

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Slow fashion at the start of the good Anthropocene

Analysis of the British Red Cross's and Vinted's sustainability communication on Instagram

Auteur : Sophie Torfs

Promoteur(s) : Sylvie De Cock

Année académique : 2023-2024

Master en communication multilingue

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Abstract

This dissertation is based on an analysis of Instagram publications from the British Red Cross and Vinted's accounts in the quest for slow fashion. The fashion industry is known to damage the environment, and as a result, consumers tend to buy secondhand. Therefore, organizations must adopt green initiatives and communicate about them sustainably, given the increase in customers' ethical consumption choices. The aim of this thesis is to investigate to what extent both organizations have adopted sustainability communication in their online Instagram corporate accounts through digital marketing tools. In the 21st century, there is a pursuit of implementing a fair business model, namely a socio-economic model in which social and economic matters can co-exist. At the same time, consumer engagement in the 21st century, under the impetus of the Youth for Climate movement, increasingly relies on the adoption of Insta-worthy norms while spreading environment-aware messages. A comparison of the British Red Cross and Vinted on Instagram could give insights into the proportion to which they followed the path to the implementation of sustainability communication in a digital consumption society.

Ce mémoire s'appuie sur l'analyse des publications Instagram des comptes de la Croix-Rouge britannique et de Vinted dans la quête de la slow fashion. L'industrie de la mode est connue pour nuire à l'environnement, les consommateurs ont donc tendance à acheter de la seconde main. Par conséquent, les organisations doivent adopter des initiatives écologiques et communiquer à leur sujet de manière durable, étant donné l'augmentation des choix de consommation éthiques des clients. L'objectif de cette thèse est d'étudier dans quelle mesure les deux organisations ont adopté une communication durable sur leurs comptes Instagram en ligne grâce à des outils de marketing numérique. Au 21^e siècle, on cherche à mettre en œuvre un modèle d'entreprise équitable, à savoir un modèle socio-économique dans lequel les intérêts sociaux et économiques peuvent coexister. Mais aussi, l'engagement des consommateurs au 21^e siècle, sous l'impulsion du mouvement Youth for Climate, repose de plus en plus sur l'adoption de normes Insta-worthy tout en diffusant des messages respectueux de l'environnement. Une comparaison entre la Croix Rouge britannique et Vinted sur Instagram pourrait donner un aperçu de la proportion dans laquelle ils ont suivi la voie de la mise en œuvre d'une communication durable dans une société de consommation numérique.

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Introduction

Many companies and organizations have adopted green initiatives; however, this remains insufficient as it has been estimated that 134 million tons of unwanted clothes would end up in landfills by 2030 (Chen et al., 2021, p. 2). There have been environmental issues in the distant past as well as more recently. Each generation has been able to raise awareness of these ongoing problems in the fashion industry. What is different from the earlier periods, is that society in the 21st century wants to be eco-friendly, at least the majority of young people among generations Y and Z. And at the same time, remaining competitive in the market matters a lot nowadays. Living in a digitalized market society makes it difficult to follow the changing trends. Generations Y and Z have been able to introduce the circular economy with sustainable models such as the second-hand business model.

In this thesis, the focus will be on the British Red Cross (henceforth BRC) and Vinted, both of which are known to retail secondhand fashion. If Vinted is a relatively new platform that emerged at the beginning of the fashion revolution and has gained popularity because of its mantra 'don't wear it, sell it,' it is still interesting to explore the dynamics behind this trend in terms of sustainability. The BRC is a well-established charity organization, but it appears to have followed the path of Gen Y and Z in the quest for slow fashion and its sustainable approach. Digitalization has enabled this trend to develop on a large scale thanks to social networking apps, among which Instagram reached a broader younger audience thanks to content diversification (reels, behind-the-scenes, posts, etc.).

Although Vinted and the BRC sell secondhand clothes, they do it for different reasons and are quite different organizations. The BRC is a British charity organization founded by Henry Dunant in the 1860s under the 'International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement', whose aim was to collect money to take care of injured soldiers on both sides of a war (BRC, n.d.). Social engagement was already palpable. In the aftermath of the Second World War, charity shops officially emerged in Britain with the sales benefits going to the war effort (Borusiak, and Paluchova, 2018). In line with this war effort, Hickin (2016) reported that the Red Cross movement was created in order to provide relief and support for individuals caught in conflict situations. Natural disasters and emergencies were also common focus areas, and internationally, since the BRC complies with the principle of 'universality' (2016, p. 27). The BRC has always been socially oriented with its mantra, 'Saving Lives, Changing lives' (2016, p. 28). From 2010 to 2015, the BRC reviewed its strategy by focusing on the needs of vulnerable people, who are often more affected in crisis situations.

By mentioning that the BRC is one of the leading voluntary sector providers, Waikayi et al. (2012) foreground the volunteering act. The BRC relies on its volunteers to implement key activities and deliver front-line services. This suggests that volunteers are in direct contact with people in need. One of its activities is secondhand retailing. On their website, it can be read that the

clothes that volunteers sell are preloved and that the money raised is used to help those in crisis at a locally and internationally. Shopping secondhand in the BRC's charity shops is possible online, but foremost contact with its community is praised by gathering at the local shops where donating is also highly appreciated.

Vinted, on the other hand, is solely restricted to online selling and retailing with no physical contact. While donating was a main feature of the BRC, Vinted is all about making money. Social pursuits are therefore different, but Vinted remains a community. Since its creation in 2008, Vinted has succeeded in convincing its users that they should get rid of their unwanted clothes—for their wallet, their wardrobe, and finally the climate (Vinted Company, n.d.). The sale motives vary compared to those of the BRC since the collected money does not serve to help people in need. Vinted is interested in spreading its brand identity throughout the world and has made it part of its global mission to increase its community to over 75 million members by making secondhand retailing the first choice. It pretends to be an app that facilitates clothes swapping and, at the same time, has a low impact on the climate by recycling, reusing, and resharing clothing items.

However, it is a business that keeps making a profit, and thanks to that, it keeps developing its structure as a shipping business with growing financial revenues amounting to 126.1 million euros. Its increasingly numerous subsidiaries that have contributed to generating capital, like UAB Group, testify to this thirst for growth and gain. It is important to explain how Vinted makes money. Of all transactions made on the app, there is an amount charged by Vinted that serves as a user fee but also protects users. Vinted checks the authenticity of the accounts of its members; for this caution, it demands 0.7 euros, but it also keeps a percentage of 5% on the sales. Being a professional seller is highly encouraged, as is the promotion of brands and luxury products.

The dissertation sets out to examine BRC's and Vinted's sustainability communication and the extent to which profit-making, planet-saving, or social interests are foregrounded in their quest for slow fashion. Instead of questioning customers and retailers on their purchasing habits and how they view they have embraced sustainability, which is subjective, I have decided to concentrate on the BRC and Vinted's online communications. More precisely, I have analyzed what they posted on their Instagram corporate account. Social media analysis is necessary to explore how the promotion of sustainability communication has been facilitated thanks to current digital tools and provoked a shift of mentality among Gen Y and Z. Most importantly, the digital transition that businesses have adopted shows that Vinted and the BRC have seized the opportunity to expand even more in terms of community scope. This has an impact on communication strategy and can impact the promotion of sustainability as a whole.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Firstly, the context of the fashion industry will be addressed. Going back to the two most important periods of the industrial era (the Capitalocene

and the good Anthropocene) will help give insights into the Industrial Revolution, from the bad practices in the fashion industry to the implementation of the circular economy. Chapter 2 will explore the shift towards a socio-economic model that includes the sharing economy. It will focus on the nexus between its social, environmental, and economic interests in the quest for sustained communication under the rise of digital tools. After which, the research questions central to this study will be stated in Chapter 3. The data and methods of analysis are explained in the same chapter. The fourth chapter presents the results and the discussion related to the research questions. Finally, chapter 5 will summarize how the two secondhand businesses (the BRC and Vinted) have adopted sustainability communication, with their respective focal points and strategies.

1 Chapter 1: Context of the fashion industry : from the 'Capitalocene' to the 'good Anthropocene'

In this first chapter, three main aspects will be discussed. The first part focuses on the negative impacts of the Industrial Revolution on fashion practices: growth and dehumanization will be addressed in an attempt to curb fast fashion. Secondly, Generation Z and its Youth for Climate movement will be featured as the key element of this eco-conscious slow fashion -movement in the 21st century, with particular attention to digitalization and the rise of communities on social media. The last part explains how a new economic model (circular economy) can be adopted, simply by sustaining the belief in mankind and its practices.

1.1 **How the Industrial Revolution contributed to disrupting fashion practices**

Exploring the concept of 'Slow Fashion' requires a historical background. Going back to the emergence of the Industrial Revolution makes it possible to highlight the contribution that this historical process has had to the fashion industry as a whole.

1.1.1 Transition to Social Modernity

As pointed out by McCloskey (2008), the Industrial Revolution started in northwestern Europe approximately at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, even though specialists still argue about the start of this historical period. This phenomenon was not geographically restricted, nor was it limited in time. It can be characterized as a time of general change as it left palpable traces all over the world and affected the next few centuries.

From an economic perspective, Lucas and Robert (2018) stated that the effects were more tangible in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) at an early stage. Focusing on the UK, the authors noticed a one -to two-percent growth until 2018, which is based on income observations. Not only has the Industrial Revolution enabled "catch-up economies" (2018, p. 182), but it has also played a leading role in reshaping individual behavior as ordinary people earned their own money, resulting in altering the whole demography by the combination of productivity growth and the increase in family size. Moreover, this historical period allowed a social class upgrade, which ensured fairly equal participation in the English economy:

These events surely represent a historical watershed, separating a traditional world in which the incomes of ordinary working people remained low and fairly stable over the centuries from a modern world in which incomes increase for every new generation. (Lucas and Robert, 2018, p. 182).

According to Linehan (2012), this new modern world was marked by a "British socialist awakening" (p. 65) or so-called 'social modernity' (p. 65). It appears that modernity and socialism were interconnected by the desire to be volatile: "This volatility was a product of a

quite explosive collision of technological, social, economic, epistemological, temporal, and liminoid circumstances.... All these circumstances and currents were aspects of the maelstrom that was modernity.” (Linenhan, 2012: p.65).

This desire to innovate and grow gave birth to a socio-modernist movement in British society during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras (Linenhan, 2012, p. 65-66). Linenhan (2012) characterized this movement as ‘revitalization’ (p. 65), where socialist groups were formed such as the Fabian Society, the Labor Church, and the independent Labor Party. Even though some of them were less conventional, they all aimed at experimenting with small-group communities building ‘beyond the mainstream of capitalistic life’ (2012, p.65). Linenhan (2012) seems to agree with McCloskey (2008) that there was great improvement in terms of social rankings due to higher incomes; Britons, therefore, had access to better food, clothing, and housing than the previous generations.

The English people relied on financial support – and at the same time, they tried subverting ‘Capitalism’ brought about by the Industrial Revolution. However, it might seem controversial that money was the only way to get access to higher social rankings and contributed in some way to being socially emancipated and starting to invest. The English people longed to innovate and develop new ways of doing things while claiming to be unconventionally emancipated, though money is at the core of investment. On the one hand, the socio-modernist movement was above all a means of improving ‘ordinary people’s lives’ (McCloskey, 2008, p. 65), leaving remarkable lasting consequences for the whole society: education, literacy, and technology. But on the other hand, enrichment was by far desired among all social classes.

Already in 1973, Mathias summed up this issue very neatly with this statement: “The implications of two contrasting features of the 18th-century economy, which the flow of research has been revealing: the extent of savings being produced in the economy, both before industrialization and during its initial phases, and the modest capital demands made by the new technology for investment” (p. 121). This suggests that the position of ‘capital’ in this socio-economic movement was ambiguous and misleading.

1.1.2 Growth at all costs

It has to be emphasized that modernity led to the phenomenon of globalization, which has impacted the worldwide economy. Globalization can be defined as follows: “It is the increase of trade around the world, especially by large companies producing and trading goods in many different countries” (Cambridge Dictionary) or as a situation of ‘expansion’ (Davut, 2008, p. 40).

According to Davut (2008), the changes in the late 18th century were not solely economic but socially based either. Britons were, therefore, able to develop freely not only financially, but also as individual entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship fostered the expansion of the British global economy (Hill, 1969, as cited in Davut, 2008, p. 32). Hill mentioned that ‘capitalist economy’ is the center of ‘globalization’ (2008, p. 32). Another factor that triggered globalization was

migration. Due to population movement, the workforce was easily available for industrial production. It is worth noting that the exploitation of women and children in clothing industries was common since they were working for free, alongside men who did get paid. In other words, globalization was caused by population growth, which led to higher prices and increased demand for production. The author also stresses that the cheaper quality of textiles led to the creation of mass markets (2008, p. 8).

Globalization could not be disconnected from the term 'industrialization.' The need for sophisticated machinery arose from the fact that a skilled workforce was lacking. Even though Hobsbawm (1968, cited in Davut, 2008) claimed that free labor delayed the implementation of labor-saving machines, the search for profit-making was strengthened by the emergence of technology, like the steam engine or the use of oil (Davut, 2008, p. 42). As a consequence, innovations became the focal point. Good examples of these are the emergence of railways to facilitate transportation and exportation, which helped to open up to the world market.

Brooks et al. (2017) argue that the Industrial Revolution actually led to a shift in mindset with the process of globalization that goes hand in hand with capitalism. It is worth paying attention to the period post WWII, the so-called 'Capitalocene,' which triggered an acceleration in fashion consumption (p. 489). The term 'Capitalocene' refers to capital, which became the main driver of this modern growth quest. As reported by Brooks et al. (2017), there is a tipping point as capital damaged the relations that humans have with the environment. The desire to expand and acquire modern textile factories, which kept growing with the various inventions, has done more harm than good.

Even though the British economy benefited from massive production at low prices, a dichotomy emerged between manufacturers and capitalists. According to Davut (2008), workers in clothing factories began to be reluctant to go to work because social democrats viewed the accumulation of capital as an end in itself, rather than as a means to benefit society as a whole by reinvesting in economic activities (p. 40). He also added that the equilibrium between economic activities and rural life had been deteriorated due to massive production, which was replaced by new industrial cities: the new 'area of human settlement' (Davut, 2008, p. 43).

Not only is mass production detrimental to the environment, but it can also have dramatic consequences in terms of social patterns. Brooks et al (2017) established a link between mass production and 'hyper-consumption' or 'consumerism' (p. 486). Cheaper synthetic fibers were a turning point in that process as people were able to follow the latest fashion trends with the declining prices of clothes. Needless to say, that competition was at the heart of these practices. However, the shift of production to East Asia in the 1950s led to a decline in quality and a shift from quality to quantity. More recently in the 2000s, fashion consumption has increased because of the spring-summer and autumn-winter collections. Body sexualization and branding

encouraged consumers to stay fashionable, which resulted in higher consumer credit (Brooks et al., 2017, 490-491).

Hyper-consumption during the Capitalocene period (mid-20th century) also led to environmental issues. Solvents and chemical residues were found in streams and watercourses. On the whole, textile production requires huge amounts of water, especially cotton production. Brooks et al. (2017, p. 491) mainly criticized the unsustainable extraction of water supplies. To sum up, the expansion of industrial activities strengthened by consumerism since 1950 is to blame for polluting the environment. Since then, carbon emissions and dioxide levels have surged, from 311 PPM (parts per million) to 400 PPM in 2013 (2017, p. 490).

1.1.3 Human practices overlooked

Dagostino (2021) stressed the importance of the notion of the 'invisible hand' by Adam Smith in the 19th century, who himself criticized the 'great acceleration' of the 18th century.

To cite Dagostino (2021: p.7): "Smith's opinion was that technological improvement was the key force for a nation's growth". This idea fits with the process of the Industrial Revolution, during which growth and expansion prevailed over everything. In agreement with Dagostino, Grampp (2000) understands it as aimed at boosting the '*Wealth of Nations*' (2000, p. 442) stemming from free market development. Despite this period of industrial prosperity, Brooks et al. (2017) identified an *invisible* shift from an 'organic to an inorganic economy' in the middle of the 19th century (p. 7). This is how the environment began to suffer from the 'great acceleration' (2017, p. 488) to meet larger consumer demands as a result of globalization and its downsides. The 'great acceleration' was said to be the starting point of the so-called 'Anthropocene' which marked the separation between the global economy and ecology; from this time on, the relations between humans and nature started to be damaged. Yet, the term 'Capitalocene' is preferred to underline the central position of 'capital' in British society.

In this view, it is worth mentioning Rothschild's work, who viewed Adam Smith's theories from another perspective. This is how, in 1944, she identified a sort of social inequality and immorality in terms of climate degradation in "The Theory of Moral Sentiments", written in 1759 by Smith:

The use, here, is sardonic in a different respect. Smith is describing some particularly unpleasant rich proprietors, who are quite unconcerned with "humanity" or "justice" but who in "their natural selfishness and rapacity" pursue only "their own vain and insatiable desires." They do, however, employ thousands of poor workers to produce luxury commodities: "They are led by an invisible hand to ... without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society" (Smith, 1759; as cited in Rothschild, 1994: p. 139).

Based on Dagostino (2021), laissez-faire theories seemed to be the main causes of both social and environmental damage, which were embedded in modern capitalism. Such theories mainly relied on state intervention (p. 8), which was considered by Berend (2016) as the main cause of

accelerating the process of globalization and mass production: “By printing additional money and financing public works, the state may have a more positive impact: it can create jobs and generate additional demand” (p.70). Focusing more specifically on the fashion industry, they are good examples that contributed to the disruption of the fashion industry in terms of unequal social wealth and labor by steadily putting capital first in an attempt to boost the capitalistic system.

Consequently, some social classes that were not part of the rich democrats were exploited and did not benefit from social privileges (Milanovic, 2020, as cited in Dagostino, 2020, p.8). Needless to say, social injustice is linked with climate degradation. With the desire to buy cheaper, fashion companies have been relocated to underdeveloped countries where workers’ rights and environmental policies are lacking. It is not just about a relocation to another country; it also goes with mass production to meet the increased demands, and with lower quality to increase the margins. Unfortunately, mass production has detrimental effects due to the current ‘fast fashion practices’ that are linked to globalization and capitalism, namely compulsive buying to meet the new fashion codes.

The following paragraphs are good examples of historical situations that have marked British history and more specifically the fashion industry.

London’s Great Stink of 1858 (Brooks et al., 2017: p. 490) occurred as a result of the release of soaps, chemicals, industrial rubbish, and solvents generated by modern laundry factories and others that ended up in watercourses (namely the Thames). This led to water contamination due to damaged sewer systems, which helped spread the illness of cholera. Moreover, odoriferous pollution hit the whole city, causing health issues. This event strengthened the gap between the less fortunate and the democrats, as the latter were responsible for outfalls from factories and population growth, or at least arranged the facilities accordingly.

Another event is the failed reset due to COVID-19. According to Hayes (2020), there was an attempt to change our lifestyle during the pandemic by shopping more locally, but this trend was ephemeral. To some extent, the lockdown contributed positively to adopting sustainable purchasing habits such as reusable bags. Byrne (2020) raised another issue due to the COVID-19 illness, which was that garment workers had to continue working in crowded factories; otherwise, they would be penniless. Any protection was designed to help them face the crisis. If they refused to stay at home during the sanitary crisis, they were not paid since fashion workers’ rights were missing. In this way, the campaign ‘PayYourWorkers’ was launched in 2020 to demand justice against the financial capital that those renowned brands have (e.g., Nike, H&M, and Primark).

The Rana Plaza disaster in 2013 (Hobson, 2013) represented the biggest fatal building collapse related to the fashion industry. More than 1800 (p. 317) clothing makers died in this accident

which occurred in Bangladesh. The fact is that production has been amplified under more dubious conditions. Besides exploiting textile workers from lower social classes, the exploited workers put their lives at risk to manufacture even more items destined for the USA or Europe in order to meet the increased demand. The accident helped question international labor rights. However, this disaster was not an isolated event: child labor and unhealthy working conditions are all elements that derive from 'fast fashion' practices.

As has been underlined previously, profit-seeking at all costs is endangering society and leading to a societal breakdown. Growth is not profitable to everyone because many are exploited by rich capitalists. And, this is ultimately harmful to the planet. As humans wish to develop and upscale from an industrial point of view, a real breakdown occurs between humanity and its living environment. There is an urgent need to reestablish this link by promoting other ways of thinking that reconnect with our intrinsic nature over the desire to grow at the expense of the poorest.

1.1.4 Detrimental rise of fast fashion

According to Hayes and Jones (2006), fast fashion refers to a fashion-conscious segment of the market that is volatile, rapidly changing, and therefore difficult to predict. McDonald and Nicioli (2023) also added that fast fashion promotes ever-changing trends propagated by online influencers. Shoppers can buy even more and be budget-conscious given the low prices. Brands have reduced their production schedules to produce quicker, constantly changing their collections. In partnership with online influencers on social media platforms, brands seek to boost their sales by launching new trends and new fashion norms.

Niinimäki et al. (2020) mentioned that fast fashion relies on cheap manufacturing, frequent consumption, and short-lived garment use. Although this new production method has a negative impact on the environment, the fashion industry continues to grow. The reason is that it is a lucrative business, with a production rate twice as high as in the years before 2000. This success led to the implementation of fast fashion business models, launching new fashions and trends, and urging fashion consumers to get rid of the old collections to comply with the new ones. This model has gained ground thanks to its outperformance and exploitation of workers. It is also based on the fast delivery of new products by online retailers. All of this has led to rising consumption, characterized by low costs and, consequently, low price points. The garment use time has decreased by 36% compared to 2005. Due to the volume of items produced and the resulting waste, the fashion industry threatens the environment's prosperity.

Besides environmental issues, workers' rights were undermined. This raised concern about the social engagement behind producing and retailing fashion items. As a result, an 'anti-corporate attitude' has emerged. This trend has been developing since the 1990s, with 83% of charity shops located in the UK (Borusiak and Paluchova, 2018).



Figure 1 UK cities by number of charity shops (Psychrec, 2021)

Figure 1 shows the distribution of charity shops in the UK in 2021. It can be seen that the majority of charity shops are located in Great Britain. Scotland is the second most active country (after England), thanks to the city of Edinburgh. In terms of cities, London, Nottingham, Bristol, and Leeds have the most charity shops, while Cardiff and Belfast are less active in this regard. It appears that the success of Great Britain and Scotland, based on the number of charities, is due to their big cities' central position on the map.

1.2 Revolution against fast fashion, growing environmental preoccupations

The revolution against fast fashion that started in the UK will be addressed, based on the article written by Domingos et al. (2022). The article emphasizes that there was a period of latency in the beginning, but people became increasingly concerned about the future of their planet. The emergence of the word 'sustainability' in the 1960s will also be discussed; however, it was previously limited to ecological issues.

1.2.1 Sustainability from an ecological to an ethical dimension

It is important to mention that the terms 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' were assumed to be part of the slowdown process in the face of the undeniable climate crisis. Although these two terms are often used as synonyms, Ekins et al. (2019, p. 14) state that this is not the case, which will be of paramount importance in the rest of this thesis. Since the 1960s, sustainable development has been connected with the ability of the future generation to meet the needs of the present without compromising those of the following generations (Borusiak & Poluchova, 2018, p. 7). Borusiak and Poluchova pointed out that the implementation of 'sustainability' throughout the entire fashion production process (e.g. water consumption, energy use, welfare, etc.) could help to mitigate the negative effects of fast fashion. However, it would not be enough to cope with the 'ever-increasing buying and

consumption' (p. 7). In their view, 'sustainability' refers to reducing the harmful effects of fast fashion production, or at least is connected to this idea of sustaining the production line. The concept of 'sustainable development' is therefore more comprehensive because it directly addresses the source of the problem of mass consumption, as it is multi-faceted when creating environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity (Kirchherr et al., 2017, cited in Borusiak and Paluchova, 2018). To some extent, sustainable development includes the concept of sustainability. It emphasizes sustainable consumption by considering the three dimensions of sustainability: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and social sustainability. This is the so-called triad model, which will be used throughout the rest of this thesis.

Nowadays, the everlasting effects of globalization, industrialization, and mass consumption on the environment have made people embrace a more ethical-responsible view on the matter. Not only do industrial capitalists have to be blamed for the wastage of goods, but consumers are also responsible for their purchasing behavior, as they can approve or disapprove of societal systems. This is how the 'slow fashion' movement emerged in reaction to 'fast fashion' (Domingos et al., 2022, p.9)

Human practices have been shown to have detrimental ecological impacts. The fashion industry is said to be the 'most polluting at all stages of its life cycle' (Domingos et al., 2022, p. 1). Domingos et al. also added that there was a 40 percent increase in purchasing habits between 1996 and 2012 (2022, p. 1), and all these clothes will eventually end up in landfills, increasing waste and pollution. Many consumers have slowly started to be aware of this dramatic tendency, and as a result, they have begun to focus more on sustainable garments with traditional techniques that are considered to be 'slower,' hence the term 'slow fashion.' Domingos et al. (2022) identified a shift from quantity to quality as consumers' responsibility was singled out. The shift is not that easy, as garment buyers are apparently not yet willing to bypass fashion trends and the four collections that are produced annually.

In spite of the fact that physical appearance is crucial nowadays, sustainable consumption is associated with ethical commitment. Domingos et al. (2022, p. 11) specify that pleasure and well-being do not have to be split up; however, other alternatives have to be adopted towards sustainable consumption to play down global warming effects due to fashion consumption and industrial processes with their lasting negative consequences. Social support has become the main concern as textile workers' rights are often undermined. Local communities and processes are therefore foregrounded. It is a matter of sustaining society as a whole, which would make it possible to lead to a change in people's values while trying to create an eco-conscious culture. Green initiatives have, as a result of this 'slow movement,' been initiated by some fashion companies.

1.2.2 Generation Z and sustainable development as a mission in the 21st century

Domingos et al. (2022) identified Generation Y and Generation Z as the main change drivers when it comes to implementing sustainable development in their fashion consumption behavior. In this thesis, Generation Z will be the object of study as the practices of the 21st century will be examined. Both generations share common features: they like to wear mature and timeless styles, even if upcycling remains central to 'slow fashion' (p.9). Brydges et al. (2020, p. 298) emphasized Ho and Choi's theories (the five R's) by stating that reducing, re-designing, recycling, reusing, and re-imagining have become crucial to Generation Z. Dagostino (2021, p. 24) reported that they strengthened the Youth for Climate movement who mainly contributed to the revolution towards slow fashion in an attempt to mitigate the bad effects that the fashion industry had on the environment.

As pointed out by Soler-I-Marti et al. (2022), the main objective of this movement is to raise awareness of the climate crisis that is currently happening and that is threatening our future as well as that of future generations. Global warming can no longer be denied since everybody is affected by, for example, greenhouse gases, rising waters, deforestation, fires, heat waves, and so on. Owing to climate-denier politicians who refused to act according to environmental catastrophes, which put their futures at risk, students' protests have taken the shape of Climate Marches since mid-2018. The Youth for Climate was inspired by Greta Thunberg, a Swedish activist who refused to attend school because of this climate emergency. In the second phase, the movement spread throughout the world to foster social engagement. Youth for Climate is considered a group of activists where collectivity is preferred over individuality.

Youth for Climate's activists added another component to sustainable development by stating that 'climate justice' and 'social justice' are correlated. On their website (Youth for Climate.com), it can be read that they recognize that some groups are less privileged, which leads to discrimination against minorities. The movement wants to tackle social inequalities, but this requires special attention to global warming in this instance. As mentioned by Dagostino (2021, p. 6), social discrimination already occurred during the industrial phases of development and industry enlargement. Teenagers of the 21st century would like to move to a sustainable future where solidarity and intersectionality are promoted and to break through the dichotomy between the rich and the poor, who are exploited garment workers. By paying attention to 'intersectionality,' no one would be left out. As was reported by the movement itself: "This means a society in which care and people are prioritized over profit and growth" (Youth for Climate.com). It is worth repeating that a system change is expected where sustainable development and circular economy could match.

Gradually, the young activists factored another key element into the definition of 'sustainable development,' which is therefore no longer limited to environmental issues. By also paying attention to the social element, ethics has to be underlined as well. Domingo (2022, p. 9) depicts the 21st generation as an eco-conscious youth movement that has been able to help people

make ethical choices when making buying decisions. Transparency and especially local support are central to this movement. They adopted a zero-waste approach which is in line with the five Rs (Ho & Choi, 2012, as cited in Brydges, 2020) such as recycling or upcycling to stem the dissemination of fast fashion.

Most teenagers no longer tolerate the exploitation of both the environment and the workers. Huge amounts of clothes are produced in record time as a result of using cheaper materials. The major concern is that these items would be worn briefly before being discarded in accordance with fashion trends, which Youth for Climate's teenagers are fighting against. De Bruyne and Verleye (2022, p. 506) state that social engagement has shifted to consumer engagement by combining the present needs of the 21st generation, namely, to protect society from the perils of the fashion industry, which also means rethinking the orientation of businesses from a global perspective to a locally shared one: the sharing business that is part of the circular economy.

It seems that Generation Z has to deal with some post-industrial effects, the so-called 'late modernity.' Besides having to face climate change, young people have to deal with uncertainty and the acceleration of social time. This is why they need to focus on the 'absolute present.' As indicated by Soler-I-Marti et al. (2022), the ecomodernism that goes hand in hand with an eco-conscious claim demands positivity rather than passivity due to loss. Advanced modernity, accompanied by all sorts of technological development, is known to be a factor in the acceleration of social time and relationships are therefore altered. On the one hand, teenagers have to gather and project themselves all together in order to plan in the long term how they can contribute to sustaining society and their future. But, on the other hand, vulnerability and uncertainty increase as time acceleration reduces the experience of time.

It is noteworthy that this feeling of emergency makes it possible to create a 'we' identity. By depicting climate change as a non-apocalyptic end, Generation Z has to identify itself as a bonded group, which is not grieving for the future at risk (Soler-I-Marti et al., 2022, p. 6). It also appears that young people have adapted their speech to generational needs. Despite the negative predictions of the future, they put forward positive messages instead of fear and despair. Emotions are also a means of strengthening this idea of collectivity. In short, Soler-I-Marti et al. (2022) have demonstrated that 21st-century teenagers have been able to overcome time acceleration to preserve eco-activism thanks to adaptive speech and its feeling of generational belongingness.

1.2.3 Social media enabling community building and commitment

The emergence of digitalization in the early 2000s and media consumption are responsible, by and large, for a process of 'acceleration' that seems to poison people's well-being (Görland & Kannengießer, 2021, p. 252). This leads to stressful behavior and excessive use of digital platforms. Generation Z is known to be constantly 'online.' Time pressure is often identified as a 'free-time killer' (p. 252) as young people are seen as surfing all alone without any interaction

with the outside world. This idea of loneliness is biased since communication is initially interactive with a minimum of two people in contact with each other, and in addition, there is a desire to synchronize with society, which keeps speeding up to keep up to date, exacerbated by the fear of missing out. Community building is all the more challenging for Generation Z as digital channels strengthen 'connectivity pressure' (p. 252). Digital Detox is another element that will lead to sustaining the use of digital media in the attempt to 'slow' social practices.

Digital media remains the major means of community building for Generation Z. Community building relies on social values, according to Calcagni et al. (2019), and interpersonal relationships are thought to be part of societal core values that are shared during the communication process, leading to reciprocity. It is also "a system of preference, principles, and virtues co-constructed and held in common of a social group" (p. 1309). The socially shared norms are crucial when building communities. Each group has its preferences that reflect its cultural identity.

Consequently, virtual digital communities share some norms. As young people are always connected, their shared experiences are expected to be evaluated positively by other members of the same community, whose values are supposed to be in line with expected social values to create a feeling of reciprocity. As mentioned by Calcagni et al. (2019, p. 1310), posting on social media makes it possible to share information like pictures, tags, descriptions, and geolocalization elements such as hashtags, which can be commented on. The fact that synchronization enables teenagers to react immediately at the same time other people experience something makes people stick to societal ruling within the community in question by feeling engaged (p. 1318).

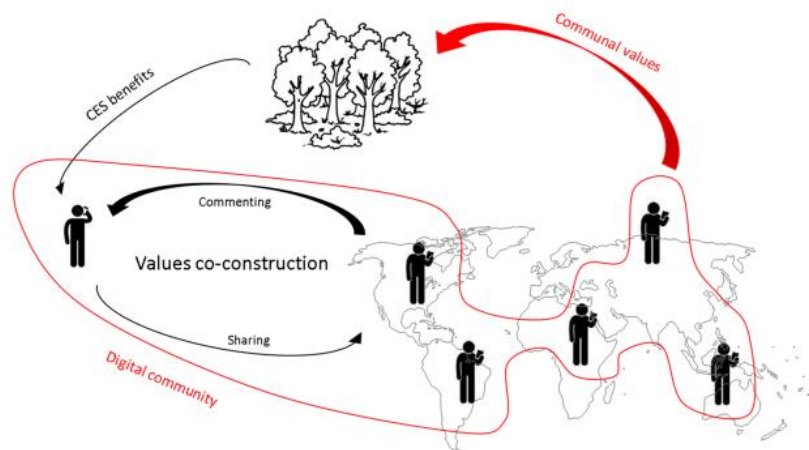


Figure 2 Relational values co-construction through interactions on social media (Calcagni et al., 2019, p. 1311).

As can be seen from Figure 2, singular individuals feel connected to each other throughout the world thanks to digital tools and they form a digital community. This feeling of belongingness is

due to communal values that are said to be co-constructed. These digital communities will influence other individuals in turn by the ability to comment on some online posts.

The process of mutual influence underlies commitment. But first, social comparisons on social media have to be analyzed to understand how commitment is displayed among Generation Z. Noon (2020, p. 2) claims that peer validation is a key element. Young people tend to post 'idealized versions' of themselves which serve as 'self-affirmation' and self-enhancement in comparison to other 'online' members. This is a two-way system with upward and downward comparisons. The former relates to a role model in order to improve the 'self' (p. 5). Young people idealize another person who can be an influencer in the case of fast fashion to take on good consumption moral behavior. The downward approach serves to demonstrate an inferior opinion of the object of comparison. An experiment was conducted on SNS (Social Networking Sites) social comparisons on Instagram by Park and Baek (2018, cited in Noon, 2020). They pointed out that making social comparisons helped young people to 'fit in' since it encouraged them to actively explore their identities and solidify their commitment. Given that both strategies seek to increase a good self-image while demonstrating commitment, no connection has been established between them and negative self-enhancement (such as envy and depression).

Marcella-Hood (2023) demonstrates that Generation Z is devoted to the community and commitment thanks to social media in the quest for sustainable practices. It is important to bear in mind that we live in a hyper-connected world and that performance is monitored on social media with the number of followers and posts. Instagram will be the communication channel analyzed in this dissertation as it is one of the top three influential platforms and also because visual focus matters a lot nowadays. Instagram was created in 2010 and is now by far one of the most popular social media sites among teenagers, with 2 billion users monthly (Dixon, 2023). Marcella-Hood (2023, p. 2) adds that this social media platform is the favorite one in the UK. Based on Statista, it is only ranked 8th among other apps, but it appears to be the first in terms of fashion content promotion due to aesthetic norms, which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Under the impact of community building, bloggers-influencers, and fashion critics have been playing a crucial role in shaping consumers' behavior and helping them reason about problems concerning fashion and related unsustainable practices (Marcella-Hood, 2023, p.3). The follower system on Instagram fosters engagement and commitment to 'slow fashion' by increasing ethical discourse in a reflective attempt. Educational accounts are therefore constructed to shape and influence people's identities, which aims to create a shift in fashion consumers' habits (p. 11). Peer evaluation, pressure, and comparison fit perfectly with this social medium, especially as users can share, follow, and identify themselves with the content makers to later act in their turn. Instagram is considered to be a very influential social media platform; because of influencers' communities, the transition to slow fashion is arguably facilitated.

1.3 Rethinking our human practices to reshape our economic model

As mentioned above, the period of the 'Capitalocene' (Brooks et al., 2017, p. 489), which followed the Industrial Revolution where profit and growth mattered more than human relations under the influence of globalization and mass profit, is currently held responsible for the erosion of the link between humanity and nature. Fashion factories have undergone excesses in terms of environmental pollution, or with various accidents resulting in widening social class inequalities.

1.3.1 Thwarting the current fallout of the fashion industry in the 21st century

The fashion industry is considered to be the biggest polluter in the world. It has been estimated that approximately 13 million tons of textile waste are discarded on an annual basis. (Theprettyplaneteer). The amount of water used by that industry to grow crops, which are later transformed into textiles, is reported to amount to 20% more in comparison to other industries (Theprettyplaneteer). Moreover, consumers tend to overwash their clothes. As a result, synthetic fibers which are made up of plastic such as Polyester, reject tons of microfibers into watercourses. Because of delocalization, namely in India, greenhouse gas emissions have risen by 10%. Toxic chemicals (from dyes) are also endangering marine life. In other words, the fashion footprint is considerable.

Generation Z feels concerned by these climatic issues as their future is at stake. Thanks to digitalization, they have tried to alert the authorities to this matter in order to sustain relations with the planet and their living environment. Instead of complaining, they succeed in rallying by creating communities, where social values determine all the interactions always from an ethical point of view. When it comes to fashion, they have been able to propose alternatives such as recycling, and upcycling.

It has to be kept in mind that the 21st century is subject to an acceleration where the fear of missing out pushes young people to be even more connected. Peer validation on social networks also worsens the process of comparison, which can slow the momentum of participation in a more sustainable society where people feel important and supported, as a part of a community. Generation Z pays attention to community building, which is central to promoting local fashion initiatives and boycotting big fashion chains. Young consumers want to engage in a more ethical way where they are agents and not objects of capitalism.

1.3.2 Shift from eco-modernism to the "good Anthropocene"

As a reminder, the period of the Anthropocene, which is characterized as the breakdown between humans and true nature altered by the industrial process, needs to be overcome in order to lean towards a model where people are at the center of practices. Brooks et al. (2017), however, present the Anthropocene as the ability to face the undeniable climate crisis, hence the 'good Anthropocene' (p. 483). The belief in the good Anthropocene, albeit somewhat utopian, helps people believe in humans and their ability to adapt. The authors view this

geological epoch not as doomed because it enables humankind to improvise new societies. This ideology puts humans at the center as they can seize the opportunity to move beyond this total failure. As mentioned by Brook et al. (2017, p. 496): “

A strength and weakness of the Anthropocene concept is how it can provoke audiences to think about what a future world will look like while also painting a picture of inevitable change and recognizing the “godlike agency” of humans.

Eco-modernism as such does not seem to be the solution since it is inevitably linked to the capitalist market and its endless desire to grow and develop new technologies aimed at making a profit. The proposed solutions like closed-loop recycling, and upcycling are considered to be ‘magic bullets’ (2017, p. 497). But, the same problem remains that all these practices underlie the same capitalistic logic. Using new technological alternatives does not restore ecosystems. If Brooks et al. (2017) criticize eco-modernism for its embeddedness in capitalism, like Soler-I-Marti et al., they have been able to pin down the social mobilization that makes people all aware of their power to reshape social relationships by engaging actively with nature without longing for its depletion. Soler-I-Marti et al. (2022) were able to identify the will among Generation Z to remain positive despite the fact that the climate degradation is worsening, which is in line with Brooks et al.’s utopian theories.

A social reorganization is therefore necessary, but Brooks et al. (2017) underline the importance of not solely relying on technological innovations but rather transforming culture, economics, and politics to enable new sustainable opportunities. Sustainable practices such as upcycling, upcycled garments, recycling, and close-loop recycling can no longer be isolated mechanisms; a new business model is needed: that of the circular economy where creative and progressive initiatives could ensure a ‘revolutionary transformation of the relationships among fashion, consumption, technology, and the environment’ (Brooks et al., 2017, p. 499). This is how human practices have to be reshaped to embrace a new economic model. The economy does not have to be the center of everything so competition is no longer at the basis of our society, which mainly relies on purchasing power. The quantity of products that may be purchased at any given time with a unit of currency is known as purchasing power. The price of these commodities can change over time owing to inflation. As a result, fewer things may be purchased for the same amount of money due to increased pricing. It is also referred to as buying power (Hayes, 2024). Purchasing power can be reached differently, and a new socio-economic system will be promoted instead, avoiding excessive exploitation of natural resources and deepening social inequalities.

2 Sharing economy in the second-hand business model: from capitalistic to socio-economic system

This second chapter examines the shift towards a socio-economic system with special attention to the circular economy, which embodies the sharing economy as such. It is worth mentioning that the main object of study is the second-hand model. The first subsection focuses on 'sustainabilities' and the related three-input system, the so-called 'triad model,' which incorporates a social, economic, and environmental component. The subsection also shows that social input efforts like voluntarism have adopted a business orientation. After this, the emphasis will be laid on how communication methods have been sustained, especially in digitalized societies. Instagram's digital strategies are highlighted in the process of creating communities, which is central to commitment. Finally, the focus is on how sustainability communication in the fashion industry has evolved from a corporate point of view.

2.1 Triad model - distinction between 'sustainabilities'

In Chapter 1, 'sustainable development' (1960) was referred to as the ability to answer 21st-century needs while still preserving natural resources for the following generations (Borusiak and Poluchova, 2018, p. 7). Generation Z with their focus and support to local communities has shown that it is possible to opt for a system that also takes social aspects into account and therefore promotes eco-consciousness. Above all, though, they have demonstrated that the circular economy is key to saving the environment from disruptive fashion practices, as seen by their sustainable alternatives to fast fashion.

Ekins et al. (2019) characterize the circular economy as follows: "The circular economy puts most emphasis on environmental sustainability: its focus is overwhelmingly on making circular use of natural resources and reducing environmental impacts like reducing waste and preserving the resource" (p. 80). Ekins et al. (2019) also emphasized the necessity of mitigating the depletion of limited natural resources, reducing environmental pollution from the processing, and using and end-of-life materials. It is exactly what Generation Z aims for when recycling, upcycling, and reusing used fashion items. By sharing and re-adopting used garments, they foster the sharing economy, which consists of redistributing and sharing used unwanted items to avoid them ending up in landfills and to stem the endless pollution caused by the fashion industry. They also underline the importance of the social component in that kind of circularity by mentioning social inclusivity such as 'diversity, inclusion, income, wealth distribution...' (p. 14).

That is how the circular economy (based on a sharing system) and sustainability are said to be interlinked. As a reminder, 'sustainability' places an exclusive focus on stemming the bad effects of fashion production. Social concerns are also foregrounded, although as noted by Ekins et al. (2019), there is a chance that eventually the additional financial gains from the circular model will outweigh the advantages to society from protecting the environment. This three-

component model is hence referred to as the ‘triad model,’ which is more precisely called the ‘the three sustainabilities’ (Ekins et al., 2019, p.14) and is made up of three components: social, environmental, and economic. Speaking of sustainabilities, Ekins et al. (2019) argued that a distinction has to be made between ‘economic sustainability,’ ‘social sustainability,’ and ‘environmental sustainability.’ The first is linked with ‘corporate profitability,’ the second concept relates to ‘social cohesion,’ and finally, the third stands for the ‘maintenance of important environmental functions.’

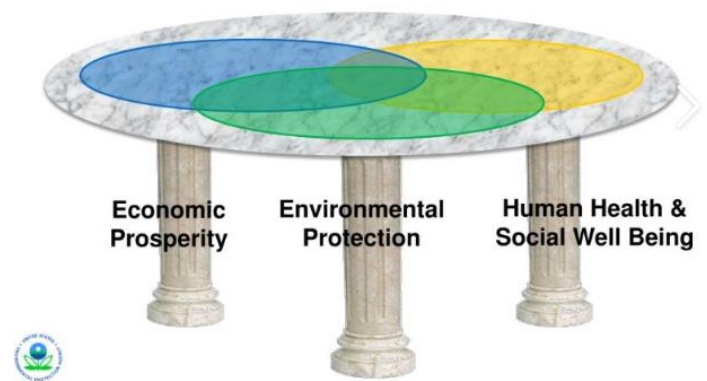


Figure 3. Three pillars of sustainability (Halen, 2019, slide 2)

Figure 3 shows that there is an assumed equal distribution between the three components, the so-called ‘sustainabilities.’ As a result, social well-being, environmental preservation, and economic prosperity all seem to be on the same level. For that reason, Ekins et al. (2019, p. 14-15) criticized the term ‘circular economy,’ as it essentially emphasizes the protection of the planet, which means that ‘environmental sustainability’ would be foregrounded over the other considerations. But the main issue, according to the authors, is that even if a social dimension is intertwined within the sphere of ‘environmental sustainability,’ there is a paradox with the concept of ‘economic sustainability.’ While preserving the environment demands ‘degrowth’ (p.14), a non-decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected since the term ‘economic sustainability’ relates to ‘corporate sustainability,’ which goes hand in hand with capitalism.

Based on their research, the following hypothesis can be formulated: social dimensions will always be considered after the interest in ‘capital;’ ‘large economic gains’ are expected to be realized by circular loops, which underpin the definition of ‘sustainability. This is why, according to Ekins et al. (2019), sustainability and sustainable development can no longer be used as synonyms. There is a misconception, nonetheless, that the circular economy process cannot accommodate both social relationships and economic considerations. As mentioned by Pearce et al. in 1994, economic development was already depicted as trying to reach growth but not disconnected from social progress and improvement:

“Economic development could be defined narrowly in traditional terms as real gross national product (GNP) per capita, or real consumption per capita. Alternatively, it could be defined more broadly to include other indicators of development, such as education, health, and the “quality

of life,” including human freedom. One broad measure of economic development, the United Nations Development Programme’s “Human Development Index” (HDI), combines measures of subgoals – education, life expectancy, and gross domestic product- to provide an index of a country’s achievements relative to that of other countries.” (Pearce et al, 1994, p. 458-460).

It is worth repeating that a pro-social attitude has always been claimed throughout the centuries as a result of capitalistic imbalance. From the Edwardian period (see Linenhan, 2012) with the social modernists to the eco-modernists during late modernity, they all refuted an economic predominance as a result of globalization and mass consumption, but enrichment was still the key to development and growth. If Ekins et al. (2019) viewed this imbalance between the three ‘sustainabilities’ as a fatal breakdown in socio-economic coexistence, Brooks et al. (2017) considered it instead as an opportunity for mankind to reshape an economic model where humans are at the center of a business model and are no longer isolated. This leads to taking on a new socio-economic model that allows for the combination of ‘social sustainability’ alongside ‘economic sustainability’ in reference to the concept of ‘sustainabilities’ (Ekins et al., 2019).

As noted by Borusiak and Poluchova (2018), the adoption of charity shops is bound to reconcile the two contradictory aspects of ‘sustainabilities,’ namely by promoting social cohesion and the importance of gain and money, which are crucial to economic wealth. The authors specify that those kinds of stores are not considered ventures because they mainly rely on donors and are sold at extremely low prices. Charities are part of the ‘sharing models’ owing to the exchange of used garments and are referred to as second-hand stores by giving clothes ‘a second life’ (p.8), which demonstrates the process of circularity. This is why special attention will be paid to sharing business models and, more especially, to their second-hand systems with a focus on the BRC and Vinted. In order to determine whether this desire for environmental protection against the excesses of fast fashion can be achieved through an equitable distribution from a socio-economic perspective under this new business model, it is necessary to examine the stakes and interests of the three ‘sustainabilities’ of the second-hand models that are the BRC and Vinted.

2.1.1 Green Policies- the Green New Deal

The Green New Deal (GND) was created by a group of academics and advocates in the UK (Brown et al., 2023, p. 1). It intends to address ecological crises while tackling social and economic disparity and creating employment from a local perspective. One way to characterize it would be as an ‘environmental policy program of the 21st century’. Originally, the GND group was established in 2019, after which it was reviewed in 2020 under the name ‘The New Green Deal’. Additionally, they created the Green New Deal Rising. All of them share common features: green infrastructure investment, financing the group (GND), ownership structures, economics, and finally, *social and climate justice*.

The Green New Deal (2019) was shaped as a result of the ‘global economic downturn’ due to the financial crisis in 2007-2008. There is a dual objective: the renewal of the financial system

with the view of permitting both public and private investment in environmental projects to reduce the use of fossil energy for planet-saving. For them to meet their objectives, a zero-carbon program was launched, including the decarbonization of buildings, reductions in transport emissions, and the creation of green businesses (2023, p. 4). But this program also demands social justice, which is the second objective: “zero carbon, zero poverty” (p. 4). This is why investment in green initiatives should be implemented in a whole society approach.

For this purpose, social security policies have to be implemented as an essential element of the ‘green initiative.’ Although the initial priority of the GND group was to lower carbon release, the economic, social, and climate justice claims must be tied together (p. 6). From an economic perspective, it appears that they refute a ‘broken and exploitative’ heritage as regards globalization and industrial dealings. Aside from this, Brown et al. (2023) suggest that local authority should be increased (p. 6). Local empowerment is hence promoted. The authors regard this transition to green emissions as an accomplishment and recognition of workers’ rights and inclusion. The latter is crucial to adopting new green energies as community and active participation help approve decision-makers’ policies. Thanks to UK Citizens’ Assemblies, people feel concerned about the decision-making process because they are given information.

2.1.1.1 BRITISH RED CROSS- GREEN INITIATIVES

Before analyzing the importance of green initiatives at the BRC, it is important to describe this non-profit organization, which makes use of volunteers to implement and lead diverse activities and projects. Voluntarism and volunteer involvement at the center of practices (Hickin, 2016). According to Hickin (2016), the voluntary sector is designed ‘by the people for the people’ (p. 25). It is important to remember that the main role of the BRC was to support people in need and help them recover.

Casagrande (2021), in charge of the Green Response Group at the International Federation of the Red Cross, reports that the British Red Cross (BRC) has taken some measures to protect the environment. These measures are called the Green Response, they are willing to address the issue of climate change, which leads to humanitarian crises. Because communities are dependent on their local environment, the same principle as that for humanitarian actions, i.e., DO NOT HARM, is applied. This stresses the connection between social and environmental preoccupations, like Youth for Climate’s claim: ‘Climate justice is social justice’ (Youth for climate.be). Even if the Green Response leads to life-saving interventions that result from the climate crisis, they pay attention to the preservation of local places: “A response to a disaster must not leave an affected community more vulnerable to future crises by degrading the environment” (Casagrande, 2021).

The main objective of the Green Response by the BRC is to enhance the ‘environmental sustainability of humanitarian response.’ Regarding ‘environmental sustainability,’ the BRC is aiming to reduce its carbon impact by 2030 to be a zero-carbon emitter, as was promoted by

the GND (2019). Casagrande (2021) explains that the Green Project Response could even be cost-effective and valuable in terms of monetization from a local point of view: the shift from fossil fuels to new clean-green sources such as solar water pumps could for example generate some income while boosting and empowering local communities.

Recycling is also one way to be more responsible for environmental protection. Like the GND, the BRC has to promote green policies in a reshaped economic system that allows local empowerment since 'climate justice is social justice' and social justice requires trust in local authorities fostered by the preservation of the connection to volunteer's local lands. To sum up, investment in green projects is possible on the condition that people are given information, which leads to greater involvement in the process and consequent action in the face of a climate emergency.

The BRC allows local investment thanks to its charity stores, which mainly use volunteers. At the same time, they adopt green behavior by recycling and resharing used items. In the clothing industry, they recycle unwanted garments that would normally end up in landfills and sell them at extremely low prices in the second-hand model. The money raised is reinvested in humanitarian actions. So, it is clear that local projects are in line with the motto 'by the people for the people' (Hickin, 2016, p. 25), which empowers local involvement and the sense of utility in serving others. When giving a second life to clothing items, a pro-environmental attitude is promoted. As suggested by Borusiak and Paluchova (2018, p. 8), the British Red Cross has taken on *circular fashion*:

“In particular, such stores contribute to the democratization of consumption, extending the life cycle of products, reducing the abusive exploitation of the Earth's resources, and reducing the volume of wasted goods as a result of, among other things, the popularization of the *fast fashion* concept.

2.1.1.2 VINTED – GREEN INITIATIVES

Based on Palomo-Dominguez et al. (2023), Vinted can be described as a company. In other words, it was a business venture from the start, unlike the BRC. It was created in 2008 in Lithuania. It is mainly recognized by its digital app, which now has 65 million users in the entire world (p. 5). Furthermore, it also has a team of 1200 employees in 16 countries, which are mainly EU countries apart from the USA, the UK, and Canada. Not only is digitalization the only success factor for this green private-owned business, but Generation Z and its quest for sustainable consumption has also contributed to this transition to green initiatives. It seems that Vinted seized the opportunities brought about by 21st-century consumers' sustainable orientation, including community building (p. 16). This is how Vinted created its community of *Vintees*.

In his book “Sustainable Textiles: Production, Processing, Manufacturing & Chemistry,” Muthu (2022, p.28) describes Vinted as part of a collaborative consumption system. Collaborative

consumption is determined by the sharing of goods and services among people, such as through swapping or resale. Vinted is a digital platform that enables peer-to-peer retailing (p. 30). Compared to the BRC's scope, Vinted has expanded beyond local communities to contact individuals throughout the world. Compliance with ownership is no longer at the center of concern, given that it is now shared (p. 32). Vinted is mainly known for facilitating the buying and selling of second-hand clothes. Peer-to-peer retailing guarantees the extension of garment life cycles as clothes are worn several times without being discarded (p. 30). Affordable prices are usually offered for the clothing items offered for sale.

On Vinted's corporate website (Infoboard.com), it can be read that 1.8 kg of emissions is avoided when buying second-hand. They stress that the sharing model reduces the production of fashion garments by 33%. And that means that one-fifth of the Vintees would still refuse to purchase freshly produced items if they had the opportunity to share them. Besides, special attention is paid to shipping in order to sustain traditional shipping habits that usually involve single-use packaging. As a result, recycled wrapping is promoted, which helps save 17 kilotons of carbon emissions. Pick-up points are another solution that replaces home delivery, which enables a 62% carbon cut.

2.1.2 Social input towards re-humanization through consumer engagement

Hickin (2016, p. 7) stresses the prominence of local empowerment regarding past events where factory workers were exploited and lacked all rights. The English people want the opportunity to be heard, mostly the marginalized. She also looked back at the social movement in the UK in 1940, which expressed dissatisfaction due to oppression and inequalities. This explains the rise of activists and the success of the voluntary sector, which is made up of non-profit organizations whose aim is to enrich communities.

Service User Involvement (SUI) is viewed as a landmark for the empowerment of left-out individuals. According to Hickin (2016), SUI is outlined as a process fueled by knowledge and experience (p. 93) to bring about change in different areas such as education, training, and recruitment. It is noteworthy that *market-led* approaches (p. 7), derived from the period of the Capitalocene, overlooked the social care system (p. 8). As a result, SUI's main objective is to prioritize individual rights. Nevertheless, community and collective power underlie social actions regardless of any kind of involvement. SUI is represented in terms of a 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (Arnstein, 1969, as cited in Hickin, 2016, p. 9) to express the degrees to which people are engaged in a particular project.

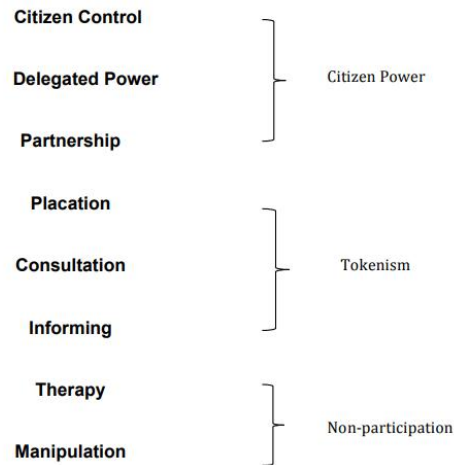


Figure 4 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (Arnstein, 1969, as cited in Hickin, 2016, p.9)

As shown in Figure 4, there are different layers of involvement. There are three main categories: citizen power, tokenism, and non-participation, all of which include three main components. At the top of the 'ladder', citizen power is represented. In the second position, tokenism is illustrated, and finally, non-participation can be observed at the bottom of the figure. Despite the fact that this model has been criticized because of its top-down approach highlighting unequal participation, agency is stressed in that model given the distinction between layers of involvement (Hickin, 2016, p. 10-11). This results in the recognition of citizens' ability to exert control and power as a central element of their experience as service users.

Volunteering can be viewed as taking part in service user involvement as it is set "by the people for the people" (2016, p. 25), which stresses the importance of 'agency.' Volunteering essentially underscores community empowerment and collective action. That is why the BRC, which is a voluntary organization, outlines the prominence of voluntary service. The main motives for volunteering are the recognition of citizenship and societal good in an attempt to give everybody equal chances. As demonstrated by Waikayi (2012), the two main reasons for volunteering at the BRC are social interaction and social connection. Collective interactions enable young volunteers to get an overview of working life thanks to their experience in charity stores, for example. This leads to self-satisfaction, which is perceived as rewarding. To quote Waikayi et al. (2012, p. 359): "Volunteering is rewarding in itself...it means a lot to me to do something for other people. It helps me to develop understanding to collaborate with other people...collaborating with the community and other people." Social responsibility is at the heart of Service User Involvement, it is actually a matter of 'giving back to the community' (Waikayi, 2012, p. 360).

As pointed out by the Youth for Climate movement (cf. above), there are social inequalities due to global warming, which makes people less likely to act in collective projects and, as a consequence, increases discrimination against those groups. However, the epoch of the 'good

Anthropocene' (see Brooks et al., 2017) mainly relied on human agency to rally and shape promising futures despite environmental collapse. Going back to the ladder model of citizen Participation (see Hickin, 2016), it can be seen that Tokenism is depicted as an underlying element of citizen participation. This tokenistic approach involves 'placation, consulting, and informing' (Hickin, 2016, p. 10). As some groups are left out or marginalized, they do not feel concerned by the projects and 'withdraw from initiatives' (Hickin, 2016, p. 31). As a result, further discrimination is increased. In agreement with Ekins et al. (2019), Hickin considers the collective decision-making process as crucial to making people feel part of the process and fostering social support to avoid social exclusion.

Speaking of social support, Pischetola (2011) already viewed the importance of digital inclusion in 2011. With the rise of digitalization, a boom in online sales has been recorded with the emergence of apps like Vinted or the Charity shop network of the BRC. But, it is important to point out that not everybody has access to digital platforms. This is why ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) factors such as race, income, gender, social status, etc. (p. 5) are central to the BRC's commitment, which is to provide the whole community with equal opportunities, even in digital media. Moreover, ICT factors are crucial to the economic development of a country (p. 1). If people are familiar with new technologies such as digital platforms, that will help spread innovations that enable the *knowledge economy* (p. 5). From a psychological perspective, the influential process in terms of digital-social support among marginalized communities is thought to be a means of encouraging cultural development given the *agency* factor, which has a positive fallout on the economy.

Digital inclusion seems crucial as sharing businesses are making almost exclusive use of digital platforms nowadays, whether adjunct brick-and-mortar second-hand stores (De Bruyne & Verleye, 2023, p. 500) in the case of the BRC or only online apps like Vinted. This means that the 'circle of sharing' (2023, p. 10) can happen from a local or global perspective. Needless to say, engagement, whether it is thanks to Service User Involvement or volunteering, is crucial to sharing businesses and their circularity. By stating that: "consumer engagement depends not only on business characteristics but also on consumer characteristics" (p. 502), De Bruyne and Verleye (2023) understand that consumer engagement is mainly dependent on consumers' sustainable orientation.

In accordance with this, Borusiak and Poluchova (2018, p. 8) also highlight two main fulfilments gained as a shopper in charity shops: the satisfaction of the symbolic and social needs of customers, both of which have an impact on *consumer engagement*. The satisfaction of the symbol relates to the creation of self-identity, which is accompanied by its values. Secondly, satisfying the social needs of customers requires belonging to a community that includes lifestyles and particular attitudes regarding Noon's identity theories (2020) and the construction of 'the self.' Peer validation is of paramount importance since it shapes individual engagement.

This is to say that unequal social support could lead to marginalization, which itself hampers the recognition of the 'self' through collective engagement.

Based on their research, De Bruyne and Verleye (2023) concluded that community scope has an influence on *consumer engagement*. They also argued that, even though local commitment was preferred over online platforms, digital platforms are necessary to enable service providers to interact with consumers. This is how the BRC has opted for Shopiigo, which is a charity shop network, to boost online sales and grow its online presence. This digital platform allows for a combination of local and online support (Meredith, 2021). To reach and target a younger public, the BRC has also started a collaboration with the ASOS marketplace, which has a broad influence on vintage potential consumers as it counts more than 20 million 'active customers' in the UK, US, and Europe (Meredith, 2019). This means that this e-platform helps to promote second-hand clothing items from BRC's second-hand retail. As for Vinted, e-empowerment is essential to consumer engagement. If Vinted is supposed to be a global sharing business, it is also possible for people to share items in person. It is not the local or global dimension that shapes *consumer engagement* (De Bruyne & Verleye, 2023, p. 501), but rather the focus on the community.

2.1.3 Market society- voluntarism and its business orientation

Broadbridge and Parsons (2002, p. 3) observed that charity shops were prominent in the 1990s with 3,200 shops in the UK and double that ten years later. It can be highlighted that the BRC, which had no business model a few years ago, has since the year 2000 adopted an NGO business model. It is worth repeating that they are a non-profit organization and, therefore, is not a business venture. Even though they receive items from donors and sell them at low prices, they are business-oriented with corporate activities. All their profit is redistributed to various projects, but their turnover is on the increase, which suggests that their business is healthy. The authors clearly emphasize that this is due to a shift to professionalization, where commercialism is as important as voluntarism (p.4).

By "professionalism," (p. 4) Broadridge and Parsons (2002) mean 'businesslike,' which underlies management and staff. The paid staff's main role is to centralize the decision-making process to standardize charity shops. This is how charity shops laid the emphasis on image enforcement and shop standardization to foster their brand image, which mainly relied on the trading up strategy. Above all, the trading up of charity retailing refers to "a move towards a more centralized and professional operation of charity shops... Many of these trading up features reflect procedures within the commercial high street retail environment..." (2002, p. 10) Modernization is also a main feature of trading up. Good examples of these are shop locations in prime high streets, improved shop windows, fittings, and unified pricing systems.

In other words, management strategies are the current common practice of running charities. The British Red Cross report on trading up their business puts forward their 'SMARTER strategy' (BRC, 2000 updated 2003, p. 80), which includes the following aspects: specific, measurable,

achievable, realistic, time-related, enhancing the service, and recognizing progress. All these elements strengthen the focus on customers to fuel their business model. However, three constraints can be observed: “budget, time, and performance constraints” (BRC, good practice guide, p. 80). If the BRC initially aimed to have a team half composed of volunteers and paid managers, Broadbridge and Parsons already stated in 2002 that it was difficult to recruit volunteers owing to the new management’s performance-based practices, which increased competition among charities (p. 8).

In terms of monetization, sharing practices have also been altered by adopting a business model. If sharing models aimed in the first instance to redistribute or swap clothes in an attempt to support local communities (see Hickin, 2016) within a ‘green’ circular approach, De Bruyne and Verleye (2023) now view the sharing economy as a business that has reshaped consumers’ engagement towards a sustainable orientation, the latter of which was measured thanks to five dimensions (p. 512): ownership transfer, professional involvement, compensation, digitalization, and community scope. Based on their study, the authors concluded that monetary compensation was preferred to non-monetary compensation.

The new socio-economic model based on sharing business enables the combination of the social component with the economic one. While Vinted emerged in the 21st century amid this ‘Slow’ perspective, the British Red Cross has had to adapt to this new hyper-connected world to meet the digital requirements. Görland and Kannengießer (2021, p. 253) remarked that time management is also a big issue that has to be factored in by charities. Consequently, they have to be able to multitask by fragmenting their discourse to reach diverse audiences, knowing that social inclusion is central to the ‘collective decision-making process’ (see Hickin, 2016). According to Broadbridge and Parsons (2002), time management is a skill that staff managers have to master, many of whom claim that ‘time equals money’ (p. 15), which might seem controversial while raising money for charities.

As stated by Soler-I-Marti et al. (2022), management is hindered by time acceleration, which is known as a major characteristic of the digital 21st century. Although Görland and Kannengießer (2021) specify that time and sustainability are interlinked in a modernized world, time is considered a resource that functions at three levels: as the underlying core of sustainability, as the relational link between mediated communication processes, and finally as the interconnection between time-sustaining and digital media use (p. 249). This triad must also be factored in in order to cope with time pressure. Because of the increase in media use and disinformation, discourse fragmentation has to be implemented. Fragmentation, or the splitting of communication activities, is a strategy that can occur at different times to the face temporal stress caused by a complex digital environment but whose aim is to decelerate media use (p. 253), hence ‘slow media.’ On the one hand, these discourses are willing to reduce media use on the whole, but on the other hand, there is an attempt to make people reconnect with an ‘authentic sense of time’ (p. 253).

2.2 Sustainability communication in digitalized societies

In their book called 'Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures,' Leaver et al. (2020) claim that Instagram is currently the most influential digital platform among young people and is subject to mass popularization. In 2020, Instagram had one billion users. It is essential to pay attention to its model as well, as communication and commerce tend to overlap. This social site belonged to Facebook but had no business model at first. The main difference compared to Facebook is that the users are younger. Instagram started advertising in 2013 and opened for other businesses, such as Marketplace in 2015. Two years later, it was the start of paid partnerships as influencers wanted to be transparent about their commercial dealings. If Instagram was an app at its start, it is now a gigantic database where the visual focus matters a lot. Instagram is also referred to as a huge 'singular' community, which is ruled by Instagram community guidelines which aim to ban inappropriate content sharing in order to protect users based on algorithms. Content-checking is crucial since it shapes consumer behavior. Instagram's digital use could redesign cultural practices in terms of 'slow' fashion consumption by combining social interests and communication fragmentation (e.g., multitasking, and stories). Instagram is above all by far the best digital platform that pictures life in all its aspects from the first moment to the latest moment of life (e.g., celebrating birth or a relatively old relative). This is why it is worth analyzing Instagram's strategies in terms of community building and aesthetic norms to entice people to take on sustainable fashion practices in the 21st century which is characterized by time pressure and social acceleration.

2.2.1 Instagram's communities building strategies

First of all, building Instagram's community mainly relies on influencers and the role models that they play. Marcella-Hood (2023, p. 11) stresses that influencers have an educational role as they can foster ethical purchasing behavior. They are not solely eco-friendly oriented, knowing that greenwashing is increasing too. They also give tips on how to buy garments in a responsible manner. Marcella-Hood (2023) highlights that the negative effects of the fashion industry and the shortened lifecycle of garments have highlighted consumers' buying responsibility. However, instead of being fully aware of these damaging fashion practices and taking appropriate action, people feel detached and uncertain about how to adapt their purchasing behavior. The author illustrates how complex behavioral choices are. But, as was mentioned by Brooks et al. (2017), the 'good Anthropocene' makes it possible for people to be creative and positive while implementing sustainable consumption changes.

In the same vein, Marcella-Hood (2023) states that a community of content creators leads to proactive action through targeted messages spread by enthusiasts Vintees, designers or brands. They appeal to a broader audience thanks to the multiplication of accounts, so-called 'segmentation,' which makes it possible for them to be more effective in reaching and influencing a broader audience. This is the case when messages are conveyed through various communication channels, called fragmentation (e.g., stories, multiplication of accounts, photos,

comments), as well as by content creators: from fashion critics to bloggers who can become influencers (p. 3). The term 'influencer' (p. 11) is problematic in itself as it can cause a negative shift in mindset by promoting some specific brands and increasing fashion consumption as a result. By contrast, educational accounts have increased in recent years and their main goal is to provide information and produce messages concerning 'slow fashion.'

Following Noon's identity development theories (2020), communal decisions shape the 'self'. Even though Instagram leans on community power, Marcella-Hood (2023, p. 10) stresses the fact that individual consumers have to be targeted to view themselves as 'slow fashion' buyers. Obviously, Instagram's posts have to be consumer-oriented given the fact that it is expected of users to share 'slow fashion' posts on their own Instagram feed. Consequently, according to Noon (2020), users identify with an influencing community because they share common ethical values, which shape their 'self-identity,' and act on their turn to influence others. Social comparisons help people who lack a sense of 'self' to better understand 'how they fit into society' (p. 5). Therefore, he refers to Instagram as the peer surveillance platform on which the main motive is to view stuff shared by others.

Calcagni et al. (2019, p. 1317-1318) add that geolocalization with its geotraces boosts the feeling of reciprocity, which is crucial to the process of mutual influence. Geodata is known to reveal viewpoints that are experiencing the environment simultaneously as it is being evaluated, which is in line with the quest for an 'authentic sense of life' (see Görland & Kannengießer). Geotraces incite people to gradually change and adapt their values. Hashtags also provoke a shift in mindset by emulating influencers in their buying interests. The use of hashtags helps create cultural indicators related to the natural environment, which could guarantee a genuine lifecycle (Calcagni, 2019, p. 1317).

2.2.2 Aesthetic norms: being 'Insta-worthy' matters

Leaver et al. (2020) point out that institutions need to be aesthetically recognizable. Following Marcella-Hood (2023) a distinction can be made between the message and content strategy. The two components of the messages are divided into two main strategies. The message strategy includes the focus on materialization and storytelling where emotions play a leading role, such as nostalgia. To continue enhancing the sharing aspects, it can be mentioned that Instagram's users make use of inclusive and relatable language (p.13). The content strategy concentrates on posting content, which can be divided into two, imagery and typography, to make it lively and appealing.

Alongside the promotion of environmental sustainability, the ethical dimension is said to be central to Instagram's behaviorally influential strategies. To determine what motives were projected in the posts and the true nature of the message, Marcella-Hood (2023, p. 5) reused Barthe's three 'meanings' analysis: 'denoted meaning', 'connoted meaning', and 'contextual meaning'. 'Denoted meaning' is the first level of meaning, which is more literal and obvious.

'Connoted' meaning is the second level of meaning: it is more symbolic and feeling-based. Finally, contextual meaning is connected with the variables that serve for the interpretation of the post. Marcella-Hood (2023) also expands on the main elements conveyed through Instagram's posts regarding the promotion of sustainable fashion. She suggests that the imperative need to engage with ethical topics is substantial.

Based on Loukianov et al. (2020), three narratives can be identified in Instagram's discourses, which are called the 'good life' narratives: the good life of the world-traveler, the good life of the self-made, and the good life of the shared experience (p. 5). While facing current problematic issues, people have to rally to positive discourses such as the good life, which is said to be the ability to reshape a world by the 'people for the people' (see Hickin, 2016). Good-life narratives are considered to be part of the moral persuasive process fostered by social media platforms like Instagram. For that purpose, such narratives have to be divided into two perspectives: people's personal values and beliefs, and the use of the narratives that are identified in their posts. In 2020, the hashtag 'good life' was used in 793 posts (Loukianov et al., 2020, p. 1). However, it is not solely its use that fosters engagement but the aesthetic norms that go with it. Designs will automatically differ from professional, casual, and designed imagery (p.3). A distinction can also be made between thematic clusters and content themes. Thematic clusters refer to the category of 'educational account' such as bloggers, while the latter refers to themes like fashion.

Rallying people in communities thanks to social media requires some communicative techniques to convey appealing messages. Storytelling is known to be highly effective for brand communication on this social media platform (Marcella-Hood, 2023, p. 14). By providing 'behind the scenes' content that can be shared and viewed by their followers, stories depict the human side behind 'slow businesses.' Behind-the-scenes views enhance the feeling of proximity. This helps to conceptualize the experience thanks to photographs and videos of people working. Stories make it possible to involve consumers in their journey to sustainability in terms of physical locations and proximity as they share their lives for a short period. Nostalgia is another strategy used in communication (2023, p. 13). If nostalgia is often associated with bad and negative feelings, in this case, it is rather positive. People feel comfortable and familiar with 'retro cultural references, humor, and styling of the imagery,' all of which can lead to engagement when confronted with real problems.

Instagram posts often include a fashion-related picture with special typography to spread a particular message. The posts are, according to Marcella-Hood, a 'carousel of images' (p. 10), and the main message can be read when users scroll down. The main image is immediately apparent with the clothing item that is the focal point and is often portrayed in 'still-life' or stylized shoots. Needless to say, the 21st generation is assumed to be part of a visual culture. From the point of view of the language, personal and relatable language is preferred by 'influencers' to create a 'we' identity, i.e. the Instagram community.

2.3 Sustainability communication (fashion) in the 21st century

There have not been a lot of studies conducted on sustainability communication. In 2011, Godemann and Michelsen mentioned the difficulty of capturing what sustainability communication is. They defined it as the evaluation of “the human-environment relationship into social discourse” (p. 3). However, this relationship has been tainted by the ‘globalization of ecological dangers’ (p. 4) that are made worse by a sharp rise in economic connections on a worldwide basis, which mainly rely on money and market-led approaches accompanied by competitiveness. A decade ago, researchers were already able to pinpoint that the efforts of multinational corporations were pointless in the face of climate change. Moreover, they added that there is a local factor to consider, such as ecological damage specific to some regions (famine, flooding, etc.), which has detrimental economic consequences for the involved communities. So, a correlation between environmental, social, and economic aspects can be established.

The rise of digitalization and its technological devices are a good example of new elements that have to be considered when exploring today’s youth engagement with changing mentalities. The definition of sustainable development and sustainability as previously defined (see 1.2.1), can be extended as a result of the cultural changes. According to Godemann and Michelsen (2011), ‘sustainable development’ could therefore be linked to a particular cultural context with its own perceptions and mentalities in terms of self-determination, participation, and responsibility for the future. More specifically, its main goal is to bond people together but with varying expectations depending on social groups. As for ‘sustainability,’ the authors view this concept differently by mentioning that it includes aspects such as modernization and societal development, which involve individual commitment. And at the same time, communication was thought of as the social process to convey their engagement. To put it in other words, Godemann and Michelsen (2011) already shaped sustainability communication as a mutual process, including societal norms to cope with the future and its climatic challenges.

Another essential element of sustainability communication is social marketing, which is assumed to be fueled by online communication and 2.0 social media platforms. Godemann and Michelsen (2011) witnessed the rising phenomenon of ‘individualization of society’ (2011, p. 8). Currently, lifestyles are embedded in consumption patterns. To cite Godemann and Michelsen (2011, p. 8): “When sustainability communication is connected with changes in individual attitudes and behavior, then differences in lifestyle take on a special importance”. In order to change buying decisions to slow fashion, ‘empowerment strategies’ (p. 9) are required. This is made possible by giving consumers some space to reflect on their purchasing responsibilities.

Among the few studies on sustainability communication in the fashion sector, Da Giau et al. (2015) were among the first to address the emergence of this type of communication in the fashion industry. Despite the fact that the focus was on fashion practices in Italy, they explain that there is a need for businesses to adopt sustainability due to the ‘increased sensibility about

and awareness of green social concerns (p. 73). In 2015, they also noticed that: “despite the growing importance of this topic, studies investigating web-based sustainability communication strategies in relation to sustainability practices are still scarce” (p. 73). Another study conducted by Brydges et al. (2022) on e-commerce communication trends acknowledges the importance of Instagram in certifying and ensuring compliance with CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) norms. But at the same time, some challenges were pointed out resulting from the online brands’ sustainability communication. Since media platforms offer quick access to customers through shared content (reels, text captions, hashtags, tags), it might be difficult for brands to control conversations about their products. They also struggle to add sustainable elements while maintaining customer engagement. Corporate social platforms enable ‘dialogic communication’ (Brydges et al., 2022, p.365), however, maintaining conversations about sustainability remains a challenge for those brands.

Speaking of dialogic communication, Brydges et al. (2022) stated that communication sustainability aims to testify to social, environmental, and economic sustainability. When raising awareness about their fashion products, brands do not limit themselves to one-way messages. Rather, they seek to engage in dialogic communication with stakeholders (Brydges et al., 2022, p. 359). The authors recall the importance of transparency and honesty, especially concerning the sustainability standards called CSR. At the same time, Akram et al. (2022) argued that the rise of digitalization in fashion matters since 73% of Millennials (Gen Y and Z) are buying clothing items that are socioeconomically and environmentally sustainable (p. 3). Digitalization has facilitated the implementation of real-time information when promoting sustainable fashion items, mainly through virtual networks. This is why it is worth paying attention to how sustainability communication has evolved since then, spurred by digitalization, and if there has been a shift in mentality, in order to fully adopt and expand this persuasive communication style.

SanMiguel et al. (2021) have more recently realized that sustainability communication has started to be business-oriented, therefore consumer-driven. The business dimension is becoming increasingly important with the rise of e-commerce. Fashion industries or companies have consequently adopted sustainability strategies when dealing with online shopping. Digitalization and sustainability concerns are said to turn the economic, social, and environmental issues (see the ‘three sustainabilities’ in section 4.3) into opportunities (p. 3). This is how manufacturers are willing to achieve ‘Sustainable Development Goal 12’ (p. 4), which highlights responsibility while consuming. In the same vein, Akram et al. (2022) mentioned that SDG’s (sustainable development goals) are increasingly implemented thanks to the leveraging digital technologies since those devices have altered the interactions between the people, the society and the environment as far as economies are concerned. From 2000 to 2015, a decrease in clothing purchases of 36% was observed (SanMiguel et al., 2021, p. 4). In 2020, the sales decreased by an additional 15% compared to the previous years. However, not all clothing companies pay attention to overconsumption or mass consumption.

Under the impetus of the Youth for Climate movement, the 21st century can be associated with slow perspectives (SanMiguel, 2021, p. 4), as in 'slow fashion'. As a result, there is a move to green communication, where social responsibility communication, which underlies environmental sustainability, and corporate sustainability communication are embedded. Like charities, sustainability communication has adopted a business model, corporate sustainability communication (CSR) (SanMiguel, 2021, p. 5). With its presence online, it is called 'online corporate sustainability communication,' which is aimed at analyzing communication strategies used to convey their business orientation in an attempt to sustain fashion practices, for example. And ultimately, the influencer marketing strategies conveyed on social media might influence consumers' perceptions and decisions, more specifically when it comes to the adoption of ethical behavioral consumption patterns. Influencers can influence customers to adopt sustainable consumption behaviors, allowing them to reflect deeply on their purchase. The influencing process consists of a two-way communication channel with a sender and a receiver, both of which are influenced by sustainable marketing and corporate strategies. Not only are consumers influenced by influencers, but they are also under the influence of the brands for whom they advertise.

3 Chapter 3: Data and method

The first section of this chapter is devoted to the research questions that this thesis seeks to address, based on a central hypothesis. The data collected from the BRC and Vinted's Instagram publications will be described. Finally, the method of analysis that will be used to answer the initial research questions will be explained.

3.1 Research question + hypothesis

The aim of this thesis is to examine to what extent a well-established charity institution, the British Red Cross (BRC) and a relatively new platform, Vinted, have adopted sustainability communication on their corporate Instagram accounts to embrace slow fashion practices. Instagram is, according to Leaver et al. (2020), the best platform ever to influence users' decisions due to the number of influencers using it. More specifically, this dissertation aims to examine to what extent Vinted and the BRC have included sustainability communication in their Instagram posts. The focus will be on the 'triad model' of sustainabilities, and how the three components (social, environmental, and economic) are promoted in their online communication. Based on the research conducted by Marcella-Hood (2023), the hypothesis is that the adaptation of corporate communication based on 'Insta-worthy' norms has enhanced their communicative style thanks to their consumer-driven strategies.

In other words, this dissertation aims to address the following research questions:

- 1) How and to what extent do the BRC and Vinted encompass sustainability communication in their Instagram posts?
- 2) To what extent is the triad model of the 'three sustainabilities' embodied in their online communication?
- 3) How do they incorporate 'insta-worthy norms' in their communicative discourse?

3.2 Data and method

The analysis focuses on a comparison between the BRC (a well-established charity) and Vinted (a brand-new retailing platform) based on a selection of Instagram publications from their corporate accounts. The analysis concentrates not only on their online communication, but also how their communication is characterized as sustainable, hence sustainability communication. The first section is devoted to data collection and the various elements that were taken into consideration. The method is subsequently discussed, with particular attention to the angles from which the three research questions will be discussed.

3.2.1 Data collection

I collected the data posted on Instagram by the BRC and Vinted at the beginning of summer, namely from June 1 to August 31, 2023. As Instagram is known to celebrate important moments

of life that people go through, it is relevant to take a look at all the events that take place during this period. Some examples are Father's Day, Pride month, and graduation celebrations. At the beginning of the summer, a hike in fashion purchases is forecast because of the summer styles. Summer sales could also be examined from the triad model perspective.

The analysis will concentrate on the 26 publications collected from *redcrossretail* and the 34 retrieved from Vinted's Instagram page. *Redcrossretail* is a social media platform that promotes secondhand fashion from the BRC and *Vinted* is a social media platform that is known to be a second-hand marketplace to give clothes a second life. With regard to the selection of Instagram publications, I chose to focus on the main features of Instagram publications, including the four constituent parts that are characteristic of Instagram's layout. They are the caption, the publication description, the tags, and the hashtags. In this thesis, comments and likes are also paid attention to, but with less emphasis, since they are beyond the control of the BRC and Vinted. The purpose is to draw a comparison between both organizations' publications on Instagram based on the frequency of the main characteristics found in the BRC and Vinted publications.

3.2.1.1 INSTAGRAM FEATURES AND UNIFORM LAYOUT

INSTAGRAM'S MAIN FEATURES

	Type of publication	Amount / post	Average / likes	Average / comments	Average / tags	Average / hashtags
The BRC	post					
	reel					
	Total					
Vinted	post					
	reel					
	Total					

Table 1. Grid of analysis showing the proportion of Instagram's main features among the BRC and Vinted's publications

In order to allow the analysis and comparison, I have designed an analytical grid (see Table 1) which includes the average number of likes, comments, tags, and hashtags for both organizations' publications. Given the focus on Instagram, it is important to define Instagram's main features, or what they are indicative of. Likes are obtained through community support for published content; they are also representative of community involvement. Similar to the likes, comments come from community members, and they indicate the type of relationship that both organizations have with their community. In addition, tags represent people or groups of people forming communities, all of whom are tagged in Instagram publications. Communities can be made up of individuals or charitable organizations that are called influential communities. The name of tagged people is made visible by the BRC or Vinted in their publications and is preceded by this symbol (@). As for hashtags, they can be considered a sort of comment that is linked to all the constituent parts; they function as indicators that underlie the main message. They are short words that shape the final message and orient the reader to grasp the main idea behind Instagram's publications (e.g., #PrideMonth, #Secondhandfashion).

The grid also distinguishes between posts and reels (i.e. short videos), and shows the proportion of features according to the type of publication. This distinction is relevant in order to observe how both types of publications engage influential communities based on the number of likes, comments, etc., and how the BRC and Vinted shape their communications accordingly, or, by contrast, do not rely on the type of publication (reels or posts) but rather embrace sustainable communication thanks to Instagram's uniform layout.

UNIFORM LAYOUT

Another important element that has to be taken into consideration is the fact that Instagram publications comply with uniformity in their structure. After having introduced Instagram's main features in general, I chose to focus on three of the constituent parts of the caption: the publication's description, the tags, and the hashtags. Instagram ensures constancy in the way a message is delivered thanks to its patterned layout. Figure 5 depicts two primary sections. On the left, there is a picture that represents the visual element. In some cases, the visual element may take the form of a video, called reel. On the right, parallel to the visual element (e.g., picture or reel), there is the caption that provides textual elements. The caption is a written text that describes the visual element. The caption begins with a textual description of the publication, followed by the tags et hashtags. The comments reflect the type of relationship that the BRC and Vinted have with their community (Oberlo, 2022). However, because they are not part of the BRC's and Vinted's communication strategy, they are regarded as peripheral aspects, despite the fact that they help to form sustainable communities. The same accounts for likes.

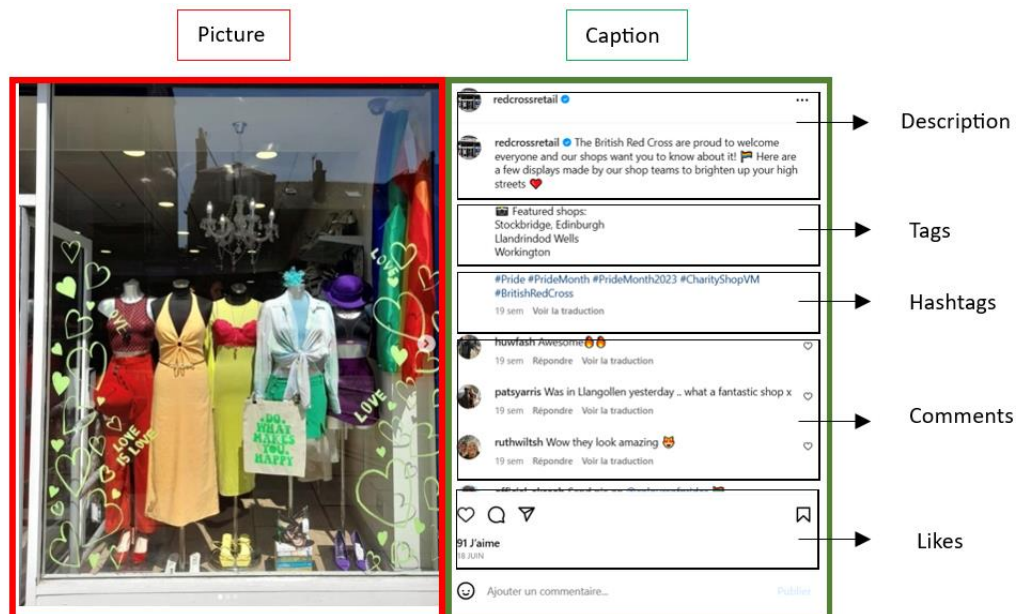


Figure 5. Publication from the BRC's Instagram account showing the constituent parts of publications

Based on Instagram publication structure, I have designed an analytical grid, taking solely the four constituent parts into account. Thanks to this grid, the communication aspects of the BRC and Vinted publications will be analyzed in depth, and this for the four parts (picture, description, tags, and hashtags). This grid will also serve to examine the extent to which Vinted's and the BRC's publications are said to be sustainable. As was previously defined, sustainability is made up of three main pillars (economic, environmental, and social) and each Instagram component will be analyzed from the triad perspective (see Table 2).

		Visual		Caption / textual	
		Picture	Description	Tags	Hashtags
The BRC	economic				
	environmental				
	social				
Vinted	economic				
	environmental				
	social				

Table 2. Grid of analysis showing the proportion of the three sustainabilities in all four constituent parts of Instagram publications.

The aim is to examine to what extent the picture, description, tags, and hashtags embody sustainability. Besides having mentioned the consistency brought by Instagram's structuring layout, the analysis per part makes it possible to explore if the trends are confirmed when publications are examined from left to right (i.e. from visual to textual elements). As a reminder, the picture introduces the theme, with the final tone being brought by the hashtags. This suggests that, for example, economic perspectives could be promoted throughout all four parts of the publication, or that a mix of various motivations could also be provided. The patterned layout and the interconnectivity between the constituent parts would not weaken the idea of fluidity in the message. But, this led me to explore another model, the so-called AIDA model, which is mainly used by businesses or business-oriented organizations to foster consumers' engagement.

3.2.1.2 THE AIDA MODEL

According to Hassan et al. (2015), the AIDA model is made up of four major steps that all work together to foster engagement. This model can be applied to the constituent parts of Instagram's publications since the AIDA model progresses from the more generic to the more specific (see Figure 6), such as the connectivity between the visual and textual elements (see above). The first step consists of catching people's attention, similar to the picture or reel. After which, information is spread to make people gain knowledge so they are interested and start liking the publication (// description). The third stage is meant to increase the customers' desire (//tags) in order to push them to buy second-hand fashion clothing items promoted on

Instagram by influencers (//hashtags). The third stage is often accompanied by a question that is asked to followers to raise interest and foster engagement. The captions frequently contain non-closed questions. Instagram users have a habit of asking open-ended questions to solicit feedback from their followers and ask for their opinion (e.g., Which one is your favourite?). Another type of question is the multiple-choice question (e.g., Yellow or Green?), followers engage with a comment containing only one word (Oberlo, 2022).



Figure 6. Aida model from [The AIDA Model: A Proven Framework for Converting Strangers Into Customers \(hubspot.com\)](https://www.hubspot.com/marketing/a-ida-model)

As argued by Hassan et al. (2015), the AIDA Model has existed for centuries and remains relevant now due to its adaptation to the current context. This model is quite flexible because of its variations. It is clear that digitalization and social networks have made information more accessible, but promoting new products, for example, still requires communication strategies that adapt to the digital world and stimulate interaction in new ways. As cited by Hassan et al. (2015, p. 265): “When prospective customers are browsing the website of a company, a lot of information can be passed on to the customers with an interactive and interesting method so as to create customers interest in the products or services offered... However, it has also been argued that there is a lack of studies that look at how the AIDA model can be applied in the context of social media marketing.” However, their findings suggest that the AIDA model may be useful in strategic marketing methods on social media platforms.

Based on Hassan et al.’ study (2015), Mantik (2022) conducted further research mainly on Instagram and how the AIDA model could shape consumer’s purchasing decisions. According to Mantik (2022), the main objective of this model is to generate more responses and hence engagement. In other words, the AIDA model consists in the implementation of promotional strategies. Most importantly, the creation of promotional content on Instagram matters, as a result, the AIDA’s steps must be included in all publications. The caption must be written clearly and persuasively in order to keep customers informed and interested in the content with the purpose of increasing sales.

3.2.2 Method (with the analytical grids described)

This section focuses on the method and on how the data has been analyzed to try to answer the three central questions in this study. This is why I have decided to divide this section into three main approaches that will bring different scopes to the matter. First, the emphasis will be laid on how the BRC and Vinted communicate in general, and the importance paid to their brand identity (i.e. picture: logos, shop windows) or, by contrast, to their followers (i.e. textual element from the caption: tags). Therefore, followers are connected to some extent with the textual identity, as they are identified by tags that are part of the caption. This distinction of focus between brand identity and community building might give insight of the degree to which both organizations rely on their visual identity (picture: brand id) or rather textual identity (followers: tags). Having already identified some strategic ways of communicating, a second in-depth analysis will enable us to have a deeper awareness of the main motives around sustainability based on the triad model. After that, I will be exploring to what extent insta-worthy norms can influence customers' purchasing behavior, namely thanks to visualization. Visualization arguably plays an important role in today's society, which is a digitalized one. It is interesting to note that different reasons can lead customers to buy from a sustainable perspective. It is therefore relevant to relate the BRC's and Vinted's communication strategies to what (triad model) and how (insta-worthy norms) they foreground in connection with sustainability communication in the 21st century digitalized society.

3.2.2.1 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

In a first quantitative approach, I will analyze the general features that characterize both organizations' online communication among all their posts. In order to describe how they communicate about 'slow Fashion', which goes hand in hand with sustainable practices, I will pay attention to the frequency of some features such as tags, hashtags, recurrent structures, the presence of influencers, pictures,... Bearing in mind that publications read from left to right, it can be expected that there is a common thread behind them due to their structured layout. This is also true thanks to the AIDA model, which serves as a persuasive communication strategy (see Brydges et al., 2022).

It is important to restate that both Vinted and the BRC rely on the sale of their clothes through their respective pages (redcrossretail and Vinted). To this end, they need to boost their marketing messages, which is why it is interesting to examine publications based on the AIDA model, and how their online communication can be qualified as commercial and at the same time foster consumer engagement. This method highlights the commercial approaches that will subsequently be linked to the three sustainabilities model (economic, environmental, and social sustainability).

After having looked into the codes and norms (and their frequency) related to fashion posts, it is important to distinguish between the BRC and Vinted's communicative techniques to see if there are recurrent ways to boost consumers' engagement and encourage them to buy from

their social platforms. Visual identity matters a lot on Instagram; this is why I have decided to explore how both organizations highlight their brand identity in their posts. I will also explore how it helps to gain more followers while raising awareness of the secondhand fashion cause. Consequently, I have decided to group publications based on the importance of a brand's visual elements, such as logos, versus those that focus on the community (textual element: tags).

3.2.2.2 THREE SUSTAINABILITIES – ANALYTICAL GRID

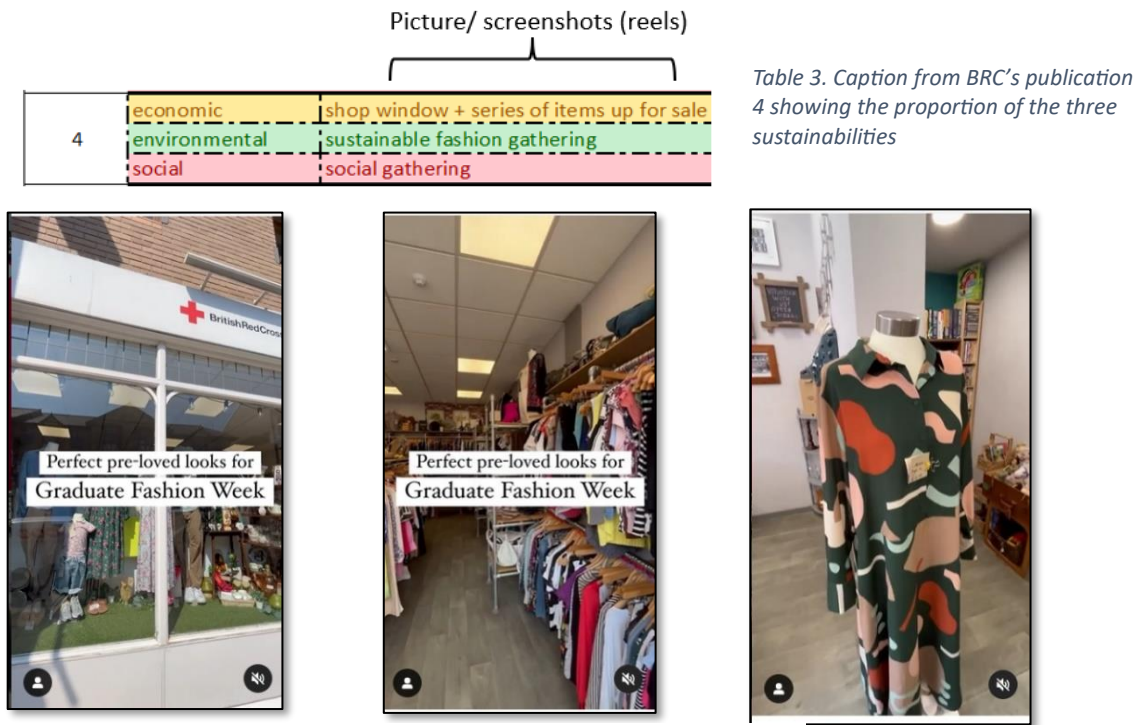
One of the main objectives of this thesis is to investigate to what extent the three sustainable aspects (environmental, social, and economic) are promoted in the four constituent parts of the publication. Based on the analytical grid (see Table 2), I have looked at what was shown (picture) and communicated (description, tags, and hashtags) by the BRC and Vinted. I then grouped them into three categories, corresponding to the three sustainabilities that the parts seemed to embody the most. Social elements correspond to people, communities, events gathering them, or any type of celebration. Economic matters include everything that is related to fashion sales and the purchasing act, like sales, labels, prices, etc. As for environmental aspects, they are connected to nature, including secondhand retailing and sustainability as a whole (e.g., recycling practices).

Based on the occurrences of some elements (e.g., shop windows, natural setting, influencers' presence) in one of the three categories, I have decided to classify the constituent part (e.g., the tag or the hashtag) in relation to the economy, the environment, or social life. To obtain figured representations in the form of diagrams, I added up all the elements present in each of the three categories, divided by X (number of publications x number of categories). In this way, it is possible to see which element stands out the most in each category within all the publications. This grid makes it possible to compare the results for the BRC and Vinted to, first, examine if the three categories are all promoted at the same level. After that, I will examine if there are differences between the BRC and Vinted, which are both part of the sharing business model.

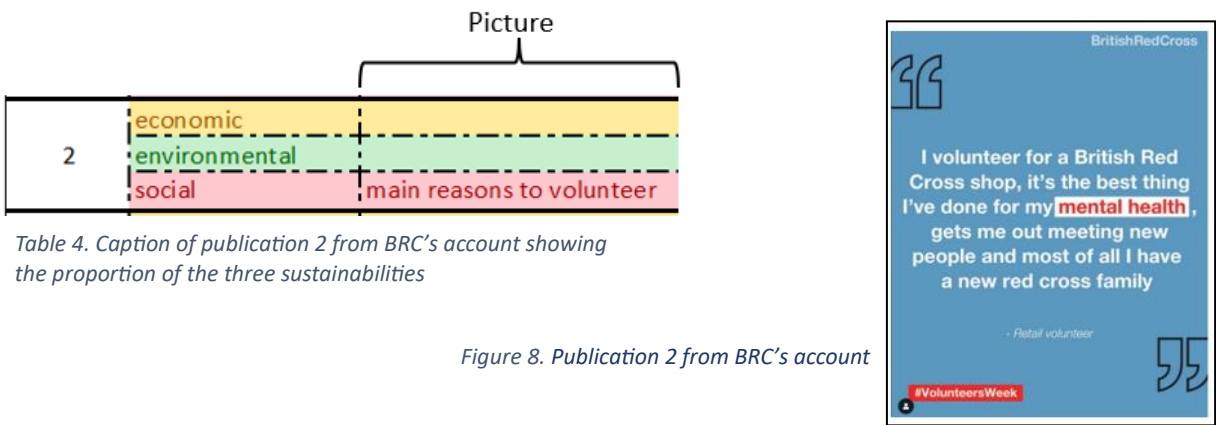
EXAMPLES 1&2 – FOCUS ON PICTURES/SCREENSHOTS (REELS)

As illustrated in Table 3, the screenshots from the reel (publication 4) from the BRC's account are mainly linked to economic elements. The shop window is foregrounded, then the inside of the store. This reel aims to entice people to buy clothes to attend a particular event, namely Graduate Fashion Week (GFW). Even if the GFW embodies and encourages sustainable choices among fashion practices and is a social gathering in the fashion world, the focus is on the purchasing act in this case. Because of the setting, which is similar to major retail chains (clothes on rails, plastic models, labels with prices, etc.), the commercial approach is predominant (see

Figure 7). Consequently, I have categorized this publication in the economic category based on the screenshots (pictures).



BRC’s publication 2 (see Figure 8) is an example of social sustainability because the visual element (i.e. screenshot) can be seen to entice people to volunteer. It is based on a testimony by one of the volunteers. Moreover, there is a connection between volunteering and mental health, which is meant to stress a caring environment. In other words, this publication works as a list of the pros of becoming a volunteer, and social aspects are clearly foregrounded.



EXAMPLE 3 – FOCUS ON HASHTAGS

For example, publication 7 contains a lot of hashtags (11 hashtags), as can be seen from Figure 9. Some elements were indeed found in at least two categories, like #GFW23, which is a social

gathering around sustainable fashion and is therefore socially and environmentally oriented. Even if some of the hashtags used exhibit more than one label, it can be seen that the social ones are more prominent. To give an example the hashtag 'preloved' refers to a garment that has been worn before, but above all loved by another follower, hence pre-loved. This term highlights social feelings. As a result, the hashtag 'pre-loved' is said to be socially connected.

Figure 9. Publication 7 from BRC's account exemplifying the three sustainabilities

#ShopRedCross #GFW23 #GraduateFashionWeek #LNLPopUp
 #LoveNotLandfill #SecondhandFashion #PrelovedFashion
 #SustainableStyle #CharityShop #VivienneWestwood
 #NTUCatwalk

#popupstore
#GFW23 & #NTUCatwalk
Preloved & #Lovenotlandfill & #NTUCatwalk & #GFW23

Table 5. Grid of analysis: proportion of sustainabilities among Hashtags from the BRC's publication 7

3.2.2.3 INSTA-WORTHY NORMS

A more qualitative investigation will explore how both second-hand organizations have seized 'insta-worthy norms' as prominent tools in their online discourse promoting sustainability communication. I will pay more attention to the visualization and content aspects, among which storytelling and materialization strategies will be discussed. This thesis aims to analyze how the BRC and Vinted have embraced the concept of 'sustainability communication' to reshape their underlying marketing orientation. They have to remain profitable, but by addressing and aligning with societal issues, they appear to have prioritized sustainability on the whole (environmental, social, and economic aspects). They have even been using familiar current digital tools (Instagram) to engage and reach a broader audience, mainly driven by digitalization.

Since visualization matters a lot nowadays, a distinction will be made between professional and casual imagery. In general, professional imagery emphasizes clothing items, while casual imagery focuses on the people featured in both organizations' publications. The analysis of focalization might give insight into the adoption of a professional attitude in both organizations' publications. An investigation of the imagery also makes it possible to analyze the scroll-down approach, which is how the imagery is built, i.e., whether it consists of a fixed image where the information is more static or in a carousel of images where the imagery is made up of several sequences of information. Carousels of images are said to be more dynamic. The scroll-down approach is a main feature of Instagram, which consists of processing the information from top to bottom, but also from left to right by clicking on the arrow (see Figure 6). The visual elements (pictures or reels) are not restricted to one fixed image; a publication can include different pictures that require a movement from right to left to have the content appear. This is why it is referred to as 'a carousel of images.'



Figure 10. Publication from the BRC showing the scroll-down approach

The scroll-down approach raises the importance of consumer engagement thanks to storytelling strategies. This shows that, in the case of the carousel of images, a story is conveyed by a set of pictures that unfold creating a feeling of proximity and reciprocity. There are also other techniques that can foster engagement. As was stated by Marcella-Hood (2023), behind-the-scenes contribute to enhancing the feeling of proximity as such techniques convey belongingness to the community and reciprocity. By providing behind-the-scenes information, followers can easily identify with the content. Examples of behind-the-scenes are backstage aspects, studios, and workshops that are exposed to the followers. As argued in Marcella-Hood's study (2023), behind-the-scenes information relies on other intertextual references from the previous shared content. This gives this idea of a common 'journey' (p. 13) in which the involved community understands those references.



Figure 11. Publication 13 from the BRC's account



Figure 12. Publication 16 from the BRC's account

Figures 11 and 12 help to highlight the sense of belonging and reciprocity by showing how the publications relate to one another. On June 19th, the BRC published Publication 13 on its Instagram account, in which it introduced the gift card premise. It was emphasized that this card can be used for loved ones. Publication 16, which was published four days after Publication 13 seems to be the perfect occasion for spending money on thrifted gifts since it is Father's Day. Followers who followed the BRC on Instagram, already knew about the card. This explains why the second publication contains less information. The gift card was previously introduced; there is no need to explain the concept again because followers are expected to be aware of it. The feeling of belonging is therefore expressed in the shared references and awareness of the corporate's news on Instagram. As followers are aware of the trends and share common references, they feel close to each other, which fosters the feeling of reciprocity and belonging.

At the same time, geodata are elements that boost connectivity and reciprocity since followers can experience the same moment at the same time (see Calcagni 2019). Geodata are expressed in the imagery as well as the captions. A distinction can be made between geolocalization elements and geotraces. Geolocalization elements are exclusively found in the imagery, they indicate the location of pictured elements or people thanks to logo's, shop windows, and other elements connected to the visualization of both organizations. Geotraces are most exclusively found in the captions. Good examples of geotraces are event names, identifiable local shops, people classified as belonging to a specific regional area, etc. According to Calcagni (2019), geodata is thought to boost the mutual benefit of the gathering by allowing followers to experience the same moment at the same time.

It is also interesting to examine how feelings of reciprocity and belonging can be fostered thanks to emotional aspects, namely the use of emojis in captions. But also, to explore how emotions underpin a collective identity by looking at language aspects (i.e. pronouns). The use of pronouns (subject, object, and possessive) might indicate the type of relationship that both organizations have with their community. The analysis will focus on the pronouns 'we' and 'you' and how they appear in the publication descriptions to investigate how Vinted and the BRC communicate using a collective identity.

Chapter 4: Results and discussion

Chapter 4 is divided into three subsections which are in line with the three research questions (see 3.1). The first section of this chapter will discuss Instagram's main features and key characteristics, allowing us to compare both retailing organizations (the BRC and Vinted). Both organizations' communicative techniques will be analyzed, which will be based on the uniform layout and the AIDA model. Since visualization matters on Instagram, this analysis will help understand the focus on visual or rather textual elements. Similarly, Insta-worthy norms will be discussed in the third subsection.

4.1 Communicative techniques

4.1.1 Instagram's main features

In this first section, the main characteristics of the BRC and Vinted's publications will be examined to understand how they shape their corporate online communication, especially when it comes to sustainable fashion communication.

		Amount/post	Average/ likes	Average / comments	Average / tags	Average / hashtags
Vinted	post	33	338.1	113.6	1.1	4.8
	reel	1	536	112	1	6
	Total	34	343.9	113.6	1.1	4.8
BRC	post	13	84.5	8.5	1.6	5.7
	reel	13	84.7	5.6	1.5	5.2
	Total	26	84.6	7.1	1.5	5.5

Table 6. Vinted and the BRC data comparing Instagram's main features in terms of average

	Amount / publication		Number/ likes		Number / comments		Number/ tags		Number/ hashtags	
Vinted			Smallest	largest	Smallest	Largest	Smallest	Largest	Smallest	Largest
	Post	33	210	515	76	237	1	4	0	6
	Reel	1	536	536	112	112	1	1	6	6
BRC			Smallest	Largest	Smallest	Largest	Smallest	Largest	Smallest	Largest
	Post	13	14	355	0	60	0	9	1	11
	Reel	13	0	177	0	11	0	6	0	11

Table 7. Vinted and the BRC data comparing Instagram' main features from the smallest to the largest

4.1.1.1 THE BRC

Out of the 26 publications collected from the BRC's Instagram page, redcrossretail 13 were posts, and 13 were reels. As can be seen in Table 6, the average number of likes each publication received was about 85. More or less 7 people commented on each publication. As for the tags, which are assumed to be connected with influential communities, there were under 2 per release on their social media page. And finally, approximately 6 hashtags constantly appeared in all of their publications.

It is also interesting to analyze Instagram's main features in terms of range (from the smallest to the largest number of X). In Table 7, it can be observed that the gap from the smallest to the largest number of all the features is quite substantial. Focusing on the BRC's posts, the difference

of likes received is 25 times higher (smallest: 14 vs. largest: 355). As for the comments, they ranged from 0 at the lowest to 60 at the highest. Tags were also inconsistently used, from 0 to 9. The same accounts for hashtags since they ranged from 0 to 11. Also, the same trends occur when focusing on the reels, with a substantial difference in the number of tags, hashtags, and comments. The only notable positive difference is the number of likes, which reached 0 at the lowest for reels, against 14 for the BRC's posts.

4.1.1.2 VINTED

Out of the 34 analyzed Vinted publications, there were 33 posts and solely 1 reel. As can be seen in table 6, the number of likes each publication received was a lot higher (posts: 343 vs reels: 536). Approximately 113 comments were recorded for each publication, the majority of which were negative, though. As for the tags, there was 1 per release on their social media page. And finally, approximately 5 hashtags constantly appeared in all of their publications.

From Table 7, it can be seen that Vinted's posts received between 210 and 515 likes. When looking at the number of comments, the gap between the lowest and the highest numbers tends to be slightly narrowed (lowest: 76 vs. highest: 237). There are fewer tags and hashtags on Vinted than on the BRC, but there is not a significant difference in use (Vinted's tags: 1 vs. 4 and hashtags: 0 vs. 6) compared to the BRC (tags: 0 vs. 9 and hashtags: 1 vs. 11).

COMPARISON THE BRC – VINTED

It is worth noting that the BRC's posts tend to engage followers slightly more than reels, based on the average number of comments (posts: 8.5 vs reels: 5.6), i.e., posts were commented on 1.5 times more than the reels. As for the likes, there was no notable difference between both types of publications. The difference between the tags and hashtags is very slightly in favor of the posts. By comparison to the BRC, Vinted's publications were liked almost four times more. Vinted's only reel can be seen to engage more than posts in terms of likes, but no generalization can be made as there is only one reel. The BRC seems to involve its community a little more than Vinted since the tag proportions vary (The BRC: 1.5 vs Vinted: 1). Hashtags seemed to be more frequent in Vinted's reels than in its posts, but again, relying on just one reel is not representative.

While the BRC published similar numbers of posts and reels (posts: 13 vs reels: 13), Vinted mainly relied on its posts. The major difference concerning comments is that they are positive for the BRC, whereas they are all negative for Vinted. Hashtags and tags vary from one publication to another in the BRC's publications, while the features remain constant for Vinted. A fixed combination of hashtags is repeatedly used among Vinted's publications. The tags refer to individuals who are always different in each publication. The BRC, in contrast, reused the same tags in several publications, which are associated with influential communities.

From the analysis of the main features in terms of range (from the lowest to the highest number of X), results that Vinted seems to maintain a more consistent communication style while the BRC demonstrates ongoing effort to engage its community. In general, the standard deviation between the main characteristics is lower for Vinted than for the BRC. As a reminder, likes and comments signify followers' commitment (see 3.2.1.1 "Instagram main features"), while tags and hashtags reflect community's interest. The BRC's use of tags and hashtags in its posts seems rather inconsistent. The analysis reveals a certain inconsistency in the BRC's communication, but it also underlines its efforts to identify a great number of followers to generate engagement. Based on the likes and comments received, the commitment of the BRC is not guaranteed due to the range disparities between them. Still, it should be noted that BRC's posts encourage discussion more than the reels. On the one hand, the BRC's use of tagged users and hashtags is inconsistent. At the same time, the number of tags and hashtags greatly outnumbers those used by Vinted, demonstrating the BRC's efforts to connect with its community.

In comparison to the BRC, Vinted's reel had higher engagement than the posts, but only one has been analyzed (post: 33 vs. reel: 1). Unlike the BRC, Vinted invests less communication efforts in tags and hashtags, so the gap between the lowest and the highest numbers per post is less pronounced. Unsurprisingly, the gap between likes and comments received by Vinted is smaller. This means that engagement in one kind or another way is being generated. In summary, Vinted appears to engage less in communicating with its community based on the use of tags and hashtags. But it appears that Vinted succeeds in generating more reactions (i.e. likes and comments) than the BRC, who itself attempted to utilize engaging elements in greater number (i.e. tags and hashtags), but whose number of likes and comments is more variable than Vinted.

In other words, it is worth analyzing how Vinted generates a great number of likes and comments, while paying little attention to its community (i.e. tags and hashtags). Even though the majority of its comments are negative, it is worth analyzing its communication strategy more closely. As for the BRC, its communication strategy has to be explored to understand why its efforts to engage its community appear to be less effective (i.e. likes and comments). However, unlike Vinted, the BRC's comments are positive.

4.1.2 Uniform strategy based on consistent layout

As discussed in the previous section, both organizations are in some way inconsistent with their communication strategies with Vinted paying little attention to engaging elements like tags and hashtags but still generates great engagement of its community. The BRC, on the other hand, invests more in tags and hashtags, but the number of likes and comments varies a lot among its publications. This is why the focus, in this second section, is going to be on the consistent layout strategy, the AIDA model, and the communicative techniques emerging from their

publications to explore how both organizations despite their irregularities in their communication, can keep stimulating their followers.

4.1.2.1 THE BRC

Even though the BRC seemed to be somewhat inconsistent (cf. see above) on the basis of the main features, the uniform layout brings consistency in its communications, regardless of the type of publication (reel or post), as all the publications under study follow the same format (see 3.2.1.1).

In addition to the uniform strategy based on consistent layout (see the constituent parts), the BRC's publications operate jointly by means of a common thread that is often thematic. Textual or visual references are systematically used to refer to past events or pieces of news, thus linking the previous publications to the relatively new ones. The goal is to generate engagement through common references. As mentioned by Marcella-Hood (2023), this idea of the common 'journey' (p. 13) strengthens the feeling of belonging to the community.



Figure 13. Publication 10 from the BRC's account: picture and description

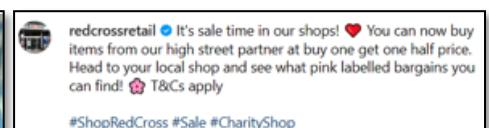
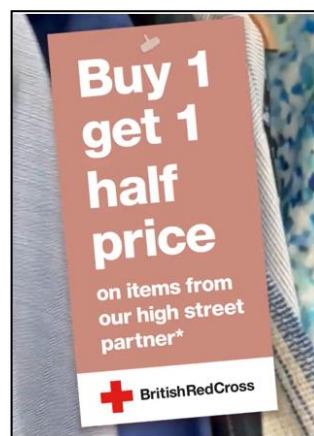


Figure 14. Publication 11 from the BRC's account: picture and description

Publication 10 (Figure 13) and 11 (Figure 14) from the BRC illustrate the connectivity and links between the two publications. They were published one day apart. Visual elements of Publication 10 inform users that they must visit their local shop, but they also play with suspense. This is to inform them that something could happen. The description provides additional information about the time, so followers know when to expect the surprise (i.e., tomorrow). Playing with suspense entices followers to check tomorrow's publication. Publication 11 delivers what was kept secret the other day, namely special offers (Figure 14). Hashtags are also connected in the two publications (#Shopredcross and # Sale). As there is no comment in Publication 10, no link can be established among comments in both publications. Furthermore, it should be noted that the link with past and subsequent publications is not systematic, but rather emerges over time. The major objective is to ensure that the participation

with the community lasts. Thematic links include themes such as Graduate Fashion Week, gift cards, etc.

4.1.2.2 VINTED

The principle of consistency connected with the unified structure of Instagram also applies to Vinted's publications. Even though the four constituent parts are interlinked, it does not seem that there is a thematic link between Vinted's publications in comparison to the BRC. Vinted mainly captures women posing, dressed in Vinted clothes. And apart from thanking them or commenting on their clothing styles, the 'description' part is not highly informative except for a few more information posts. Vinted solely does its own promotion, as it focuses exclusively on the garments found in its application. Vinted is also not really diversified in terms of its content. In the same vein, hashtags are almost invariably the same and are thus, not specifically related to a particular post. Examples are #vinted, #secondhand, #secondhandfashion, and #vindtreasures, most of which can be found in the majority of Vinted's publications. Finally, the comments that are supposed to boost the connection with the community are only negative. In other words, the analysis points to a seemingly disjointed set of publications where each publication functions by itself rather than in interconnection with the others.

4.1.3 The AIDA model, a marketing approach to post descriptions

Like the uniform layout strategy, the AIDA model is made up of four steps that can be connected to the four constituent parts. As noted by Hassan et al. (2015), the AIDA model seems to be used in relation to Instagram marketing methods, particularly due to its adaptability to each organization. Mantik (2022) also pointed out that this model can be used to influence purchasing decisions. It is therefore relevant to examine publications from the business-related orientation.

4.1.3.1 THE BRC

It is important to note that the BRC makes use of the AIDA model to spread messages and make people feel engaged. Even though the BRC remains a charity that thrives not only on selling secondhand fashion but also on supporting people in need, the analysis shows that the AIDA marketing approach is used, with some adjustments, though.

Out of the 26 publications from the BRC's account, 15 publications comply with the 4 AIDA steps (see 3.2.1.2), 10 comprise three of the four steps, and 1 consists entirely of two steps (Figure 15). Figure 16 represents the proportion of the steps among the publications. It is clear that in general, step 1 ('catch attention') is always included in the caption. Step 2, which refers to extra information is always an important aspect of the BRC's publications (25 publications out of 26). Step 3, by contrast, seems to be less highlighted in all the publications (15 out of 26). Step 4, which is associated with the purchasing act is stressed (26 out of 26 publications). In other

words, the 4 steps representative of the AIDA model are present in the majority of the BRC's publications even if the third step (probe interest) receives less emphasis.

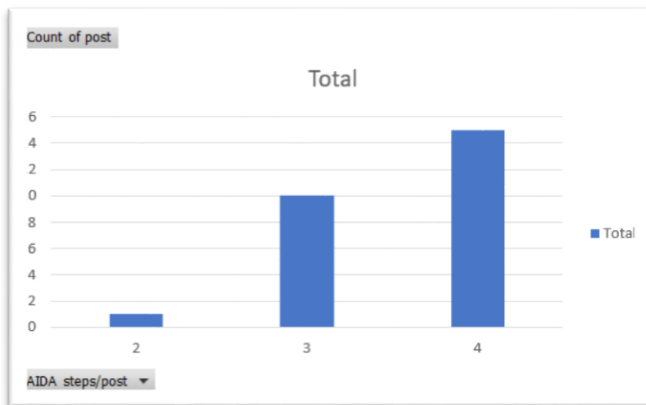


Figure 15 Proportion of the AIDA steps among the BRC's publications

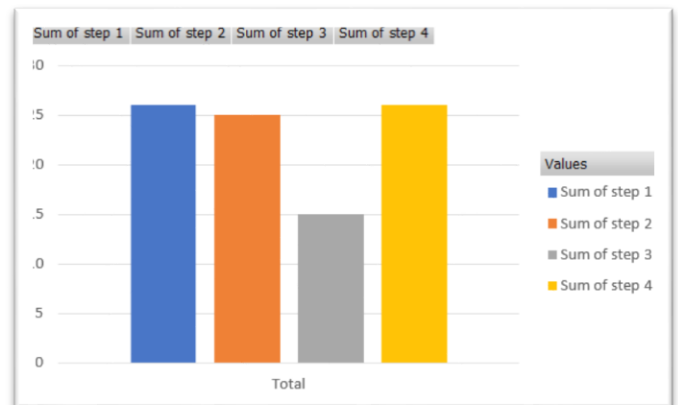


Figure 16 Representing the 4 AIDA steps among the BRC's publications

Figure 17 illustrates this AIDA model the best. The content refers to the Barbie movie release during the summer of 2023. The BRC starts its post's description with a pun, 'This Barbie is thrifty,' whose objective is to get followers' attention. And at the same time, the BRC reinforces the fact that the clothing items used in their shop windows, aimed at reproducing Barbie's style, are economical. This latter element is one of the core values of the BRC, which focuses mainly on retailing secondhand clothes at low prices. Then, further informative elements are introduced to make the followers feel familiar with this setting (e.g., preloved windows, amazed feeling). Also, an open-ended question (Oberlo, 2022) is directed to potential customers to probe their interest which is "Which one is your favourite?". And finally, featured stores are named where such items can be bought. This last step aims to make people head there to make their purchases, which requires the customer's action.

Figure 17. Post description from BRC's publication 22



4.1.3.2 VINTED

Like the BRC, Vinted's publications comply with the AIDA model. As a reminder, Vinted is a retailing platform that benefits from follower's interaction because it receives a share of sales. Consequently, it is worth analyzing how Vinted's publications leverage the AIDA model to create engagement, generate sales and profit.

As can be seen from Figure 18, the AIDA model is used among Vinted's publications but with some variations. This model seems to be inconsistently applied among its publications. Among the 34 publications, 18 are composed of the 4 steps, 4 publications contain 3 out of 4 steps, and 14 publications are only made up of 2 steps. Based on Figure 19, it can be observed that of all the steps, step 1 (catch attention) is present among all the posts. The same goes for step 2 (provide extra info). As for step 3 (probe interest), it is only included among 18 publications, which constitutes a little more than the majority of Vinted's publications (18 out of 34). Step 4, which aims to increase consumption is also lower (22 out of 34 publications).

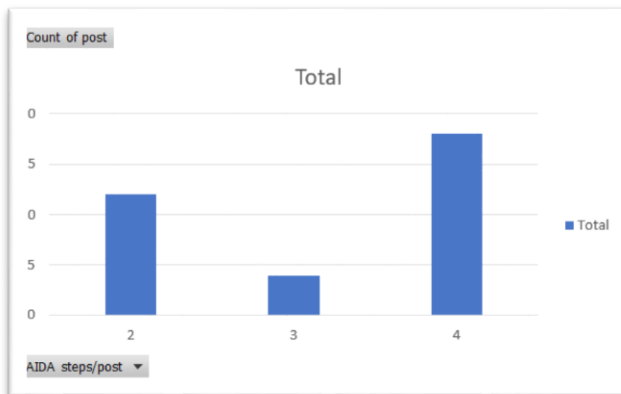


Figure 18. Proportion of AIDA steps among Vinted's publications

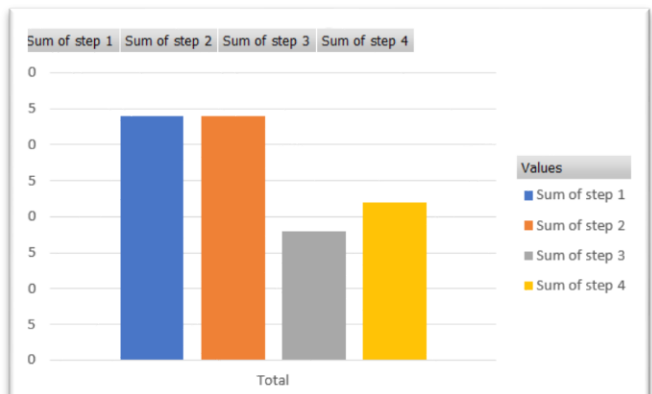


Figure 19. Representing the 4 AIDA steps among Vinted's publications

The AIDA-model can be seen to partially apply to some of Vinted's publications, but not for the majority of its publications. For example, Figure 20 includes the four elements contributing to fostering engagement. Vinted draws the attention to one particular item by focusing on the matching colors. Also, imperative forms are also used to directly address the users (e.g., check out, look at). Most importantly, Vinted emphasizes that they like it. Then, an open-ended question is asked whose purpose is to foster interest ("Feeling inspired by her style?"). And finally, the imperative is used to urge users to take a look at Vinted and search for similar items. As for Figure 21, the commercial approach is limited since Vinted directs the followers' attention to what they have found on Vinted (i.e., imperative use). It is restricted to personal judgment without any call to action connected with buying. By informing that the look worn by *jasmins.view* fits perfectly for a casual weekend, it could be used to increase desire indirectly since no question is asked. The last step of the AIDA model, which makes people act is definitely missing.

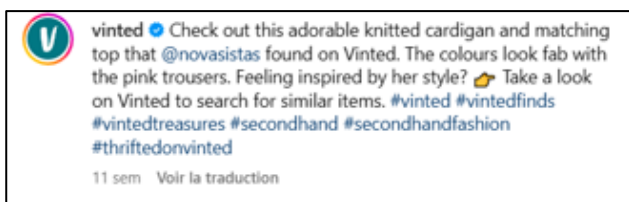


Figure 20. Post description from Vinted's publication 9



Figure 21. Post description from Vinted's publication 28

COMPARISON THE BRC – VINTED

The AIDA model is used rigorously by the BRC whose majority of its publications contain the 4 steps of the model. Among the other publications that have only two or three steps, the third method (probe interest) is featured in a minority of the BRC's publications. Vinted, by contrast, revisits the marketing model. Even if the majority of its publications include the four steps, it is worth noting that one-third of them include two of the four stages of the AIDA model (12 out of 34 publications). This revisited strategy could possibly explain why Vinted succeeds in generating increased likes while the BRC fails to inspire interaction in the same way. This led me to conduct a depth analysis of the communication strategies that emerge from the BRC's and Vinted's publications.

4.1.4 Communicative techniques emerging from their publications

Instead of analyzing the communications strategies of reels and posts separately, as the BRC publications are connected among themselves thanks the common thread (i.e., thematic link), I have found it more relevant to group them into two categories, regardless of their type. The categories were defined based on similar communication techniques. This has led me to form two groups, mixing reels and posts based on common features. Vinted's publications, by contrast, were described as being disconnected from one another, and do not fully comply with the traditional AIDA model. However, the same analysis as for the BRC can unveil some communication strategies that are still linked to Vinted's brand identity. In comparison to the BRC, it is not talked about as a visual identity but rather as a textual identity.

4.1.4.1 THE BRC

THE BRC RELIES ON ITS BRAND IDENTITY TO RALLY FOLLOWERS TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

Most publications (fourteen out of twenty-six) are characterized by their focus on the BRC's shop sign, the so-called 'logo,' which is highly identifiable and includes two types of color: red and white. Fourteen publications out of the twenty-six under investigation make use of both colors to highlight the charity's identity. For example, red and white clothing items and objects were focused on (Figure 22). Not solely fashion items are foregrounded but also messages, as can be seen from Figure 22, in which the same 'brand colors' are used. People appear to be in the background because they are not visible, even though the reels were presumably filmed by the BCR's staff, and at some point, some hands can be seen holding clothes on hangers.

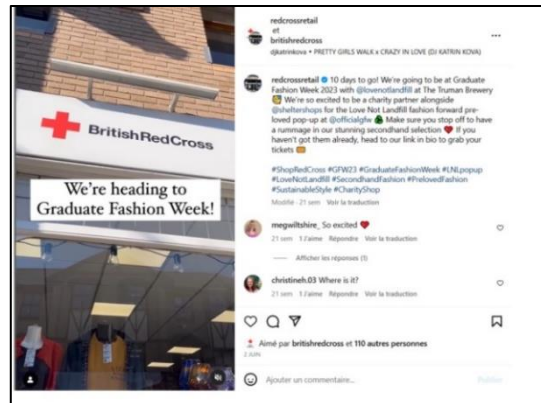


Figure 22. Publication 1 from BRC's account

The main feature of this batch of publications is that the picture, the left part of the publication, is inside the BRC's walls. For the reels more specifically, there is first an outside view of the charity store, which makes it possible to highlight the visual identity thanks to the logo as illustrated in Figure 22. Also, the shop window is featured and, even if it is not in the foreground, it arguably still remains a central element. After that, there is an inside presentation of what is up for sale. Consequently, this inside and outside movement creates a dynamic that engages and accompanies followers in its charity world. Moreover, this invitation is gradually driven by the use of layers. Such a strategy requires special attention from the followers in order for them to engage smoothly, step by step, as if part of acclimatization and immersion.

In other words, the BRC publications can be seen to play with suspense, more precisely by means of the accumulation of information to grasp the message behind the publication, similar to the principle of layers. It is worth restating the coherent principle at the heart of their communication techniques, namely the common thread (i.e., thematic link), which is a particular event or celebration. Figure 14 illustrates this perfectly, with the message that is foregrounded: "We're heading to Graduate Fashion Week" (i.e., the common thread). This element is combined with the BRC's identity, thanks to the charity's logo and the featured shop window. After being immersed in the shop itself, another description appears mentioning what types of clothing items from the BRC the followers could buy for the event.

THE BRC RELIES ON ITS COMMUNITY TO RALLY OTHER FOLLOWERS TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

Another group of publications (twelve out of the twenty-six) tend to lay the emphasis on people rather than on the BRC's visual identity (shop window, logo, etc.). Followers are immersed in one particular event that takes place outside the BRC's walls. Other charity associations and secondhand fashion lovers are showcased and represented as the main actors. Here, publications show a variety of colors in comparison to the red and white in the previous group of publications. The aim is to represent diversity and a place of celebration: all together they

share with the followers some moment, which is made vivid thanks to color use, as can be observed in figure 22.

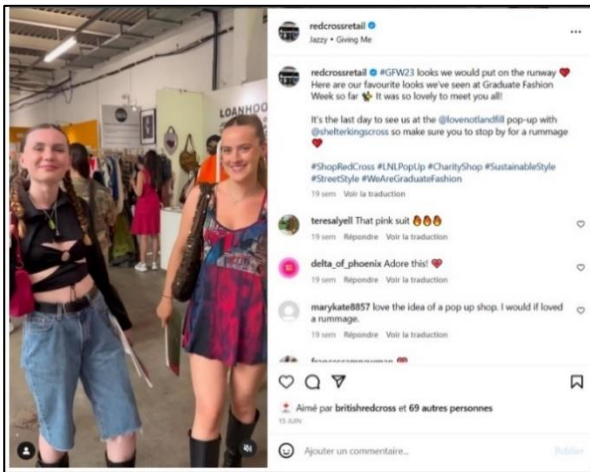


Figure 22. Publication 9 from BRC's account



Figure 23. Publication 19 from BRC's account

Similar to the first group, different layers are used, as well as the accumulation principle. The charity's visual identity sometimes appears on the exhibition displays, for example, in the background as people taking part in the event are more prominent. What the BRC aims for when remaining in the background is to foster a feeling of proximity with the followers, as if they would share a part of their privacy. Even if the BRC relies on its community to deliver a particular message, it also has to be reported that the majority of the publications do involve individuals showing off their summer outfits, most of which are taken by the followers into their private property or to public spaces, with the same remaining objective, namely, picturing ordinary people to engage a broader community. By using ordinary people and places, the identification process is arguably made easier (see Figures 22 and 23).

If the two batches can be distinguished from one another based on the caption, it has to be stated that they have one common characteristic, which is the fact that open-ended questions are asked to the followers in the post description. This ensures connectivity with the followers and strengthens the process of immersion. As the BRC aims to make people feel committed, this reinforces their interest in charity as a whole.

An investigation of the tags used reveals that the BRC relies not only on its community, but also on its partners who promote the BRC's identity at various events. By focusing only on the second group of publications, Table 8 reveals that the BRC relies on the hand, on communities in the field of secondhand retailing. Lovenotlandfill and shelterkingcross have for example been tagged. All these communities are the BRC's partners who advocate the organization's visual identity. On the other hand, in the second batch of publications, tags are aimed at both communities and individuals. It is noteworthy that individuals who are "influencers" are twice

as likely to be tagged (see Table 8). The findings support the hypothesis that the BRC relies on its partners to project its well-established identity, and on its followers' singularity to form a community based on everyone's uniqueness.

tags/batch	Sum of tags
1	8
community	8
britishredcross	2
GFW23, lovenotlandfill, shelterkingcross	0
lovenotlandfill, sheltershops, officialgfw	3
officialgfw, sheltershops, lovenotlandfill	3
(blank)	0
2	32
community	10
crukshops, Asosmarketplace	3
GFW, lovenotlandfill, shelterkingcross	0
GFW23, lovenotlandfill, shelterkingcross	6
lovenotlandfill	1
individuals	19
amylorenz, larasrail, duchessofthrift, secondhandsophie, secondhandchloe	9
diaryofthriftaddict, redcrossretail	2
Revkabottley, Secondhandstylishness, Stellar-Charlotte, Duchessofthrift	4
Silversecondhand, theundonemum, Whatismamawore, Emmaheart,tall,vintage	4
(blank)	3
Total	40

Table 8. Type of community among BRC's publications based on communication strategies

4.1.4.2 VINTED

VINTED'S TEXTUAL IDENTITY MATTERS FOR ITS COMMUNICATIONS

The majority of Vinted's publications feature followers' outfits in public places, never in private places. The negative comments of its community might indicate a more distant relationship, but the most important thing for Vinted is to remember that the clothes come from its marketplace, even though they are mediated by its community. Unlike the BRC, it does not organize gatherings where the community joins in. By just looking at the picture, it could appear at first sight that Vinted is putting its followers first, but a closer look reveals that they serve as models for the clothes. If the member's name appears, the aim is to showcase Vinted's outfits. The pictured people do not stare at the camera lens and wear sunglasses, emphasizing the professional approach that is consumer-driven (Figure 24).



Figure 24. Publication 6 from Vinted's account



Figure 25. Textual elements from Vinted's publications highlighting the marketing approach

Most importantly, Vinted seems to care more about its own brand identity than its own community. The brand identity is not visible at first glance, but that does not alter the fact that the name 'Vinted' is mentioned in every publication description. The corporate name is clearly written in the caption or referred to by using common nouns (see above in red) since the emphasis is also laid on marketing-related terms such as marketplace, sell, bought, etc., which stress the purchasing act (cf. see above). Vinted's community is called 'Vintees,' yet it appears that Vinted addresses Vintees in its publications using business-oriented words (i.e. Vinted shopper, our member, our shoppers). Vinted can arguably not be labelled as a community because comments are more than mixed. This suggests that followers are not supportive. In short, Vinted advertises its clothes itself. Its identity seems to be textual rather than visual, unlike the BRC. To put it in other words, Vinted does not convey its identity via visual elements (see Figure 24), but through its brand identity textually in the caption (see Figure 25). In comparison to the BRC, Vinted's logo reflecting its brand identity is not made visible when looking at the picture (i.e., visual elements), nor with Vinted's shop windows since Vinted is a digital app. Vinted's textual identity is thus managed through its captions.

A good example of Vinted's communication strategy is illustrated below. In Figure 26, Vinted lays the emphasis on the clothing items bought on Vinted by *opheliebld*, who is called 'a shopper'. Vinted comments on the clothing items selected from its marketplace. An open-ended question is then asked: "Do you love vintage fashion?" As a reminder, this type of question triggers engagement since followers' opinions is asked. Finally, Vinted indirectly invites people to check out more items.



Figure 26. Post description from Vinted's publication 25

In other words, it can be said that its communications is not centered on its followers but rather on its own promotion (i.e. brand identity). This could be partly explained by the multilingualism that emerges from the comments. There is an international approach, it is clear that Vinted reaches wider parts of the world in the secondhand field, but it does not redouble its efforts to satisfy its customers, as evidenced by the comments left (see Figure 27). In addition, followers are addressed as ‘members’ or ‘shoppers’ which underlines the business-oriented approach.

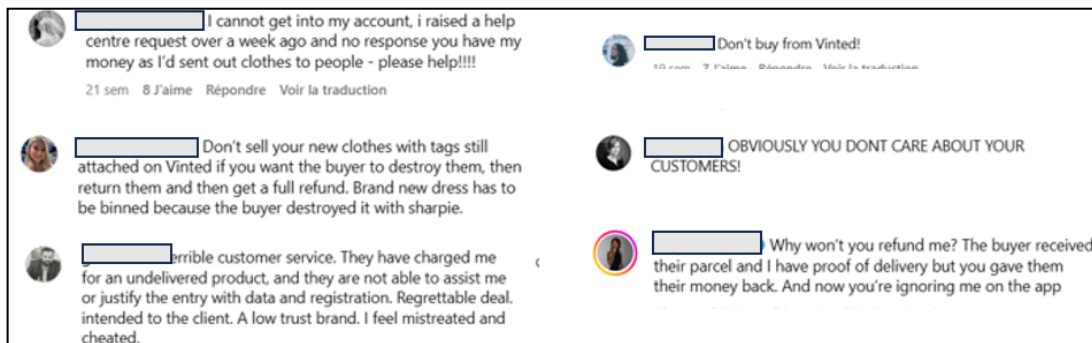


Figure 27. Comments from Vinted's community expressive negativity

COMMUNITY DETACHMENT DOES NOT PREVENT CLIMATE AWARENESS

When it comes to retailing, Vinted has more than a few tricks to foster customers' engagement and boost sales. While many of its publications focus on style and outfits that match the exterior decor, others concentrate on assets from buying second-hand. Vinted helps to sensitize even more people to the benefits of second-hand fashion. They keep promoting Vinted's clothing items but at the same time, they try to raise awareness of the fact that climate change is ongoing and that thanks to secondhand retailing, we can implement change. As can be seen from figure 28, it is 'a more climate-friendly choice'. Still, the commercial benefits seem to be underlined as well ('more money to spend on adventures'). Figure 29 emphasizes the 'lifestyle choice' regarding climate change, and more especially, is in line with the 'first Climate Change Impact report'. Last but not least, Figure 30 includes figures that aim to sensitize consumers against buying fast fashion. Therefore, they should not only buy but also sell secondhand.



Figure 28. Post description from Vinted's publication 19

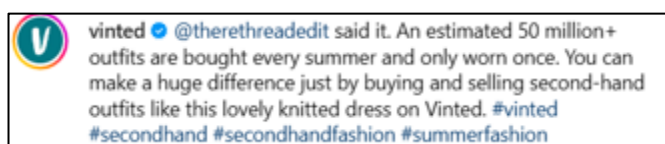


Figure 30. Post description from Vinted's publication 23

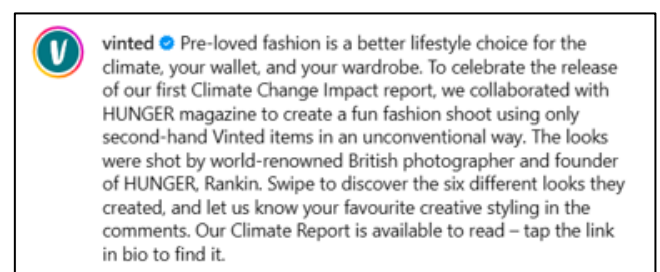


Figure 29. Post description from Vinted's publication 16

CONCLUSION

The BRC and Vinted include sustainability communication in their Instagram posts by means of different techniques. The BRC seems to highlight more events and celebrations that involve its community, but with less emphasis on climate awareness, which is arguably in line with the importance attached to its community. The latter itself is in all likelihood eco-friendly and climate-aware; as a result, it might not be necessary to restate it in its communications. As pointed out by Godemann and Michelsen (2011) in Chapter 2, sustainability communication is considered as a mutual process that includes societal norms aimed at coping with climatic challenges. When a community is united, and communication is based on followers' engagement, there is no need to remind people of the issues that bring followers together since it is self-evident.

Godemann and Michelsen (2011) also stated that sustainability communication is also about social marketing. Since individual attitudes matter, differences in lifestyle are important, as is the impact of peers. Empowerment strategies have to be thought about appropriately, namely by giving consumers some space to consider their obligations regarding purchasing behavior. This might explain why the BRC opted for a second strategy when it comes to communications, with a focus on its visual identity. Besides the logo, which is constantly apparent in BRC's publications, there are also consumer-driven approaches that stem from the BRC's business orientation (see 2.3). Not only does it emphasize the inside of the BRC's walls and is therefore connected to a marketing approach, but the community scope also makes it possible to pledge for a shift in mentality and endorsement on peers to communicate the values of the BRC and encourage a successful transition to slow fashion.

Vinted is characterized by its consumer-driven approach. If Vinted stresses more environmental concerns in its publications, it is probably because it lacks community approval and reciprocity. Since there are no collective communities sharing eco-friendly tips and eco-consciousness, they need to pay extra attention to sustainability as a whole. The opposite effect occurs through a lack of engagement among its followers, which is why Vinted restates what is supposed to be at the heart of its communication. Vinted seems not to abide by Instagram's traditional structure since there are no linking elements between its publications (i.e., thematic link) creating common references. It is also the case with the AIDA-model which was revisited (see 3.2.1.2). To sum up, Vinted follows its own rules when it comes to promoting itself.

Despite having lots of negative comments, Vinted seems to have brought some variations into the traditional communication strategies (i.e., revisited AIDA model, no linking thematic elements). However, it appeared to be successful since its publications were significantly more popular than those of the BRC. Vinted outperforms the BRC in terms of its marketing approach, having successfully engaged bigger audiences. Despite limited engagement with Vinted's community, its communication appears to be effective thanks to its revisited techniques.

Whereas the BRC focuses on local issues, Vinted and its worldwide members emphasize global concerns. This global outreach makes Vinted a major player in the secondhand fashion world.

This could lead us to think that the BRC, with its focus on its brand identity (also mediated by its partners), and at the same time on its followers, mainly aims to push followers into buying secondhand, and that Vinted, by contrast, solely focuses on its promotion without trying to get its community's approval and reciprocity. But, it has to be remembered that Vinted's main motto is the following: 'don't wear it, sell it.' The main reason for believing that the BRC could be more marketing-oriented is that both organizations use different strategies. While the BRC relies on its visual identity, which is mainly foregrounded in the picture (i.e., visualization), Vinted is more oriented towards its textual identity. This suggests that the four constituent parts of Instagram's publications do play a different role in fostering engagement and promoting the purchasing act.

In other words, the BRC seems to focus on the marketing approach in the visualization (i.e., picture), and then on its community based on textual elements (i.e., caption) in the rest of the publication, whereas Vinted focuses on its community in the visualization, and then, on the retailing act based on the caption (description, tags, and hashtags). This analysis suggests that the BRC first engages in putting forward 'economic sustainability' and then 'social sustainability,' both of which are interconnected with 'environmental sustainability.' Following the structuring layout of the social platform, Vinted first appears to promote 'social sustainability' to then pay attention to 'economic sustainability,' again with environmental concerns embedded in its communication. This conclusion is misleading because it states that community reciprocity and approval are central elements of the BRC's communication. However, this does not seem to be as important for Vinted, which has a more global scope. It also has to be reiterated that profit-making is the goal for Vinted while it is only a means for the BRC to help people in need. Since the principle of brand identity has been promoted differently for both organizations (the BRC: visual vs. Vinted: textual), it is important to investigate on how the three sustainabilities are integrated into all the constituent parts of the publications because of the common threat that links all the parts together (see 4.2.1).

To summarize, the publications of the BRC and Vinted represent different aspects of sustainability communication. Despite the fact that both organizations' communicative strategies followed the same structuring layout and the AIDA model, the consumer-driven approach was undeniably palpable. In terms of 'social marketing,' Vinted's publications lacked a thematic link (i.e. common thread). This could explain the sense of detachment from Vintees since there were no common references, which affected the feeling of belonging. At the same time, an examination of the main features revealed that Vinted was still successful in engaging its audience. This shows that the textual features in the captions were convincing enough to mobilize Vinted's community (i.e., tags). The revisited AIDA model was also a strategy that was tailored to its multinational community by allowing for additional reflection on purchase

selections at the global level. As a reminder, the business orientation has grown with the rise of e-commerce (Godemann and Michelsen, 2011), and Vinted is a digital app.

The BRC pursued a different method, embracing both the typical uniform Instagram layout and the AIDA concept. The BRC's supporters were already involved at the local level, but the number of likes and comments was low. The BRC succeeded in implementing the notion of 'social marketing,' specifically when it embraced a business model. Furthermore, the AIDA model was crucial for engaging its followers even more, as it contributed to enabling dialogic communication (see Brydges et al., 2022). By keeping potential customers informed about the shared content and encouraging positive interactions (i.e., comments), it appears that the BRC followed path to the social media marketing. In addition, an analysis of its communications revealed that the BRC increased its visibility (i.e., brand identity) and paid extra attention to its visualization as a part of the fragmentation strategy by diversifying its material (i.e., reels and posts). What the BRC and Vinted have in common is an influencer marketing strategy (SanMiguel, 2021) that is a key component of their sustainability communication when implementing a business model.

4.2 Three sustainabilities – triad model

The second section explores to what extent the triad model of the ‘three sustainabilities’ is included in the BRC and Vinted’s online communication. As a reminder, this concept consists of three main components, which are related to economic, environmental, and social concerns. In order to examine the proportion to which all the three elements were mobilized and constituted a central or minor part of the BRC’s and Vinted’s communication strategies, I have scrutinized the degree to which the ‘sustainabilities’ were featured in the 26 Instagram publications under study from the BRC and the 34 from Vinted’s corporate account. As it was seen in subsection 4.2.1., Instagram’s layout matters since it mainly consists of two main parts, namely the picture on the left and the content (i.e., caption) on the right. The latter can be divided into three parts as well: the message (description), the tags, and the hashtags. The analysis examines the level to which the three sustainabilities appeared in all four constituent parts of each Instagram publication.

4.2.1 The picture:

It is worth mentioning that the picture (i.e., visualization) was analyzed regardless of the type of publication (reels and posts), since it is the layout that shapes the way people perceive the main message. Instagram’s publications read from left to right, and the picture is the first element, which gives a quick insight into the general theme. The figures below show the proportion of pictures connected to economic, environmental, and social matters.

4.2.1.1 THE BRC

The findings show that economic and social interests are more prominent than environmental issues (see figure 31). Social components represent 50% of the pictures (13 pictures), which is not surprising as the BRC is a charitable organization whose aim is to help everyone in need. Economic elements were stressed in 45% of the captions (12 pictures), which is quite close to the percentage for social elements. Environmental aspects seemed insignificant: 5% (1 picture) of all the publications. The only instance in which environmental concerns were mentioned was in publication 3 from the BRC’s Instagram account. Paper bags were promoted and associated with sustainable choices.

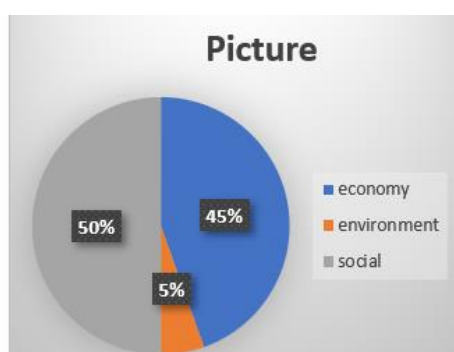


Figure 31. The proportion of the ‘three sustainabilities’ among BRC’s pictures

4.2.1.2 VINTED

Based on figure 32, it is noteworthy that the majority of pictures from Vinted's publications are socially related at a rate of 59% (20 pictures). All the pictures embody women posing in summer outfits in public places. What is rather unexpected is the attention paid to green elements in town as well as in the countryside in 36% of the pictures (12 environmental pictures). More or less every picture features some plants, trees, or green-colored clothing items. And finally, 5% (2 pictures) were solely connected to economic interests compared to 45% for the BRC. This can be explained by the fact that Vinted's pictures exclusively focus on followers and their outfits with no sales claims, at least in the pictures (see Figure 33).

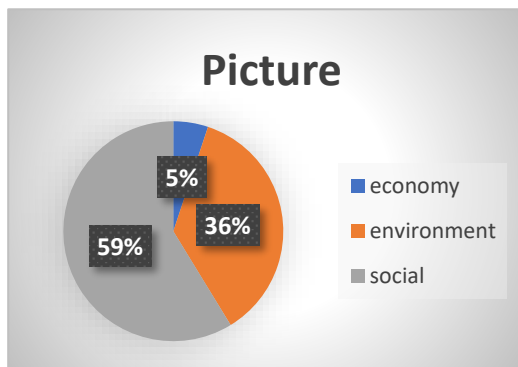


Figure 32. The proportion of the 'three sustainabilities' among Vinted's pictures



Figure 33. Publication 3 from Vinted's account

4.2.2 The description:

4.2.2.1 THE BRC

Figure 34 shows that the post descriptions are more socially oriented since half of the main aspects are socially related (13 descriptions). Economic motives remain in second place with 32% (8 descriptions). Environmental concerns amount to 17% (5 descriptions). In comparison to the first diagram (Figure 31), the same distribution has been observed, namely that social components are focused on. As for the two other "sustainability" factors, the share among both of them remains significantly different in favor of the economic preoccupation. However, it can be noted that environmental preoccupations have increased by 12% in the post description compared to the caption. This indicates that there is more attention paid to the environment in the post description from BRC's publications even though social concerns remain the main element as well as underlying economic interests.

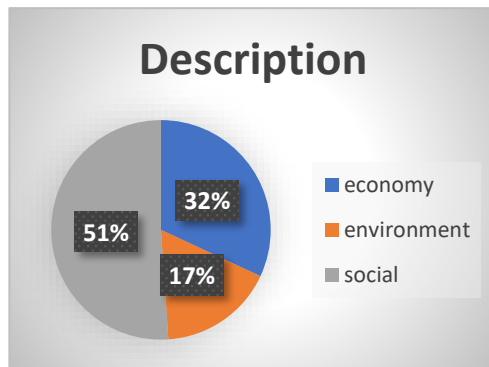


Figure 34. Proportion of the 'three sustainabilities' among BRC's post descriptions

Publication 3 (Figure 35) illustrates the BRC's interest in the environment in relation to the three sustainabilities in the BRC's post descriptions. Retailing does not seem to be the main objective in this message but accounts as an underlying element. In addition, the conditional use 'if you want a...' implies that there is no compelling reason to buy. This publication aims at fostering a more sustainable way of shopping, which is identified in the word choice as 'environment, sustainable, secondhand, and local shops.' Buying sustainably appears to be the main element that is communicated, even though the purchasing act poses the triggering event. The use of emojis is also a good indicator of the tone of the message, which in this case is climate-related.

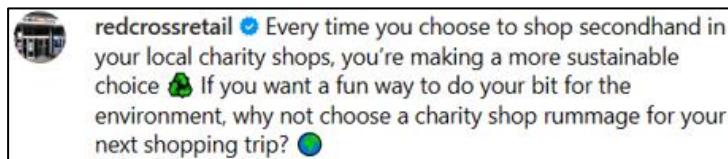


Figure 35. Publication 3 from BRC's account

4.2.2.2 VINTED

As shown in figure 36, $\frac{3}{4}$ of Vinted's post descriptions (27 descriptions) are related to clothing finds on its second-hand app and mainly emphasize economic aspects. As previously mentioned in subsection 4.2.3, Vinted keeps commenting on the styles of its members, with an obvious emphasis on the fact that they were bought from its marketplace. The marketing approach is the most palpable in this descriptive part since its main aim is to make people keep buying and selling through its app. Social elements were identified, but as a minority compared to economic ones (social components: 5 vs economic components: 27). In the 'social category,' I have included 'thanks for the sharing' and the referring of the members. Vinted usually refers to Vinted's community in terms of Vinted shoppers, members, etc. Again, the customer-retailer relationship is foregrounded. As for climate concerns, they are mentioned in 9 descriptions, but connected to economics. Figure 37 illustrates the compromise between the predominance of economic and environmental matters. The focus is on the espadrilles bought from Vinted by *opodramatica*. Buying secondhand is not presented as only climate-friendly; the money saving element is emphasized as well.

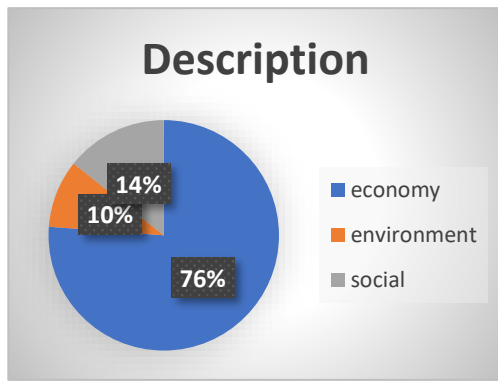


Figure 36. Proportion of the 'three sustainabilities' among Vinted's post descriptions



Figure 37. Caption from Vinted's publication 19

4.2.3 The tags

4.2.3.1 THE BRC

The proportion of the three sustainabilities based on the tags seems to be strongly in favor of social elements (Figure 38). It is obviously impossible to classify people according to their potential interest in the three sustainabilities. This is why I have examined the social status of their own Instagram account. For some of them, there was no special mention of the type of account they published in, while for others, specific information was found. In this case, 'influencers' easily identify as ethical and green influencers (8 tags), while very few of them (2 tags) stated that secondhand fashion ensures money saving.

Tags embody more social belonging (16 tags) (e.g., LoveNotLandfill, Shelterkingcross, and Cruksops), which amounts to 63%. The remaining 29% (8 tags, e.g., Silversecondhand, Theundonemum), can be connected with climate-aware followers, who share some tips related to secondhand fashion in order to buy more eco-friendly clothing items. Only 8% in the community stated that they wear pre-loved clothes so that they can save money or because they are bargain addicts.

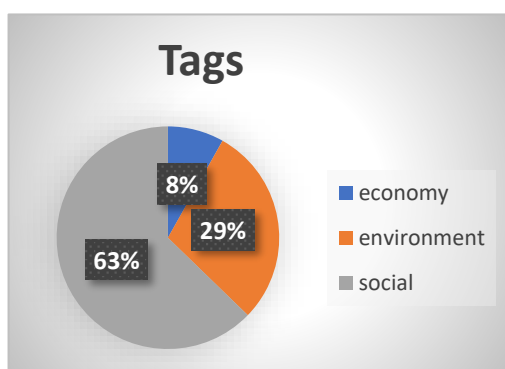


Figure 38. Proportion of the 'three sustainabilities' among the BRC's tags

A good example of diversity among tags is exemplified in publication 20 (see Figure 39). Out of the four tags, one of them named *Duchesseofthrift* identifies as an influencer who shares ‘thrifty money-saving hacks,’ but also as an ethical influencer (i.e., social tag); *Revkabottley* and *Secondhandstylishness* are green influencers that are fighting to save the planet. And *Stellar-Charlotte* claims that she is ‘just a girl,’ which stresses that they are ordinary people and that other followers can easily identify with them.



Figure 39. Publication 20 from BRC's account.

4.2.3.2 VINTED

Vinted's followers do not clearly identify as influencers, their status is not often mentioned. The majority of them seem to make a living out of selling and retailing clothes whether it is from Vinted or elsewhere. Many of them consider themselves as model designers, stylists, and content creators. Another important element is that branding seems to be important since Vinted includes a variety of brands. It appears that its community pays attention to brands, namely renowned ones like Adidas, Desigual, etc.. It is therefore not so surprising that the focus is on economic elements when looking at Vinted's community (19 tags, e.g., Beverly.lr, Theresa.caney). Interestingly, on average a third of its followers (13 tags, e.g., Velveteens) mentioned environmental reasons for buying from Vinted like: secondhand, thrifting, recycling, and sustainable lifestyle. Instagram remains a social media platform where people share every aspect of their daily routine like traveling, holding a blog, etc. More precisely, 11% among them (4 tags, e.g., soireematin) claimed that they were charity fans but social tags remain a minority though.

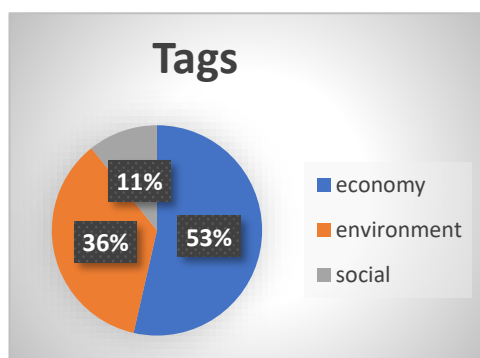


Figure 40. Proportion of the 'three sustainabilities' among Vinted's tags

4.2.4 The hashtags

4.2.4.1 THE BRC

Figure 41 indicates that hashtags expressing social concerns (e.g., #charity, #preloved) are mainly used to support the main message at a rate of 61% (16 hashtags), which is not surprising considering the proportion of social interests captured in the post description part. But, it is interesting to note that hashtags connected to environmental preoccupations were used more (8 hashtags, e.g., “sustainablefashion, #upcycle), with ‘economic’ mentions (10%; 3 hashtags, e.g., #sale, #popupstore)

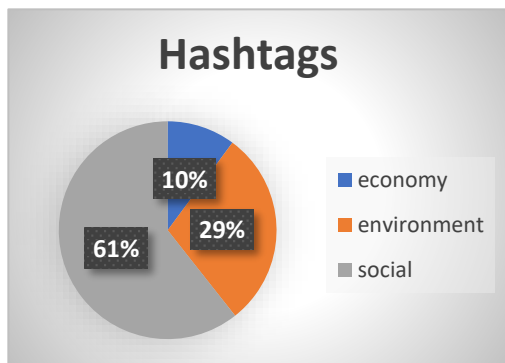


Figure 41. Proportion of the ‘three sustainabilities’ among the BRC’s hashtags

4.2.4.2 THE CASE OF VINTED

Vinted’s hashtags are mainly representative of economic matters (Figure 42). Since it underlines the message, it can be said that what matters the most is the retailing and purchasing act. The hashtags used were not diversified, but were rather recurrent in several posts in a row. Hashtags that were associated with economics were the following: #vindtedfinds, #foundonvinted, and #summerfashion. In addition, climate-related hashtags were numerous, which is mainly due to the fact that the hashtags #sustainable and #sustainablefashion were mentioned in every publication. Climate awareness is expressed thanks to hashtags, but still less numerous than ‘economics’ related hashtags (economic: 25 vs environmental: 11). As for social-related hashtags, they are absent, which is not surprising since the community is not involved.

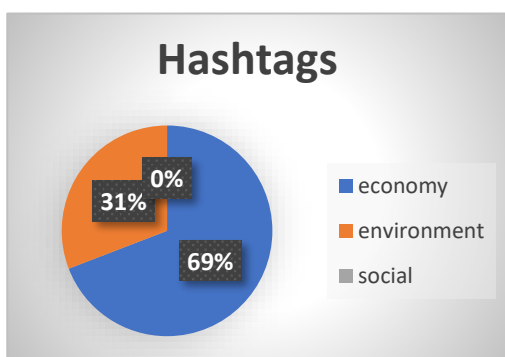


Figure 42. Proportion of the ‘three sustainabilities’ among Vinted’s hashtags

CONCLUSION

The four constituent elements have to be analyzed together to explore the message as a whole. The picture does not stand by itself, since the post description indicates the way the picture has to be understood. Tagged people also give indirect insight into the way the visualization (i.e., visual elements) has to be interpreted based on people's own status. And finally, hashtags confirm in some direct manner what the real meaning of the publication is (e.g., caption).

The BRC's pictures indicate that they lay the focus on social and economic elements, and less on environmental aspects. When it comes to the publication description, there is a rise in environmental interests and a drop in economic considerations while equal attention is paid to the community (social elements). Social-related elements are even more focused on when observing the people tagged in the BRC's publications. The same trend of 'economic' and 'environmental' preoccupations recurs when looking at tags, namely more climate consciousness and fewer marketing approaches. Finally, the trends are confirmed when looking at hashtags with stable concerns about its followers and climate and a declining focus on sales. From this data, it can be inferred that celebrating and sharing with the community is the main message that emerges from BRC's publications. Retailing is crucial for them, though, since it runs charities and has to earn money as well, but it is solely focused on in the caption. Once it is emphasized in the caption, it is clear that its communication is more about social and environmental sustainability than economic sustainability. They rely on their community, which itself plays a role in preserving the planet.

As far as Vinted is concerned, they do not embrace sustainability in the same way. Social sustainability seems to be highlighted since they picture women in all their publications. In addition, the settings are also very green, and they seem not to pay attention to economic matters. But when the description is examined, Vinted is all about promoting its clothes with a little minimal concern for the climate. The same accounts for its community. Unexpectedly, tags seem to reconnect with 'environmental sustainability.' Bearing in mind that Vinted's followers do not always identify as influencers in their biographies, the final tone is set by the hashtags, indicating that economic sustainability matters even more. It is clear that Vinted is a retailing app that does not rely on its community. It can be questioned whether they really care about the environment since economics is given priority.

To conclude, Vinted and the BRC include the three sustainabilities' differently in their online communication. The BRC appears to use economic sustainability and social sustainability in the first place, but rapidly, the combination of social sustainability and environmental sustainability gains importance when all the parts of each publication are examined. The BRC is more focused on its community, which seems to be involved in embracing slow fashion. Making a profit is important for charities, but it is not the central element. Vinted, by contrast, first captures people in natural environments. But eventually, it can be observed in the four constituent parts

of the publications that making a profit is vital. Economic sustainability prevails over social sustainability. Followers only serve to show off their finds. Most surprisingly, environmental concerns are stressed in several parts of Vinted's publications by depicting natural settings, relying on some followers' climate consciousness. But when Vinted promotes its garments, it pays little attention to being climate-friendly. It might be that its community is well aware of climate issues and wants to tackle them. But, since there is little connection between Vinted and its community, environmental sustainability could therefore be questioned.

4.3 Insta-worthy norms

The third section will examine how Insta-worthy norms have been implemented by the BRC and Vinted to boost consumer interactions while also following path to Instagram's digital strategies. This section is divided into two main parts: the visualization and the textual aspects (i.e., content). Under visualization, the focalization of imagery (casual vs. professional), the type of imagery (carousel of images vs. fixed images) and the scroll-down approach will be analyzed. In the second subsection, elements like storytelling, behind-the-scenes, and the role of emotions will be discussed.

4.3.1 Visualization: Casual vs professional imagery

It is important to bear in mind that charities have adopted a business orientation in which commercialism has become as important as voluntarism. According to Broadbridge and Parsons (2002), a change to professionalization has transformed the consumer-driven strategy. Görland & Kannengießer (2021) also pointed out that, given the changing digital requirements, organizations have to comply with the current norms on Instagram in order to embrace a sharing model in which social and economic factors are equally important. Analyzing the proportion to which both organizations focus on casual or professional imagery might give insight into the shift to professionalization.

	Row Labels	Count of post
The BRC	Casual imagery	12
	clothing items	5
	people	7
	Professional imagery	14
	clothing items	10
	people	4
	Grand total	26

Table 9. Proportion of casual and professional imagery among the BRCs publications

	Row Labels	Count of post
Vinted	Casual imagery	15
	clothing items	4
	people	11
	Professional imagery	19
	clothing items	13
	people	6
	Grand Total	34

Table 10. Proportion of casual and professional imagery among Vinted's publications

4.3.1.1 THE BRC

Table 9 shows that the BRC uses both causal (12) and professional (14) pictures in its publications. Casual imagery refers to photos that were taken by the pictured people themselves or by their relatives in their own private places or in public spaces. It is not characterized by a set-up of peripheral elements to create a harmonious whole. As can be observed from Figure 43, casual pictures tend to highlight the presence of the ‘community’ over the featured clothing items. This is not surprising since it includes every individual who is supportive of the BRC. As they represent ordinary people, no mise en scène is required. This also accounts for the informative visual elements (i.e., picture) that take the form of a message (see Figure 44), where the personal experience is praised above the clothing retailing.



Figure 43. Publication 19 from BRC's account



Figure 44. Publication 2 from BRC's account

Professional imagery, which is slightly predominant (14 out of 26 captions), involve the use of filters, different angles, and different lightning. This was perceived as more professional. As shown in Figures 45 and 46, clothes are the main focus of these pictures. Whether it is a message or a picture, the act of retailing is underscored. Most importantly, the BRC's professional imagery do not include people, only plastic models, and advertising messages are emphasized.



Figure 45. Publication 15 from BRC's account



Figure 46. Publication 13 from BRC's account

4.3.1.2 VINTED

As was shown in Table 10, the majority of Vinted's publications tend to look rather professional. Out of 19 professional images, 13 tend to focus exclusively on clothing items rather than on people themselves (6 pictures). But, this is not surprising given Vinted's main communication strategy, which mainly uses followers to show off their outfits. Professional imagery includes pictures where followers do not look at the camera and pose (see Figure 47).



Figure 47. Vinted's publications representative of professional imagery



An analysis of Vinted's casual imagery (15 out of 34 captions) reveals that more attention is paid to people than to clothing items. The major difference compared to the BRC is that the pictured people do not take a particular pose but rather seem 'natural-looking' or pictured in their daily routine, as can be observed in Figure 48, where the woman is sitting on a bench with her cup of coffee. In some cases, people face the camera, which makes it possible to feel the vibes and energy emerging from the imagery (see Figure 49). A slight minority of casual imagery (4 out of 11) emphasizes Vinted's finds, since the face of the person is not visible (see figure 50). But, this does not hamper the feeling of reciprocity since followers are immersed in their routine, though, like having breakfast. The focus is arguably more on the clothing item and the atmosphere than on the person who wears it.



Figure 48. Vinted's publication representative of casual imagery



Figure 49. Vinted's publication representative of casual imagery



Figure 50. Vinted's publication representative of casual imagery

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE BRC AND VINTED

Both Vinted and the BRC tend to adopt a more professional approach to imagery on Instagram. Given that both organizations use different communication strategies, it is not surprising to see that even though the business orientation is palpable, professional imagery differs between the two organizations. While the BRC plays with content diversification by not only focusing on people, but also on messages, shop windows, or other events, Vinted only pictures people who are wearing Vinted's clothing items. Vinted solely features human models, whereas the BRC resorts to human and non-human (plastic) models and textual elements.

The analysis of the proportion of the three sustainabilities in captions (cf. above) gives insight into the main motives that can be found in the imagery. The BRC's pictures were characterized by paying attention to social elements and economic elements (see 4.3.1). Given this finding, it is not surprising that professional imagery was mainly promoting the retailing act, while casual imagery was more socially related. Even though Vinted's customer-retailer approach seems predominant in its communicative strategy (see 4.1.4), Vinted's imagery exclusively focus on humans. Its followers were foregrounded in both types of imagery (i.e., causal and professional), and the retailing act was underemphasized. This finding suggests that Vinted found alternatives to promote social-related elements in a professional manner, demonstrating its professionalization (e.g. atmosphere, daily routine). The BRC, by contrast, made a clear distinction between the two types of imagery. With the causal imagery, the BRC stressed its followers over its clothing items. On the other hand, the BRC's professional imagery tends to be more numerous, with the exclusive focus on the retailing act. Both strategies highlight the BRC and Vinted's transition to a more professional approach: Vinted fosters engagement while creating an atmosphere through its imagery, and the BRC uses professional techniques (e.g., lights, angles, filters, models) while still incorporating its followers in its imagery.

4.3.2 Visualization- Scroll-down approach

After having explored the BRC's and Vinted type of focalization among their imagery which suggests that the professionalization of the imagery is growing, it is interesting to explore the so-called scroll-down approach. A distinction can be made between a carousel of images and fixed images (see xx). It is also possible to establish a link between the type of focalization (casual vs. professional) and the type of imagery (carousel of images vs. fixed images). Analyzing the type of focalization (casual vs. professional) for each type of imagery, whether it is made up of several pictures or one fixed image, helps to examine how the scroll-down approach can foster consumers' engagement and convey storytelling elements.

	Row Labels	Count of post
The BRC	carousel of images	18
	casual	10
	professional	8
	fixed image	8
	casual	2
	professional	6
	Grand total	26

Table 11. Proportion of the type of imagery: carousel vs. fixed images among the BRC's publications

	Row Labels	Count of post
Vinted	carousel of images	16
	casual	8
	professional	8
	fixed image	18
	casual	7
	professional	11
	Grand total	34

Table 12. Proportion of the type of imagery: carousel vs. fixed images among Vinted's publications

4.3.2.1 THE BRC

Table 11 shows that the majority of the BRC's publications are made up of carousels of images since they contain several images in a row, whereas fixed images tend to be less frequent (fixed images: 8 vs. carousel of images: 18). In the above subsection, it was suggested that casual imagery tended to focus more on people, while professional imagery foregrounded clothing items and a business-marketing approach in general. In the data, a carousel of images tends to focus a little more on people (casual imagery). Fixed images, by contrast, can be said to be more professional-oriented with the focal point on the clothing items. Going back to the acclimatization and immersion principle (see 4.2.3), the scroll-down strategy engages followers step by step, allowing them to explore the visual features one after another. It is worth noting that carousels of images essentially picture individuals, reflecting the feeling of proximity that the BRC seeks to instill in its adherents. At the same time, the BRC also focuses on stylized shoots by using set of fixed images. Even though carousels of images were more prominently used with a focus on the BRC's followers, fixed images were identified as arguably professional given the BRC's marketing perspective.

4.3.2.2 VINTED

Vinted uses fixed images and carousels of images to a fairly similar extent (fixed images: 18 vs. carousel of images: 16). This suggests that the process of immersion and acclimatization is not a central element of Vinted's communication strategy to increase its consumer engagement. Carousels of images that are believed to be more immersive and dynamic pay equal attention to people (casual imagery) and clothing items (professional imagery), which shows that efforts are made to boost not only consumers' engagement but also sales. Vinted's imagery contains a greater number of fixed pictures that focus on apparel items rather than followers. It is not surprising to observe (see Table 12) that fixed images are categorized as professional since Vinted uses its followers to promote Vinted's outfits. Again, Vinted's professionalism is obvious in both forms of imagery: carousel and fixed images.

COMPARISON BETWEEN VINTED AND THE BRC

Unsurprisingly, the BRC makes use of a carousel of images to lay the focus on its community, since such types of imagery foster immersion and the sharing of daily routines with its followers. The BRC uses fixed images that tend to focus on clothing items in a stylized manner to reiterate that clothing retailing is not central, but crucial to its communication. Vinted's carousel of images underlined people and clothing items equally. In addition, Vinted used fixed images to depict its garments, although a small number of its followers was represented by means of this type of visual element. In other words, Vinted appears to lay an exclusive focus on its clothing items, regardless of the type of imagery. It has to be remembered that if Vinted does not directly focus on its followers, it still implements a strategy when creating an atmosphere based on the shared daily routines (carousel of images: 16 out of 34). By contrast, the BRC seems to play with the effect that both types of imagery can produce. In other words, the BRC's carousels of images foster interactive information exchange with its community, which is pictured in the majority of its publications and is intended to increase consumer engagement. Vinted's fixed images (18 out of 34) and the professional attitude displayed regardless of the type of imagery testifies of its professional orientation as a predominant strategy.

4.3.3 Materialization- Storytelling:

This section explores the feeling of reciprocity created by the carousel of images and the extent to which extent a narrative story can emerge from those carousels of images, so-called storytelling. The focus is also laid on the tools that are used to boost community engagement. As was pointed out by Marcella-Hood, behind-the-scenes help to conceptualize the experience thanks to backstage elements like photographs and videos of people working. Based on Calcagni et al. (2019), attention will also be paid to geotraces as elements that are meant to boost the mutual benefit in the sharing process.

4.3.3.1 THE BRC

BEHIND-THE-SCENES

Behind the scenes is the main technique to reinforce the feeling of proximity. As was pointed out in subsection 4.2.1, two communication strategies were identified for the BRC: inside its walls with the focus on its brand identity and outside its walls with the focus on its community. In the first case, the backstage was shown by the BRC's own staff. They provide followers with some tips and, at the same time, offer them customized offers due to their close relationship. Featuring followers' outfits outside the BRC's walls, like at Graduate Fashion Week, makes it possible to disclose the atmosphere inside the event, which tend to foster connectivity. It can be said that behind-the-scenes publications take the form of a narrative, where the BRC tends to immerse the followers in its own world, which they are part of. Influencers also use the

behind-the-scenes technique. This strengthens the feeling of identification and, therefore, identifiability.

FEELING OF RECIPROCITY: GEOTRACES

The vast majority of followers are pictured facing the camera. Therefore, it makes it possible to feel the vibes and emotions they go through. The emphasis is also laid on the local aspect of BRC's shop location, which strengthens the feeling of a gathering community. It is a matter of proximity since the BRC shares geotraces. As was stated by Calcagni et al. (2019) geolocalization and its geotraces boost the feeling of reciprocity, which is crucial to the process of mutual influence. Geotraces are expressed in the visualization as well as the caption. Good examples of geotraces are names of events, local shops that are identified, people tagged belonging to a regional area, etc. In Figure 51, geotraces are the BRC's brand identity, the Graduate Fashion Week. By mentioning these locations, it is meant to trigger engagement based on mutual influence and the possible gathering. Followers could possibly experience the moment at the same other people experience it, which makes them all feel engaged. Alongside purely geolocative elements, textual geotraces can be found (e.g., 10 days, @LoveNotLandfill, pop-up, #GFW23). The choice of tags is relevant since @lovenotlandfill is located in London where the GFW took place. Geotraces are complementary to boost consumer engagement as they emphasize the mutual benefit of engaging and experiencing together at the same time, which reinforces the feeling of belonging and reciprocity.

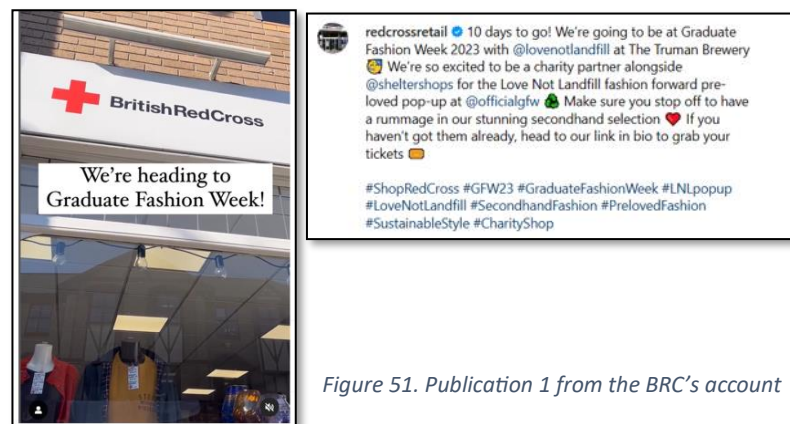


Figure 51. Publication 1 from the BRC's account

4.3.3.2 VINTED

SLIGHT FEELING OF PROXIMITY

As was already mentioned in 4.2.3, contact and exchange with the community are limited since Vinted's community is international, which makes the relationship not that close in comparison to the BRC which advocates from a more local perspective. Another important element that might explain why there is a sort of detachment between Vinted, and its community is Vinted's professional attitude when it comes to its communicative strategy. Clothing items are promoted

over its community, its followers can be said to serve as models to show off Vinted's outfits. Most of Vinted's publications feature followers' outfits in public places, never in private places. Also, the pictures are taken from professional perspectives (e.g., taking the pose). The distance is arguably palpable; Vinted's outfits are mediated by its community, but there is little connectivity or proximity in general.

ON-THE-SCENES ATMOSPHERE

However, the analysis of the imagery highlighted that, to some extent, a feeling of reciprocity is fostered because the 'models' daily routine is shared, and that most of them look at the camera, unlike professional imagery. However, no behind-the-scenes tactics are used to boost this feeling of reciprocity. Geotracers that boost the mutual experience are used to a slight extent, but no geolocalization-elements (features shops, cities, areas, logo's.) are shared which makes it not possible for followers to gather and experience the moment together at the same time. Instead of depicting people at work and Vinted's backstage, Vinted relied on another type of narrative that creates an atmosphere in which routines are shared and experienced. It can be therefore said that on-the-scene elements are instead promoted. Although some geotracers are shared in some cases, the feeling of detachment or at least Vinted's professional relationship with its followers makes it not possible to experience the moment at the same time. Compared to the BRC, Vinted's community cannot be said to be a big family that longs to spend time together and exchange tips. Given that there is no common thread in Vinted's publications (e.g., celebrations, gifts, etc.), the mutual benefit seems to be absent.

Just by looking at the caption of Figure 52, the precise location of the pictured followers cannot be identified, nor the affiliation with the brand (Vinted) since no logo or shop window is emphasized. In the caption, the follower is mentioned which makes it possible to know more or less where the picture was taken based on the follower's location if mentioned in its own biography. In this case @constancypense is coming from Paris, the picture could possibly have been taken there. The weather is also an element that helps foster connectivity with the community, hashtags also refer to #summerfashion. In other words, geotracers are used to a slight extent compared to the BRC (e.g., temporal elements, named shops, logo's..).



Figure 52. Publication from Vinted's account

4.3.4 Content aspects: emotions underpin collective identity

An analysis of emotions and the role of nostalgia suggests that they can to some extent contribute to shaping a 'we' identity. Emotions were expressed in different ways and were found in all the constituent parts of the publication. A close investigation of the use of emojis might give insights into emotional-related aspects such as feeling of belonging and reciprocity. Comments can also contain emojis. In this section, only the content aspects of the caption will be examined, namely the description, the hashtags, and the comments to understand how emotions underpin the collective identity.

4.3.4.1 THE BRC

As seen previously, a sense of belonging and reciprocity generates positive reactions when it comes to gathering with a supportive community. Playing with suspense is another main element that can trigger emotions. Most importantly, emojis are good indicators of the publication's tone and the major emotion being expressed to the followers. Emojis appeared in all of the BRC's publications and were linked to the ongoing event or celebration. The description for World Environment Day includes emojis portraying a hearth and a recycling symbol (see Figure 53). Emojis are also used in the comments (Figure 54); they may not be directly related to environmental issues, but they elicit emotions and establish a sense of community around a certain event.



Figure 53. Caption from the BRC's publication 3 illustrating emojis use



Figure 54. Comments from the BRC's publication 3 illustrating emojis use

Nostalgia is not necessarily negative. It is mostly used in the sense that the Red Cross looks back on past events to build its future and bring more members into its community. In its communication, it often talks about what has been done or shared so far. They all look back on these celebratory moments together. They have to let go of and detach from some emotions to concentrate on the other gatherings, but it is not without emotion that they recall all those moments.

4.3.4.2 VINTED

In contrast to the BRC, Vinted's post descriptions do not always include emojis. Figure 55 shows that 38% (12 out of 34 descriptions) of Vinted's publications do not include any emojis in the post description. A slight majority of its publications (18 out of 34) still include one emoji in their descriptions. Only 5% of its publications (4 descriptions) have two emojis.

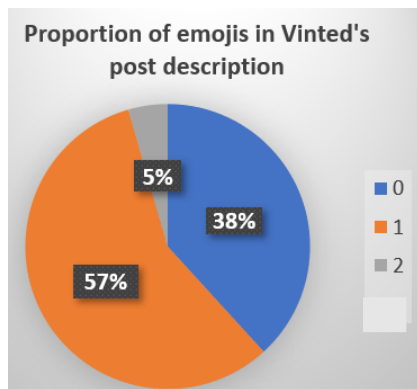


Figure 55. Proportion of emojis in Vinted's post descriptions



Figure 56. Examples of captions from Vinted's publications containing emojis

Despite the fact that Vinted does not make use of emojis in all its publications, it is still interesting to note that the ones used express strong emotions (see Figure 56). The type of emoji differs from those used by the BRC, which were more connected to a particular event or celebration. Here, Vinted's emojis directly appeal to the followers as those emojis give insights into the feelings (e.g., feeling cool, in love, happy). As for hashtags, there is no correlation between the emojis and the textual meaning since they are invariably used among all the publications (#secondhand, #vinted). Comments do not include emojis either.

Nostalgia is not a strategy that is implemented by Vinted in its communication. Vinted does not comment on past events or celebrations, but rather looks at the future. Textual elements indicate that Vinted anticipates the next sales on its marketplace: "Next time..., have a look on Vinted or Might be time to sell it." Again, this method is not inherently negative; Vinted attempts to engage and inspire its community to continue selling and purchasing through its marketplace.

4.3.5 Collective identity: 'we identity'

After having analyzed the impact that emotions can play in increasing a sense of belonging and reciprocity (e.g., the use of emojis), it is crucial to consider language factors. Marcella-Hood's study indicates that influencers prefer personal and relevant language in order to develop a 'we' identity. The pronoun 'we' is meant to echo the relationship between both organizations and their communities, or at least between influencers and the followers. In this section, the focus will be on the function that the pronouns 'we' and 'you' fulfil in the publication descriptions: subject, object, or possessive.

4.3.5.1 THE BRC

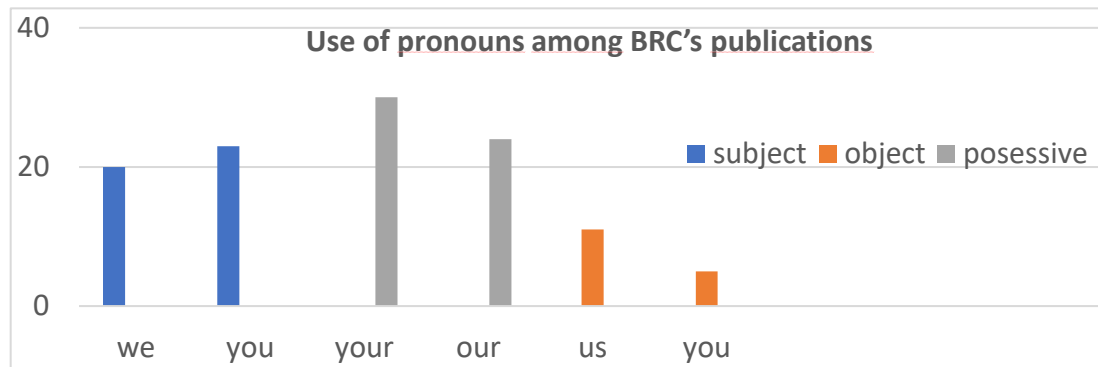


Figure 57. Use of pronouns among the BRC's publication: 'we' identity

An analysis of the pronouns reveals that the BRC alternates between the personal pronouns 'you' and 'we' in its subject forms ('we': 20 vs. 'you': 23). By focusing on the possessive forms, the same patterns emerge, with a minor preference for 'your' over 'our' pronouns. However, when considering pronouns used as objects, 'us' is more common than 'you.' This suggests that the community ('you') is thought to be the subject of the relationship together with the BRC ('us'), the possessive form ('your') also highlights that the ownership of the relationship is no longer only in the hands of the BRC, but mainly depends on the BRC's followers' will to implement change (e.g., your local charity shops, your next shopping trip, see Figure 58). When the BRC uses the pronoun 'us' to refer to its staff and stores, the organization positions itself as the beneficiary of the relationship, with the followers acting as the agents.

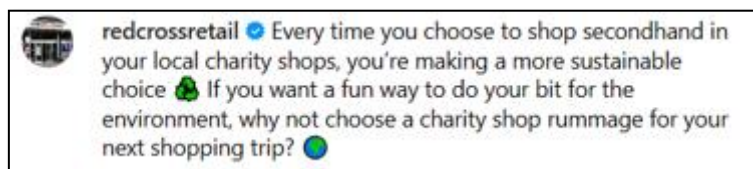


Figure 58. Publication from the BRC showing the use of pronouns: 'we' identity

In some cases, the pronoun 'we' is used as the subject, and the pronoun 'you' serves as the object. As illustrated below (see Figure 59), the message informs the followers that Graduate Fashion Week is in a few days. In the first lines of the messages, 'we' was mainly used to tell people about the fact that the BRC did something, was present somewhere, or commented on some events. This is why followers have headed to one of their local shops. In the second part of the message, something is expected of the followers since there is mention of 'you': the addresses might want to take a look at the collection in the BRC's shop. But, in any case, they need to buy a ticket to attend the event where the BRC will be present. The final line testifies to the reciprocity between the BRC and its followers: the BRC provides them with a link in their bio to help them access the event, but the BRC also needs their attendance to celebrate the gathering of its community.

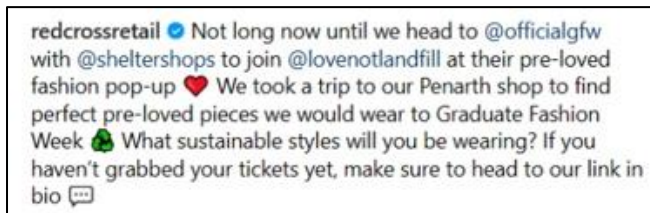


Figure 59. Publication 4 from the BRC's account

From the analysis of the use of pronouns among the BRC's publications, it appears that a 'we identity' was enhanced. It makes no difference whether the pronouns 'we' and 'you' operate as subjects or objects; what matters is that this shows a reciprocal relationship in which both groups or people benefit from the circumstance. When the BRC puts its clothing items at the service of its community on its 'redcrossretail' page, even if the aim is to generate sales, the relationship comes first. By focusing on partnerships with influencers, the aim is to gain visibility through the influencer's own community. However, it is also a win-win situation for the followers, who will acquire even more credibility and awareness as a result of the BRC shares.

4.3.5.2 VINTED

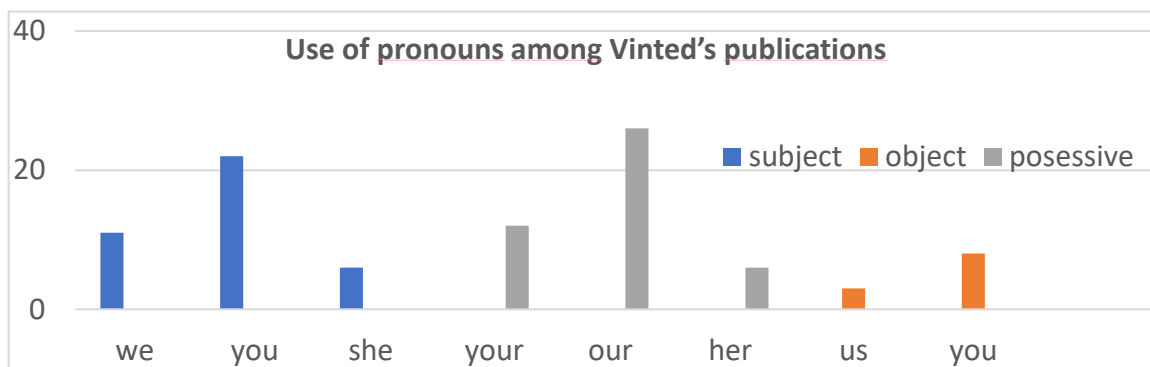


Figure 60. Use of pronouns among Vinted's publications: 'we' identity

From Figure 60, it can be seen that the pronouns are used differently as in the BRC's publications. Among Vinted's publications, the pronoun 'you' is exclusively used as the subject ("Do you like this look?"). This shows that the vinted directly addresses its followers, but it should be mentioned that 'you' only overcome in questions asked to foster engagement (see Figure 61). In very few cases 'we' is used as a subject as in Figure 61 ("We have loads of similar items.."). In this case, the 'we' pronoun does not refer to the whole community, but rather to Vinted's marketplace as a single actor. It should also be mentioned that Vinted also refers to its followers using 'she' as a subject (Figure 62). Even if 'she' is a personal pronoun, the followers are not directly addressed by Vinted.

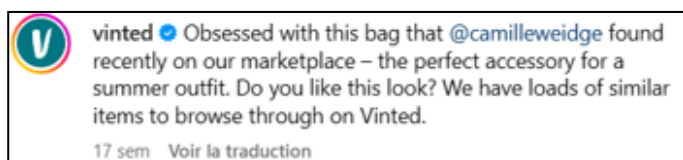


Figure 61. Publication from Vinted's account

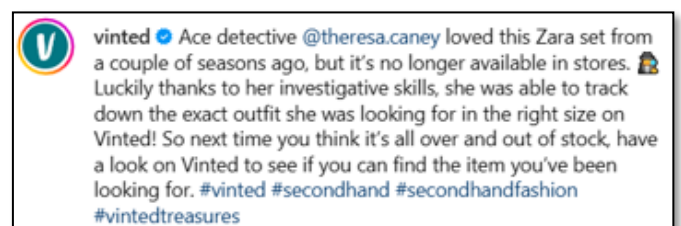


Figure 62. Publication from Vinted's account

In terms of possessive forms, the pronoun 'our' is arguably more commonly used in Vinted's publications than 'your.' If Vinted mainly uses 'our,' it is to indicate that the clothes come from its app and marketplace as shown in Figure 63. When examining object forms of the pronouns 'we' and 'you,' Figure 64 also indicates that 'you' is used more often than 'us.' A good example of 'you' in the object form is 'a snap of you wearing...,' which indicates that followers are considered as the object of the relationship to some extent. This finding seems to contrast with the previous analysis, especially that 'you' referring to the followers as objects was also used as subjects.

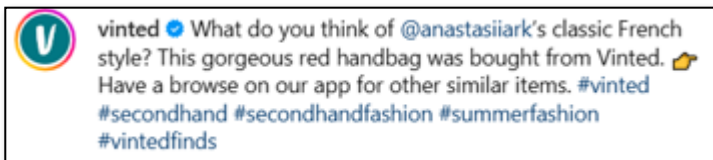


Figure 63. Publication from Vinted's account



Figure 64. Publication from Vinted's account

COMPARISON THE BRC AND VINTED

In both organization's publications, a 'we' identity seems to be promoted as the pronouns 'we' and 'you' are used alternatively. If Vinted and the BRC seem both to present followers ('you') as the agents of the relationship, the use of 'we' conveys other meanings. Among the BRC's publications, the mutual benefit is expressed (i.e., not long before we head..., if you haven't grabbed your ticket..). The use of pronouns among Vinted's publications, by contrast, does not reflect the reciprocal nature of the relationship. The pronoun 'we' refers primarily to Vinted's entity, not to the whole community. Although followers addressed by 'you' are presented as the agents of the relationship, they are also presented as objects. Also, the possessive form 'our,' makes it clear that the relationship relies on Vinted's sales platform, while the BRC used 'your' as possessive pronoun which emphasized that the community was central to the relationship. Here, Vinted introduces itself as the trigger element of the relationship and that the followers depend on it. In other words, Vinted's places its marketplace as the central element in the relationship, whereas the BRC's business is made possible thanks to its community.

CONCLUSION

It has to be mentioned that Vinted and the BRC have incorporated 'insta-worthy' norms into their communicative discourse. On the whole, the professional approach whether in terms of focalization or the type of imagery showed that both organizations have followed the path to the current digital requirements. Different strategies were used by the BRC and Vinted. Even if the BRC is centered around its community, economic considerations were equally emphasized, as evidenced by the professional approach displayed in its publications in terms of visual elements (e.g. lights, plastic models, etc.). Vinted, who appeared to pay little attention to its followers (see x), was yet successful in creating a particular atmosphere where daily routines were shared.

In both cases, the BRC and Vinted have succeeded in fostering customers participation by adopting a more professional attitude. In addition, consumer engagement was also enhanced through the scroll-down approach. If the BRC mainly used carousels of images and Vinted fixed images, the marketing-orientation was obvious in general. Most importantly, the BRC, who is more focused on its followers fostered interactive information exchange through its use of carousels of images, which are said to increase the feeling of belonging and reciprocity. It has to be remembered that sharing information with an involved community is crucial for them to be part of the decision-making process to enhance local empowerment (Brown et al, 2023). Vinted's international scope might explain the feeling of detachment and why Vinted does not apply strategies like the scroll-down approach. Although Vinted created an atmosphere based on shared daily routines, fixed images restricted the feeling of connectivity compared to carousels of images.

Other strategies used to create a feeling of proximity and reciprocity were analyzed. Storytelling, and specifically behind-the-scenes components designed to increase community interaction, were scrutinized. The findings show that, unlike Vinted, the BRC completely implemented behind-the-scenes strategies. In the BRC's publication, backstage elements were disclosed in the form of a narrative. It appears that the BRC created an atmosphere that strengthened connectivity thanks to the close relationship with its followers. At the same time, celebrating and sharing BRC-related content improved the sense of belonging because followers appear to matter to the charity organization. Geodata also makes it possible for the BRC's community to gather and emphasize the mutual benefit of living the same things at the same time. No behind-the-scenes techniques are used by Vinted. Even if the relationship between Vinted and its community is characterized by a slight sense of proximity, it appears that shared routines increase this sense of proximity. Consequently, Vinted adopted a different style of narrative to establish an 'on-the-scenes' atmosphere, as the routines are directly presented rather than shown step by step like the BRC's behind-the-scenes.

After having explored the visualization and the materialization, an analysis of emotions suggests that emojis are used in both organization's publications to convey feelings of belonging and

reciprocity. If BRC's emojis use was more related to celebrations, events (i.e., thematic link), Vinted expressed strong emotions, but to a fewer extent. The BRC made use of emojis in all of its publications, whereas Vinted used them less frequently. A difference was observed in the use of nostalgia. The BRC is more oriented towards its past publications when it keeps commenting on the gatherings and events that took place, and Vinted looks ahead and anticipates the next sales and buying of its clothes. Both organizations remain positive, which is in line with the generation Z's speech that put forward positive messages despite concerns about climate change (Soler-I-Marti, 2022). Soler-I-Marti also pointed out that emotions could strengthen collectivity, and more precisely shape a 'we' identity. The analysis of pronouns use among the BRC and Vinted's publications revealed different strategies for developing a group identity. The BRC and its community appear to be the agents of the relationship and the BRC is the beneficiary of the moments spent together, possessive pronouns also indicate that the BRC created some space for its followers ('your'). Vinted's pronouns use indicate that the followers are both the subject and the recipient of the relationship, but possessive forms tend to suggest that the relationship is concentrated on Vinted's own business ('our' marketplace, shoppers, etc).

5 Chapter 5 : Conclusion

The objective of this dissertation was to explore how the BRC and Vinted have adopted sustainability communication in the quest for slow fashion on their respective corporate accounts on Instagram. Three main research questions were central to this study. The first question sought to examine the extent to which the BRC and Vinted included sustainability communication.

An analysis of Instagram's main features of both organizations revealed that the BRC and Vinted incorporated sustainability communication differently. First of all, different communication strategies were adopted. The BRC paid more attention to content diversification strategies (e.g., posts and reels) and seemed to multiply its effort to foster engagement and therefore engage its community, but the return from its followers tended to be quite low compared to Vinted, who invested less in engaging elements (e.g., tags and hashtags) and still succeeded in having more reactions from its community. The conclusion can be drawn that BRC tends to use traditional strategies (AIDA model and structuring layout), whereas Vinted appears to review those concepts and is thus more flexible in fostering commitment and involvement with its followers. In both cases, the marketing orientation was arguably palpable, although Vinted's marketing orientation is stronger than that of the BRC's communication.

At the same time, both organizations tried to reach their followers at different levels. The BRC advocates its business at a more local level, the focus on its community is therefore at the heart of its communication. Support from other local organizations matters, which is why the BRC places a high value on brand identification (e.g., logos, store windows) in order to promote local identifiability through visual elements. Vinted's international scope explains why it appears that there is a feeling of detachment among in its communication. Given its global scope and its digital presence, Vinted beds on its textual identity. The main difference between both organizations is that the BRC copes to a greater extent with the principle of 'social marketing.'

The second research question investigated how the three sustainabilities were incorporated among the BRC and Vinted's publications, specifically among the four constituent parts (visualization vs. caption). The BRC prioritized gradually economic sustainability, then social sustainability and finally environmental sustainability. This suggests that the retailing act is important for the BRC, but the commitment of its community matters even more since they appeared to be climate-aware. Vinted takes the opposite approach, focusing first on social sustainability, next on environmental sustainability, and ultimately on economic sustainability. It can be concluded that this finding aims at mitigating the lack of interaction with Vinted's followers. Vinted's marketing orientation prevailed over its social marketing. A similar conclusion may be taken for the BRC: the charity needed to enhance its commercial focus in addition to its devotion to its followers (e.g., social marketing).

The last part of this study aimed to investigate how insta-worthy norms were incorporated into their communicative discourse. Even if the BRC is a well-established organization, it still succeeded in implementing Insta-worthy norms in its online discourse. With its carousel of images and behind-the-scenes techniques and the scroll-down approach, it conveyed storytelling strategies and as a result increased consumer engagement. The charity also resorted to its professional attitude to strengthen the feeling of belonging and reciprocity among its community. The BRC also fostered a collaborative 'we' identity through emotional aspects (such as emojis). When using geodata, the BRC emphasizes the mutual benefit of the gathering and relationship. Vinted, again, reappropriated those insta-worthy norms in its own way. Instead of applying traditional insta-worthy norms, it created an atmosphere where daily routines are shared. Vinted similarly cultivated a communal 'we' identity, even though the relationship is centered on its business. The main difference that could explain why Vinted aroused more engagement is that the organization is oriented towards the future, whereas the BRC looked back at past events. To a relatively fair extent, it can be said that insta-worthy norms have enhanced the corporate communication style thanks to their consumer-driven approach.

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