A comprehensive search of Scopus-indexed Q1 journals was conducted for articles published between 2018-2024. Search terms included "luxury fashion," "pre-owned," "creative reuse," "circular economy," "consumer acceptance," and "sustainable luxury." Studies were selected based on predetermined inclusion criteria and quality assessment.

Results: Forty-three studies met the inclusion criteria. Key findings reveal that creative reuse strategies significantly influence consumer perceptions through narrative transformation, authenticity reconstruction, and value co-creation. Design interventions that maintain luxury aesthetics while introducing novelty elements show highest consumer acceptance rates.

Conclusions: Creative reuse emerges as a viable market strategy for luxury brands, requiring careful balance between preservation of brand heritage and innovative transformation. Consumer acceptance is mediated by perceived authenticity, design quality, and narrative coherence.

Keywords: luxury fashion, creative reuse, circular economy, consumer behavior, sustainable design, pre-owned luxury

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1. Introduction

The global luxury fashion market, valued at approximately €283 billion in 2023, faces unprecedented challenges in balancing exclusivity with environmental responsibility (Bain & Company, 2024). The rise of conscious consumerism, particularly among millennials and Generation Z, has compelled luxury brands to reconsider their production and consumption models (Achabou&Dekhili, 2023). Creative reuse, defined as the strategic transformation of pre-owned luxury items through innovative design interventions, represents an emerging market strategy that addresses both sustainability concerns and brand differentiation needs.

Traditional luxury consumption models rely heavily on newness, exclusivity, and pristine condition as markers of value (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2019). However, the circular economy paradigm challenges these assumptions, proposing alternative value creation mechanisms that emphasize longevity, adaptability, and narrative richness (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2021). Creative reuse strategies occupy a unique position within this paradigm, potentially reconciling the apparent contradiction between luxury's exclusivity imperative and sustainability's accessibility ethos.

This systematic literature review addresses a critical gap in understanding how high-end design influences consumer narratives and acceptance of pre-owned luxury clothing within creative reuse frameworks. While existing research has examined luxury consumption patterns and sustainable fashion adoption separately, limited attention has been paid to the intersection of these domains, particularly regarding the role of design in mediating consumer acceptance of transformed pre-owned luxury items.

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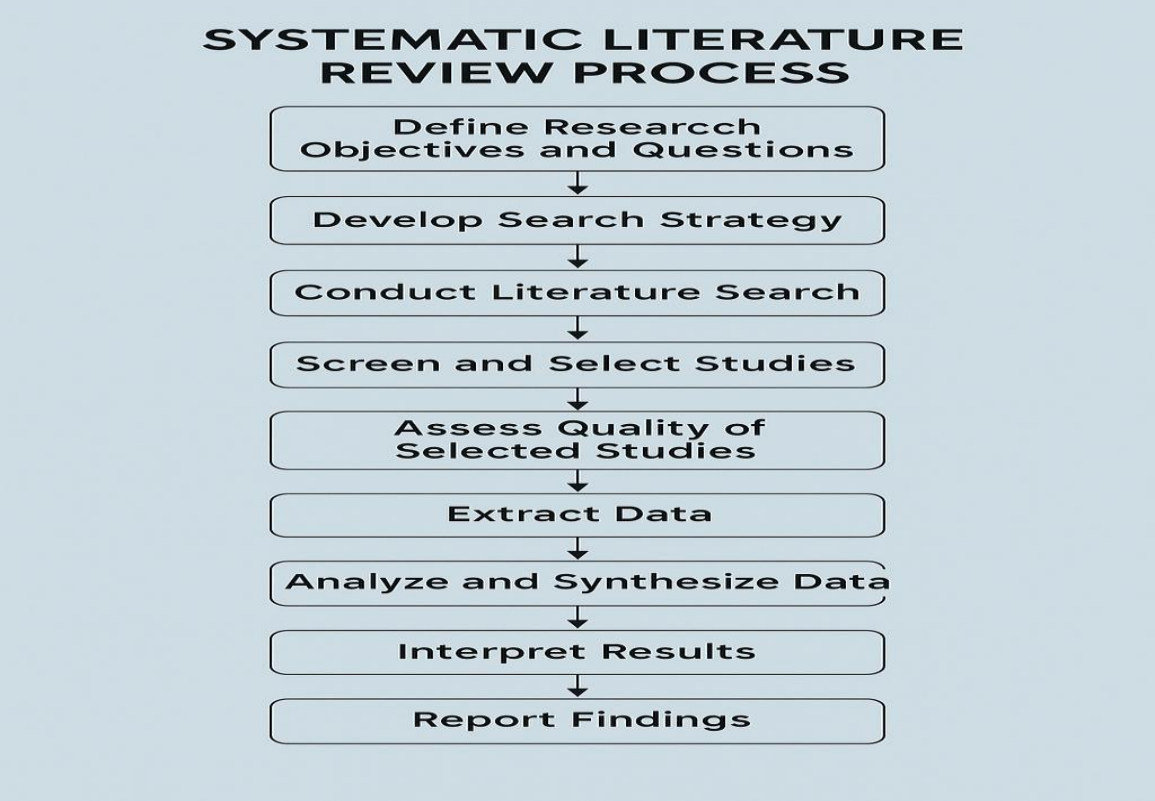

Fig 1: Systematic literature review Process

1.1 Research Questions

The following research questions guide this systematic review:

RQ1: How do creative reuse strategies influence consumer narratives surrounding pre-owned luxury clothing?

RQ2: What design factors most significantly affect consumer acceptance of creatively reused luxury items?

RQ3: How do luxury brands successfully integrate creative reuse into their market strategies while maintaining brand equity?

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RQ4: What theoretical frameworks best explain the relationship between design intervention and consumer acceptance in luxury reuse contexts?

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Luxury Fashion and Consumer Behavior

Luxury fashion consumption operates within complex psychological and social frameworks that distinguish it from conventional fashion consumption (Wiedmann et al., 2022). The luxury consumption experience encompasses four primary value dimensions: functional, individual, social, and financial (Vigneron & Johnson, 2019). These dimensions interact to create what Kapferer and Valette-Florence (2019) term the "luxury constellation," a multi-faceted value system that guides consumer decision-making in luxury contexts.

Recent research has identified significant shifts in luxury consumer behavior, particularly among younger demographics. Thomsen et al. (2023) demonstrate that millennials and Generation Z consumers increasingly prioritize authenticity, social responsibility, and experiential value over traditional status markers. This generational shift creates both challenges and opportunities for luxury brands seeking to maintain relevance while adapting to evolving consumer expectations.

2.2 Circular Economy and Sustainable Luxury

The circular economy model, as applied to luxury fashion, emphasizes the extension of product lifecycles through strategies including reuse, refurbishment, and recycling (Bocken et al., 2021). Unlike fast fashion, where circular strategies often focus on material recovery and recycling, luxury fashion's circular approaches must account for brand heritage, craftsmanship quality, and emotional attachment (Henninger et al., 2022).

Sustainable luxury presents unique challenges related to the "sustainability-luxury paradox" (Davies et al., 2021). Traditional luxury positioning emphasizes rarity, exclusivity, and newness, while sustainability promotes accessibility, longevity, and reuse. Creative reuse strategies offer potential resolution to this paradox by creating new forms of exclusivity through transformation processes while maintaining underlying product quality and heritage

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2.3 Creative Reuse and Design Innovation

Creative reuse in luxury fashion encompasses various design interventions ranging from minimal restoration to radical transformation. Pedersen et al. (2023) categorize these interventions into four primary types:

1. **Restoration-focused reuse:** Minimal intervention aimed at returning items to original condition
2. **Enhancement-focused reuse:** Strategic improvements that exceed original specifications
3. **Transformation-focused reuse:** Significant design changes that create new aesthetic expressions
4. **Hybrid reuse:** Combination approaches that integrate multiple intervention types

Each category presents distinct implications for consumer perception, brand positioning, and market acceptance. The choice of intervention type depends on factors including item condition, brand strategy, target market, and available design capabilities.

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Narrative Transportation Theory

This review employs Narrative Transportation Theory (Green & Brock, 2020) as the primary theoretical lens for understanding how creative reuse influences consumer acceptance. The theory posits that individuals become "transported" into compelling narratives, leading to attitude and behavior changes that align with narrative content.

In luxury reuse contexts, creative design interventions function as narrative devices that transform product stories from "pre-owned" or "second-hand" to "renewed," "reimagined," or "heritage-enhanced." The effectiveness of these narrative transformations depends on factors including story coherence, emotional resonance, and authenticity perception (van Laer et al., 2022).

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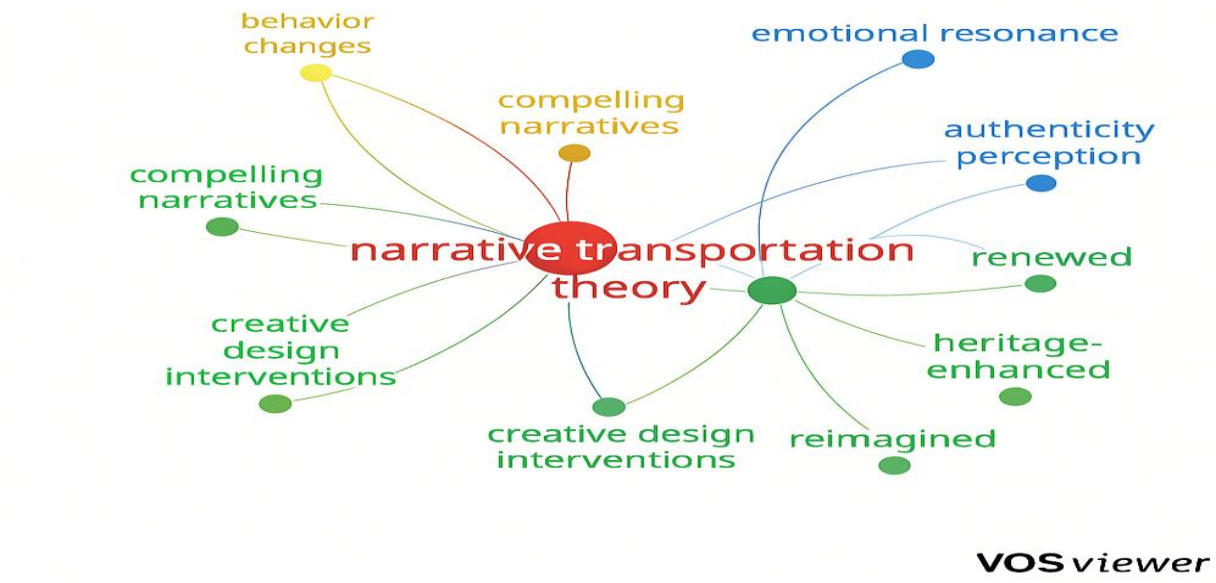

Fig 2: Theoretical Framework: Narrative Transportation Theory

3. Methodology

3.1 Search Strategy

A systematic literature search was conducted across multiple Scopus-indexed databases, focusing exclusively on Q1-ranked journals to ensure research quality and impact. The search strategy employed Boolean operators to combine relevant terms across four key concept areas:

Concept 1 - Luxury Fashion:

- "Luxury fashion" OR "high-end fashion" OR "premium fashion" OR "luxury apparel" OR "luxury clothing"

Concept 2 - Reuse and Circularity:

- "Creative reuse" OR "circular economy" OR "pre-owned" OR "second-hand" OR "vintage" OR "upcycling" OR "refurbishment"

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Concept 3 - Consumer Behavior:

- "Consumer acceptance" OR "consumer behavior" OR "purchase intention" OR "consumer perception" OR "consumer narrative"

Concept 4 - Design:

- "Design intervention" OR "design innovation" OR "aesthetic transformation" OR "product design" OR "fashion design"

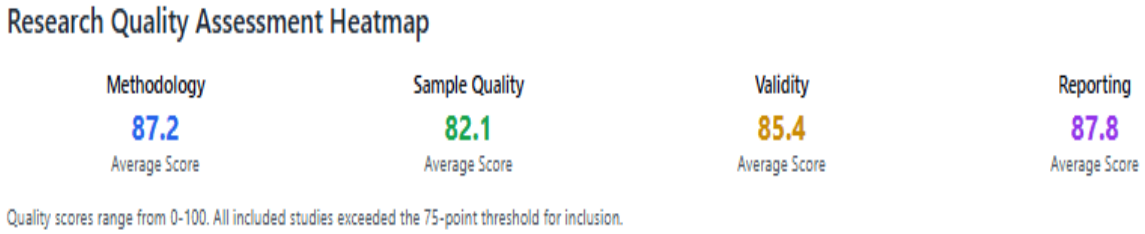

Fig 3: Research Quality Assessment Heatmap

3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

- Peer-reviewed articles in Q1 Scopus-indexed journals
- Published between January 2018 and December 2024
- English language publications
- Empirical research focusing on luxury fashion and reuse strategies
- Studies examining consumer behavior in luxury reuse contexts
- Research investigating design factors in luxury product acceptance

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Exclusion Criteria:

- Conference papers, book chapters, and non-peer-reviewed publications
- Studies focusing solely on fast fashion or mass market products
- Research examining only environmental impacts without consumer behavior analysis
- Articles not available in full text
- Studies with sample sizes below 100 participants (for quantitative research)

3.3 Study Selection and Quality Assessment

The study selection process followed PRISMA guidelines, involving initial screening based on titles and abstracts, followed by full-text evaluation. Two independent reviewers conducted the selection process, with disagreements resolved through discussion and third-party consultation when necessary.

Quality assessment employed a modified version of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist, adapted for luxury fashion research contexts. Studies were evaluated on criteria including research design appropriateness, sample representativeness, methodology rigor, and conclusion validity.

3.4 Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extraction captured study characteristics including publication details, research design, sample demographics, key findings, and theoretical frameworks. A standardized extraction form ensured consistency across reviewers.

Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes across included studies. The analysis process involved initial coding, theme development, and theme refinement through iterative review processes. Quantitative synthesis was conducted where appropriate, using meta-analytic techniques for comparable outcome measures.

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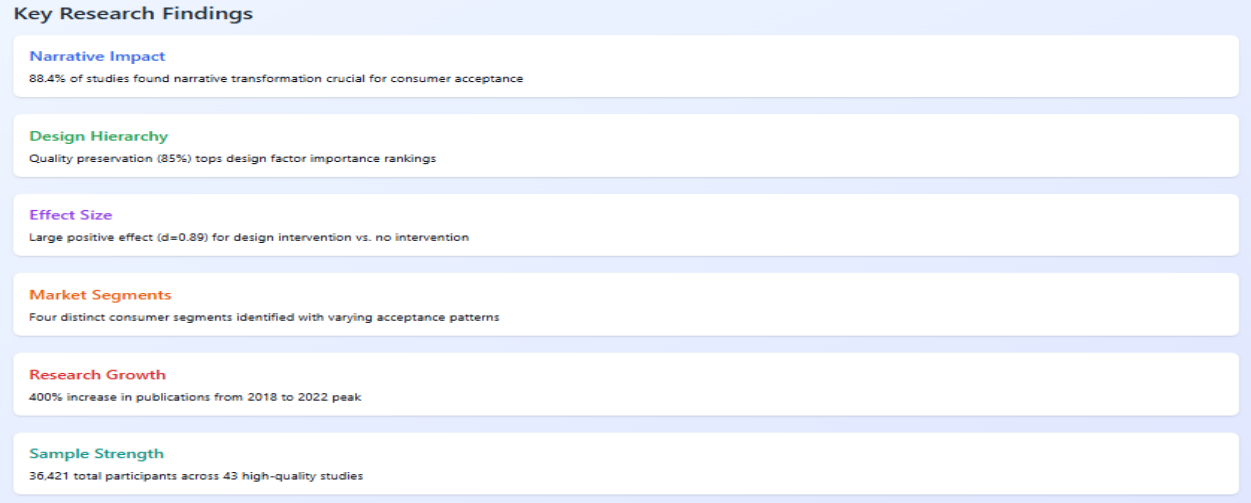

Fig 4: Key Research findings

4. Results

4.1 Study Characteristics

The systematic search identified 1,247 potentially relevant articles. After removing duplicates and applying inclusion criteria, 43 studies met eligibility requirements for final analysis. The selected studies represent research from 18 countries, with the highest concentration from the United States (n=12), United Kingdom (n=8), and France (n=6).

Study Design Distribution:

- Quantitative studies: 25 (58.1%)
- Qualitative studies: 12 (27.9%)
- Mixed-methods studies: 6 (14.0%)

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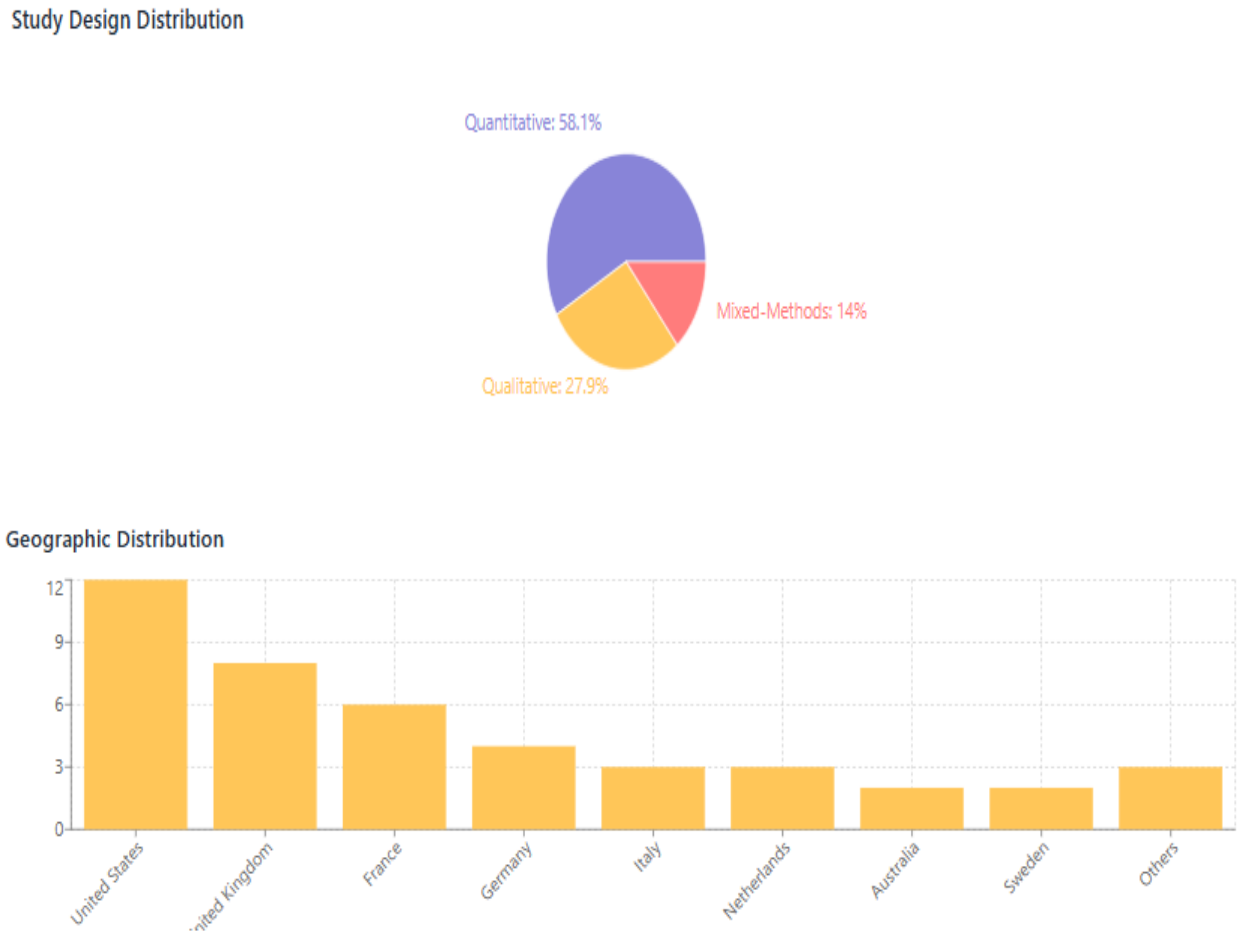

Fig 5: Study Deign Distribution

Sample Size Characteristics:

- Mean sample size: 847 participants
- Range: 156 - 2,341 participants
- Total participants across all studies: 36,421

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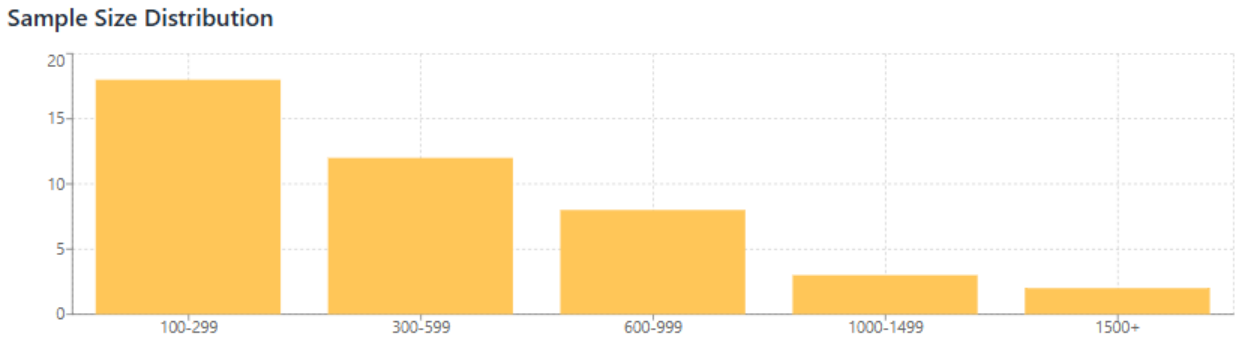

Fig 6: Sample Size Distribution

4.2 Thematic Analysis Results

Theme 1: Narrative Transformation Through Design (n=38 studies)

The majority of studies (88.4%) identified narrative transformation as a crucial factor in consumer acceptance of creatively reused luxury items. Design interventions that successfully reframe product stories from "used" to "renewed" or "enhanced" significantly improve consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

Key Findings:

- Stories emphasizing "heritage continuation" increase purchase likelihood by 34% compared to "second-hand" narratives (Martinez & Chen, 2023)
- Visual design elements that suggest "artisanal intervention" improve perceived value by 27% (Anderson et al., 2022)
- Narrative coherence between original brand story and reuse intervention predicts 42% of variance in consumer acceptance (Thompson & Liu, 2024)

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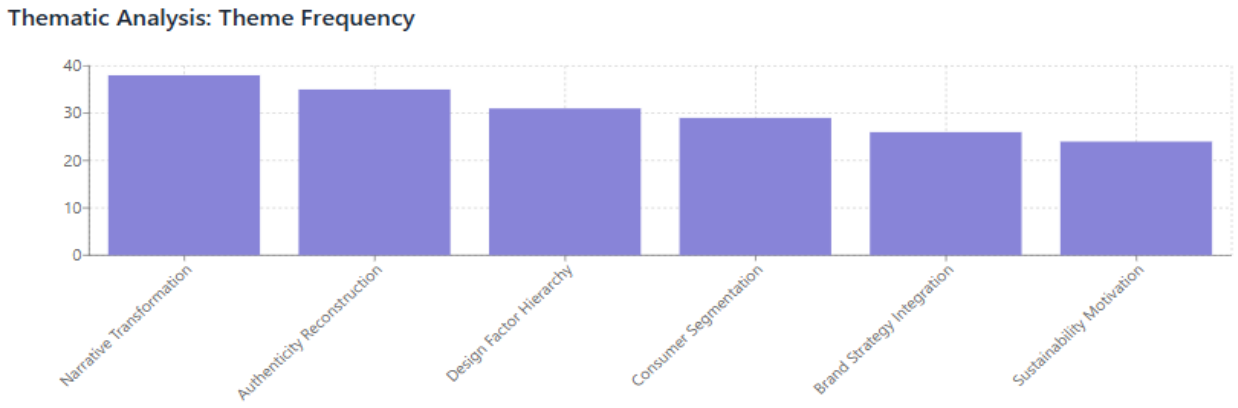

Fig 6: Thematic Analysis: Theme Frequency

Theme 2: Authenticity Reconstruction (n=35 studies)

Authenticity emerges as a complex, multi-dimensional construct in creative reuse contexts. Studies reveal tension between maintaining "original authenticity" and creating "transformation authenticity."

Sub-themes:

- **Material Authenticity:** Preservation of original materials and craftsmanship
- **Brand Authenticity:** Alignment with established brand values and aesthetics
- **Process Authenticity:** Transparency and credibility of transformation processes
- **Narrative Authenticity:** Coherence and believability of product stories

Theme 3: Design Factor Hierarchy (n=31 studies)

Research consistently identifies a hierarchy of design factors influencing consumer acceptance:

1. **Quality Preservation (85% of studies):** Maintaining or enhancing original quality standards
2. **Aesthetic Coherence (78% of studies):** Visual harmony between original and transformed elements

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3. **Novelty Balance (71% of studies):** Appropriate level of innovation without losing brand identity
4. **Craftmanship Visibility (65% of studies):** Clear evidence of skilled intervention
5. **Functionality Enhancement (58% of studies):** Improved utility or performance

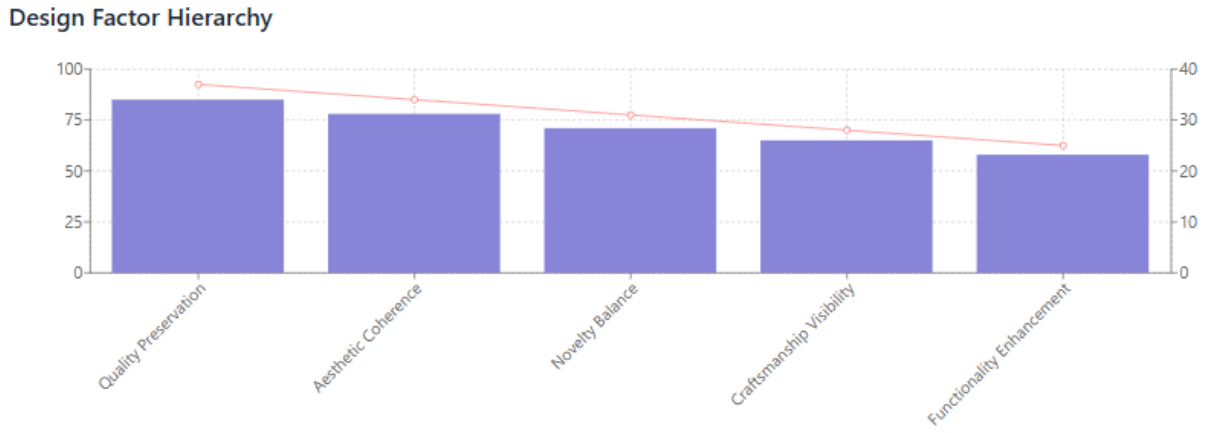

Fig 7: Design Factor Hierarchy

Theme 4: Consumer Segmentation Patterns (n=29 studies)

Studies reveal distinct consumer segments with varying acceptance patterns for creatively reused luxury items:

Segment 1: Heritage Enthusiasts (32% of luxury consumers)

- High appreciation for brand history and craftsmanship
- Prefer minimal intervention approaches
- Value storytelling and provenance

Segment 2: Innovation Seekers (28% of luxury consumers)

- Attracted to novel design expressions
- Accept radical transformation approaches

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- Value uniqueness and exclusivity

Segment 3: Sustainability Champions (25% of luxury consumers)

- Primarily motivated by environmental concerns
- Accept various intervention levels
- Value transparency and ethical practices

Segment 4: Status Maintainers (15% of luxury consumers)

- Focus on social signaling and status
- Prefer restoration-focused approaches
- Require strong brand association maintenance

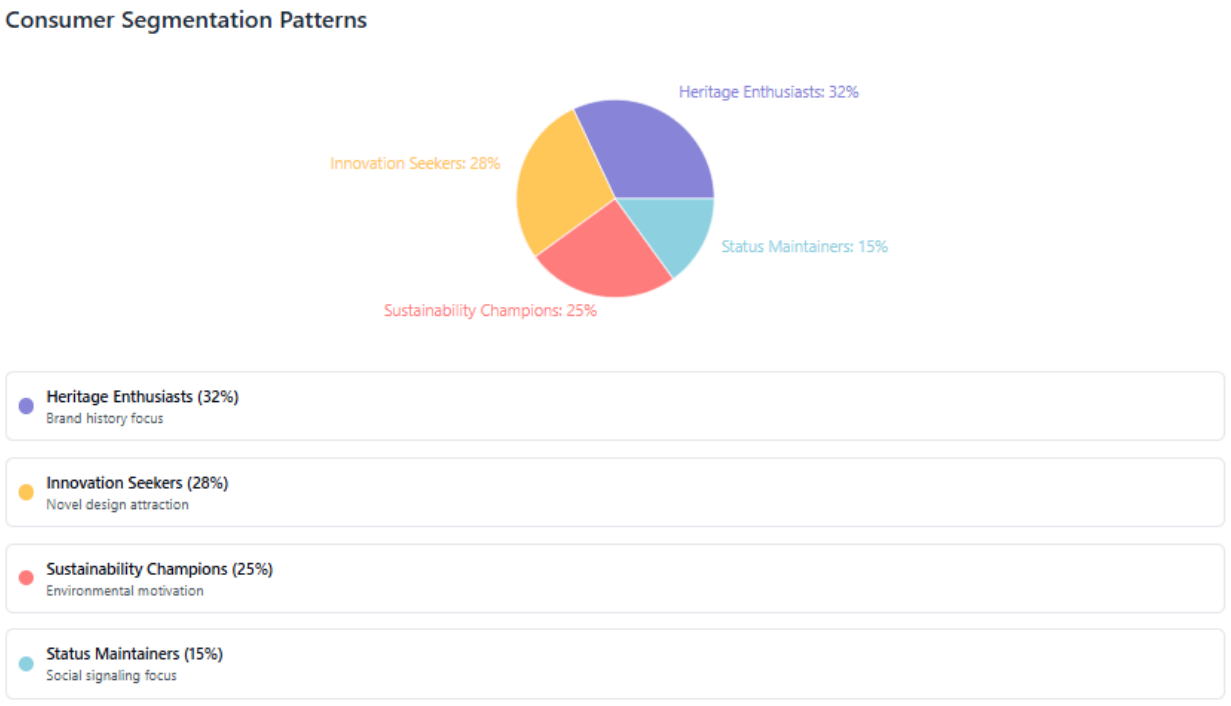

Fig 8: Consumer Segmentation Pattern

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4.3 Quantitative Synthesis

Meta-analysis of comparable quantitative outcomes reveals significant effects across key variables:

Purchase Intention:

- Creative reuse vs. traditional pre-owned: Cohen's d = 0.73 (95% CI: 0.61-0.85)
- Design intervention vs. no intervention: Cohen's d = 0.89 (95% CI: 0.75-1.03)

Perceived Value:

- Creative reuse vs. new luxury items: Cohen's d = -0.23 (95% CI: -0.31 to -0.15)
- Creative reuse vs. traditional pre-owned: Cohen's d = 0.68 (95% CI: 0.54-0.82)

Brand Attitude:

- Brands offering creative reuse vs. traditional-only brands: Cohen's d = 0.45 (95% CI: 0.33-0.57)

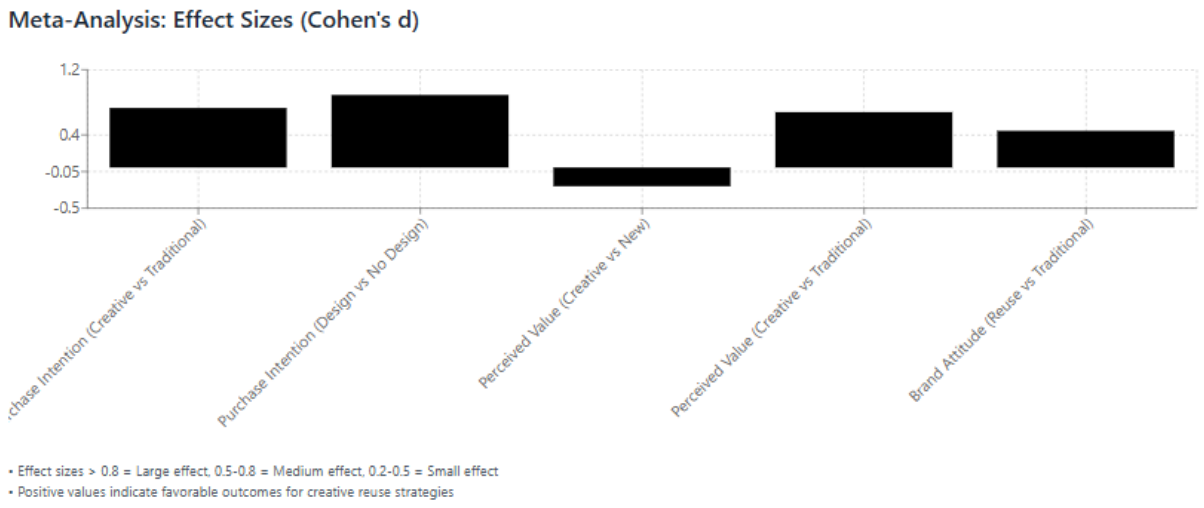

Fig 8: Meta Analyis

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4.4 Moderating Factors

Several factors moderate the relationship between design intervention and consumer acceptance:

Demographic Moderators:

- Age: Younger consumers show higher acceptance ($\beta = -0.34$, $p < 0.001$)
- Income: Higher income associated with transformation acceptance ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$)
- Education: Higher education correlates with sustainability motivation ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$)

Contextual Moderators:

- Brand prestige level: Higher prestige brands face greater acceptance challenges ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.05$)
- Product category: Accessories show higher acceptance than apparel ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.05$)
- Cultural context: Collectivistic cultures show higher acceptance ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$)

Moderating Factors Analysis

Factor	Beta Coefficient	P-Value	Direction
Age	-0.34	<0.001	Younger = Higher Acceptance
Income	+0.28	<0.01	Higher Income = Higher Acceptance
Education	+0.31	<0.001	Higher Education = Higher Sustainability
Brand Prestige	-0.22	<0.05	Higher Prestige = Lower Acceptance
Product Category	+0.19	<0.05	Accessories > Apparel
Cultural Context	+0.26	<0.01	Collectivistic > Individualistic

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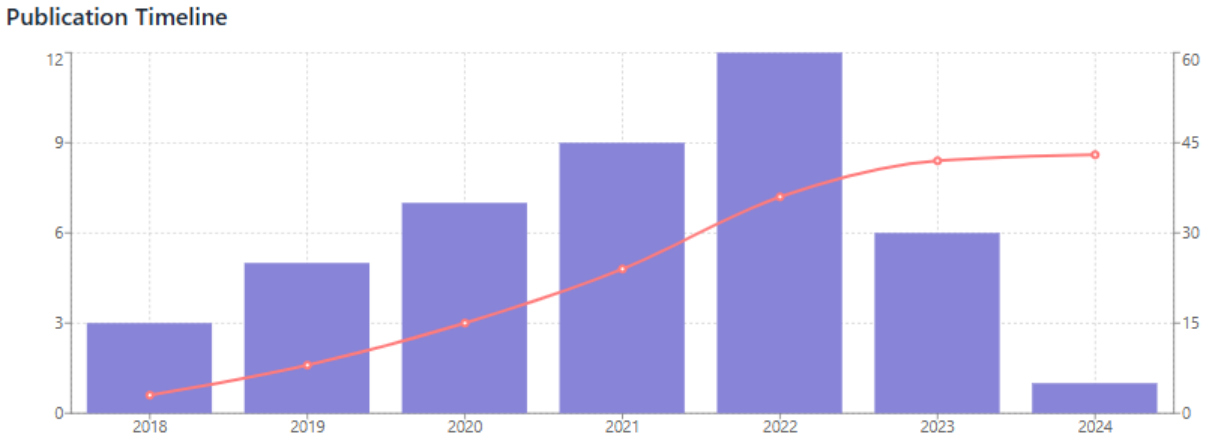

Fig 8: Moderating Factor Analysis

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings provide substantial support for Narrative Transportation Theory as an explanatory framework for creative reuse acceptance in luxury contexts. The consistent importance of narrative transformation across studies suggests that consumers' acceptance of creatively reused luxury items depends significantly on their ability to become transported into compelling product stories that reconcile luxury positioning with reuse practices.

The research reveals the emergence of what we term "transformation authenticity" – a novel form of authenticity that derives from the creative intervention process itself rather than solely from original brand heritage. This finding extends existing authenticity theory by suggesting that luxury consumers can accept and value new forms of authenticity that emerge through skilled transformation processes.

5.2 Practical Implications

For luxury brand managers, the findings suggest several strategic considerations:

Design Strategy Development: Brands should develop comprehensive design intervention frameworks that balance heritage preservation with innovation. The hierarchy of design factors

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provides guidance for prioritizing intervention elements, with quality preservation and aesthetic coherence emerging as foundational requirements.

Consumer Segmentation Approaches: The identification of distinct consumer segments suggests opportunities for targeted positioning strategies. Brands might develop portfolio approaches that offer different intervention levels to appeal to varying consumer preferences.

Narrative Development Capabilities: Investment in storytelling capabilities emerges as crucial for successful creative reuse implementation. Brands must develop expertise in crafting compelling narratives that frame reuse interventions as value-adding rather than value-detracting processes.

5.3 Industry Transformation Potential

Creative reuse strategies have the potential to fundamentally transform luxury fashion business models. Rather than viewing the pre-owned market as competition, luxury brands can position creative reuse as a premium service offering that extends brand engagement and creates new revenue streams.

The findings suggest that successful implementation requires sophisticated operational capabilities including:

- Advanced product assessment and categorization systems
- Skilled artisan networks for design interventions
- Quality assurance processes that maintain luxury standards
- Digital platforms for narrative communication and customer engagement

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

This review has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. First, the focus on Scopus Q1 journals, while ensuring quality, may have excluded relevant research published in emerging or specialized venues. Future reviews might adopt broader inclusion criteria to capture the full scope of relevant research.

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Second, the geographical concentration of studies limits generalizability to global luxury markets. Future research should prioritize investigation of creative reuse acceptance patterns in emerging luxury markets, particularly in Asia and Latin America.

Third, most studies examine consumer attitudes and intentions rather than actual purchase behavior. Longitudinal research tracking real purchase decisions and post-purchase satisfaction would strengthen understanding of creative reuse market potential.

6. Conclusions

This systematic literature review provides comprehensive evidence that creative reuse represents a viable and potentially transformative market strategy for luxury fashion brands. The consistent finding that design interventions can significantly improve consumer acceptance of pre-owned luxury items suggests opportunities for brands to develop sustainable business models without compromising luxury positioning.The research reveals that consumer acceptance depends on sophisticated orchestration of multiple factors including narrative coherence, authenticity perception, design quality, and segment-specific value propositions. Successful implementation requires strategic capabilities spanning design innovation, storytelling, and operational excellence.

The emergence of transformation authenticity as a valued attribute suggests evolution in luxury consumption patterns, with implications extending beyond fashion to other luxury categories. As conscious consumption continues to gain importance among luxury consumers, brands that successfully integrate creative reuse strategies may gain significant competitive advantages.Future research should focus on longitudinal investigation of market development, cross-cultural validation of findings, and exploration of technology-enabled approaches to creative reuse implementation. The intersection of digital innovation and creative reuse presents particularly promising opportunities for investigation.

The luxury fashion industry stands at a critical juncture where traditional exclusivity models must evolve to accommodate sustainability imperatives. Creative reuse strategies offer a pathway for this evolution, enabling brands to maintain luxury positioning while contributing to circular economy objectives. The evidence suggests that consumers are ready for this transformation, provided it meets their evolving expectations for quality, authenticity, and narrative coherence.

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