

Racial discrimination on online second-hand shopping platforms

An Experimental Study on the Influence of Skin Colour on Consumer Interaction

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Preface

In the summer of 2020 I attended the peaceful demonstration on the Dam Square in Amsterdam that was organised to create awareness on police brutality and systemic racism. Feeling overwhelmed and emotional standing there it became clear to me that I wanted to start the conversation on racism as well as dive deeper into the subject. I wanted to learn more about racism, listen to people's experiences, explain to others what I have learnt, share my thoughts, and even contribute to this topic academically. Starting the Master's program I dedicated multiple papers to racial discrimination. When having to decide on a topic for the Master thesis, I was sure that I wanted to work on a project that is of importance for our society. I am very thankful that I was selected to work on this particular thesis. I have learnt a lot from it and I appreciate that I got to research such a valuable topic. I hope my contribution to the literature on racism will have an impact on others, make people think, and open other people's eyes.

I would like to acknowledge and give special thanks to my supervisor Dr. J. Gonçalves for guiding and helping me through the whole process of writing this Master thesis. He has been of great help, supported me where needed, and he has taught me a lot about quantitative research. I am very thankful for having him as my supervisor. For the theoretical insights regarding the topic of racism, I would like to thank Dr. J. van Sterkenburg for advising me about literature regarding racism and insights about these literary topics. Furthermore, I would like to thank Nicolette Lazarus for her contribution to this thesis. She has been of great help and supported me in getting the tools I needed: the clothes used for the study, the models, and she helped sending out the packages to actual Vinted buyers. I really appreciate all of the time and effort she put into this study. Then I would like to thank John Olivieira for his contribution to recruiting the models and connecting this great group of people in order to start this research project. Lastly, I would like to thank all of the brands that contributed to this study: Adidas, Calvin Klein, Nike, Stieglitz, TOMS, and Tommy Hilfiger. Without their generosity of providing this research real clothes, this study would not have been such a success!

Abstract

The death of George Floyd on May 25th 2020 has created a lot of debate regarding the topic of systemic racism throughout the world (Oriola & Knight, 2020). Systemic racism is deeply ingrained in our society and it occurs on many levels: the individual level, the institutional level, and the cultural level (Bowser, 2017). The existence of systemic racism limits the quality of life for many different communities. As of today, in contemporary society, racism has become more covert in real life than it used to be. However, this is quite different on the Internet. On the web, individuals more easily act out and express their racist beliefs and thoughts (Ortiz, 2020). Previous studies found that online racism limits opportunities for people of colour, for example on online marketplaces (Edelman et al., 2017; Ge et al., 2020; McLaughlin, 2018). With platforms whereon you can sell your own clothes – such as Vinted and Depop – becoming more popular these days, the question arose whether the skin colour of users of these platforms has an influence on how others interact with them. Do black sellers receive lower price bids than white sellers? Or do white sellers gain more interaction with their items than black sellers?

Considering the above, a research question was formulated. The research question this study gives an answer to is as follows: “To what extent does a model’s race have an influence on consumer interaction with clothes on sale on online second-hand shopping platforms?” In order to answer this particular question an experimental research design was created and executed. The experimental research design includes two types of experiments: an online field experiment on Vinted and an online experimental survey created with Qualtrics. Both experiments focus on whether the skin colour of a model has an effect on how individuals interact with the clothes they see, either on Vinted or in the online experimental survey.

The results of the experiments suggest that, statistically, skin colour does not have a major significant effect on the consumer interaction with clothes on sale on online second-hand fashion platforms. However, one important finding did indicate the existence of unconscious biases among respondents of the online experimental survey. It can thus be concluded that a model’s skin colour does have a small effect on how individuals interact with clothes sold on online second-hand fashion platforms. This study shows that unconscious biases as well as racism are still prevalent in contemporary society.

Keywords: *Systemic racism, skin colour, unconscious bias, online second-hand shopping platforms, colour-blind racism.*

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List of abbreviations

BLM	Black Lives Matter
CoBRAS	Colour-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale
DV	Dependent variable
H1	Hypothesis 1
H2	Hypothesis 2
H3	Hypothesis 3
IV	Independent variable
US	United States

1. Introduction

May 25th, 2020 – It is already over one year ago that the world was shaken up by the death of the African-American man George Floyd. A video capturing the mistreatment of Floyd went viral on social media and many individuals got to see what happened to the man. The video showed how a police officer held his knee on the neck of Floyd even after the man begged for air saying: “I can’t breathe”. A few hours later, because of this brutal incident, Floyd passed away. What happened in the video created a strong public debate around the world regarding police brutality and the longstanding existence of systemic racism (Oriola & Knight, 2020). In the months that followed after Floyd’s death, a long period of Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests took place (Gay et al., 2020). Most protests took place in the United States, but many other countries organised demonstrations as well to create awareness on police brutality against people of colour and systemic racism.

A little longer than one year after Floyd’s death, the police officer – Derek Chauvin – was charged for second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter (Dewan, 2021). Around the world, a feeling of justice and relieve was found especially amongst communities of colour. However, the reality of systemic racism quickly took those feelings away as the world was exposed to new acts of violence against people of colour: Daunte Wright, Ma’Khia Bryant, and Andrew Brown Jr. (Bogel-Burroughs et al., 2021; Koettl & Kim, 2021; The New York Times, 2021).

Racism is nothing new, it has been a problem for centuries and limits the quality of life for many people. In contemporary society, there are individuals that argue that racism is no longer a problem anymore, that racism is something that has happened in the past, and that there is no such thing as seeing colour. This way of thinking is referred to as colour-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). However, the theory of systemic racism argues differently about the existence of racism in modern society. The theory states that racism is well-integrated in our society and that it is internalised on many levels: the individual level (e.g. attitudes and beliefs), the institutional level (e.g. government), and the cultural level (e.g. popular culture) (Bowser, 2017). The existence of systemic racism has led to individuals having racial (un)conscious negative or positive biases of others (Moule, 2009). Even though racism is not as overt as it used to be in the real world, another shift was found. The rise of the Internet has further resulted in different and more overt forms of racism, namely cyber or online racism (Bliuc et al., 2018). Most web-based platforms require individuals to create a profile including one’s name and a profile picture. This easily reveals a person’s personal characteristics such as age, gender or race. Levy and Barocas (2017) note that this information impacts users’

online behaviour. It allows users to discriminate against one another intentionally or unintentionally based on (un)conscious racial biases. They argue that on online marketplaces users might refuse transactions, make less attractive offers, or evaluate others less favourably based on one's profile. As online shopping and second-hand shopping are more popular than ever, a few questions arose related to online second-hand shopping platforms: Does a model's skin colour influence the buyer's purchasing-decision? And, when selling clothes online, does one get higher price bids for the clothes on sale when the clothes are worn by a white model?

Purchasing clothes online has become incredibly popular over the years. Besides the shopping platforms of commercial brands, new applications such as Vinted (21 million users) or Depop (18 million users) that allow individuals to sell their own clothes are growing in popularity (Depop, 2021; Vinted, 2021). Considering this, the existence of racial discrimination on such platforms is interesting to study. Therefore, this study aims to examine whether racial discrimination exists on these platforms. Thus, the research question this study focuses on is as follows: "To what extent does a model's race have an influence on consumer interaction with clothes on sale on online second-hand shopping platforms?" In this study's case, a model's race mainly refers to the skin colour of a model, focusing on black and white models. Consumer interaction includes multiple dimensions, including price offers on the clothes on sale, number of likes an item receives on an online second-hand shopping platform such as Vinted, number of views, and the time it takes till an item is sold.

Building on theories of systemic racism, unconscious bias, cyber racism, and racial discrimination on online marketplaces it is expected that racial biases limit the opportunities for sellers and buyers of colour on online second-hand shopping platforms. Several academics examined the existence of racial discrimination on online marketplaces such as Uber and Airbnb (Piracha, et al., 2019; Luca & Svirsky, 2020). These previous studies have shown that racial discrimination is a real issue on online marketplaces. Even though such studies are great contributions to the topic of racial discrimination on online marketplaces, they are different from this particular study as they are mainly service-oriented (transportation and housing). This study focuses on another industry and product-oriented online platforms whereon people buy and sell clothes. So far, no previous research was conducted yet on the role that race plays on online second-hand fashion platforms such as Vinted and Depop. However, the fashion industry has been guilty of a lack in diversity and being involved in racial discriminative practices on different levels in the industry (Baker, 2005; Fowler & Carlson, 2015; Lee, 2009; Millard & Grant, 2006; Reddy-Best et al., 2017). These racial discriminative practices and lack of diversity also point towards the expectation that black users on second-hand shopping

platforms will be treated differently than white users. This particular study will therefore add to existing literature regarding racial discrimination on online marketplaces and expand the research focus to the fashion industry. Studying this problem will create awareness on racial biases and actual racism that might exist on these platforms. Furthermore, this study hopefully contributes to a starting point in creating a safe and fair environment for buyers and sellers on online second-hand shopping platforms.

In order to find an answer to the research question, this study consists of an experimental research design. In total, two types of experiments have been used: an online field experiment and an online experimental survey. The online field experiment was conducted on the online second-hand fashion platform Vinted. This particular experiment tested whether there are differences in the consumer interaction on Vinted between the profile of a black model and the profile of a white model. The online experimental survey was created and distributed through Qualtrics. The survey randomly assigned participants to 1 of 3 conditions: images of clothes with a black model (condition 1), images of clothes with a white model (condition 2), and images of clothes with no model (control condition). During the online experimental survey the respondents were asked what amount of money they would offer for a particular item. All 3 conditions showed the same clothing items.

Finally, this study is structured as follows. It first starts with a thorough theoretical framework explaining and reviewing important concepts from previous studies related to the research question. The literature review further introduces the hypotheses used for this study. The following chapter involves the methodology, discussing the methods used, the sample and sampling strategy, ethics, procedures, measurements, and data analysis. The chapter that follows focuses on the results of the different analyses. Thereafter, the final chapter includes a discussion, conclusion, the limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature review

In this chapter, previous literature studies focusing on relevant topics for this particular study are discussed and reviewed. This chapter starts with a review on racism and systemic racism theory. After this, the notion of colour-blind racism is explained and is followed by a review on unconscious biases. Following, cyber racism, discrimination on online marketplaces, and the lack of diversity in the fashion industry are discussed. Building on previous studies, three hypotheses important to this research are introduced. Finally, a brief conclusion regarding the literature is provided including a summary and visualisation of the hypotheses.

2.1. *(Systemic) racism*

As defined by Bonilla-Silva (2015), racism is “the belief that some people are better than others because of their race.” (p. 1359) Racism can be found everywhere around the world and exists in many societies (Macionis & Plummer, 2012). To further explain the notion of racism, Blum (2002) notes that racism can be divided into two themes. These themes are inferiorisation and racial antipathy. Racial inferiorisation refers to the treatment of the racial other as less. The second theme, racial antipathy, means a strong dislike of individuals or communities from a different race (Blum, 2002). According to Blum (2002), racism often leads to the discrimination of the people that are seen as inferior. To clarify the concept of discrimination, Davis (2017) defines racial discrimination as the different treatment of individuals of a certain different racial group. Moreover, an important aspect to consider is that the notion of racism “can be marked by colour, ethnicity, language, culture and/or religion.” (Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 10) However, as Grosfoguel (2016) argues, one’s skin colour has been the dominant marker of racism over the past centuries. Racism is a result of racially dominant projects, such as apartheid, slavery, colonialism, and segregation (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Overall, the term racism has been defined slightly different among scholars, however there is one aspect that most definitions have in common: the aspect of power dynamics. Davis (2017) argues that racism asserts a power dynamic in which a dominant group, which have often been whites, controls the ability to give or hold back opportunities, benefits, or resources to others. Davis (2017) therefore states that racism “serves to perpetuate systems of inequality.” (p. 136)

According to Bowser (2017), racism occurs at three levels in society: the cultural, institutional, and individual level. At the institutional level, racism is internalised in important organisations or institutions of a society, such as the healthcare system, the government,

(corporate) businesses, religious entities, schools, and the media. At the cultural level, the values and norms of individuals in a society are spread and portrayed through a society's literature, entertainment, and popular culture. At the individual level, racism comprises one's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour based on biases, prejudices, and stereotypes. Additionally, Bowser (2017) argues that these levels are intertwined and that one does not occur without the other. This argumentation points into the direction that racism is deeply embedded in societies and its institutions or system, also known as systemic racism. The theory of systemic racism argues that racism is a deeply integrated societal problem. Systemic racism, also referred to as institutional racism, is the inescapable hierarchical system of racial oppression which is invented and maintained by white individuals and directed to people who have a different skin-colour (Feagin & Elias, 2013). Feagin and Elias (2013) argue that systemic racism is an ideological reality well-embedded in society and its institutions. The ideological nature of systemic racism has led to both racial conscious and unconscious biases. These biases mean that people quickly assess others in an either negative or positive way based on one's race (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). According to the Equality Challenge Unit (2013) these biases are "deeply ingrained into our thinking and emotions" (p. 1). The biases, prejudices, or stereotypical beliefs individuals hold about people from a different race often lead to (un)intentional discrimination (Moule, 2009). The definition of systemic racism given by Feagin and Elias (2013) specifically focuses on the context of racial oppression in the United States. However, though less of a focus in literature regarding this theory, systemic racism is a construct that appears in European societies as well (Orsini et al., 2021). Several recent studies have examined the existence of systemic racism in European countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, and Britain (Ducey & Feagin, 2021; Hayes et al., 2018; Malanda, 2021; Moffit et al., 2018; Naidoo, 2019; Orsini et al., 2021). As this particular study focuses on racism in the European context, these findings of systemic racism in Europe are of importance. The second-hand fashion platform Vinted is widely used in European countries and it is therefore valuable to research the extent in which systemic racism can be found on this platform.

In addition, what is important to note is that the definition of systemic racism by Feagin and Elias (2013) is rather simplistic as it focuses mainly on "whites versus people of colour". As discussed earlier, racism is not only marked by one's skin colour, but by a person's culture, religious beliefs, language, and ethnicity as well (Grosfoguel, 2016). Therefore, racism should not only be seen in the narrow terms that it only exists between white individuals and people of colour. Racism can also occur among white groups, for

example, Dutch individuals discriminating Polish immigrants in the Netherlands (Polek et al., 2009). Additionally, racism is not only reproduced by whites but can also be reproduced by non-whites. Therefore, systemic racism can be reformulated as an inescapable hierarchical system of racial oppression invented and maintained by a dominant group and directed to a minority group. These racial groups can consist of individuals with a particular skin colour, culture, country of origin, religious beliefs, language, or ethnicity. For the purpose of this study, however, the focus is on racism maintained by whites and directed towards people of colour.

Over the years, systemic racism and racial discrimination practices have changed to some extent. Bonilla-Silva (2015) argues that racism and racial inequalities are still produced in systematic ways. However, in modern society, discriminating someone based on one's race is not a practice as overt anymore as it used to be. Bonilla-Silva (2015) argues that we moved from the obvious racist practices, such as the Jim Crow legislature and state enforced racial segregation, to a more nuanced or even invisible kind of racism. Bonilla-Silva (2015) calls this kind of racism the new racism. Bonilla-Silva and Ashe (2014) argue that there are five – slightly intertwining – elements that constitute this new racial structure. First of all, as indicated before, racial discourses and practices are becoming more covert. Secondly, an avoidance of racial vocabulary exists and white individuals claim that they often experience reverse racism, which is racism towards whites. Thirdly, when it comes to political matters, there is an avoidance of racial references when such matters are discussed. Fourthly, invisible mechanisms reproduce racial inequality, such as withholding housing or job opportunities for people of colour. Finally, the rearticulation of racial practices from the period of the Jim Crow legislature into more 'coded', implicit forms of racism make it harder for individuals to call out racist practices. However, these covert practices still uphold a system of racism and discrimination and thus limits the quality of life for people of colour. The following section discusses another form of racism which is predominant in our contemporary society.

2.2. Colour-blind racism

“All Lives Matter”, “My best friend is black and he is amazing.”, “Today everyone can make it as long as you work hard enough.” or “We are beyond racism.” At the first glance, these phrases seem quite harmless and even positive or promising. However, each of these phrases is reflective of what is called colour-blind racism. In modern society, the most influential discourses regarding race and racial matters operate through a certain denial of racism and the belief that racism is something that has happened in the past and no longer

happens today, while research actually shows otherwise (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). This denial of racism and the problems it causes is referred to as colour-blind racism. Colour-blind racism holds the ideology that racism simply is not a problem in society anymore (Ostertag & Armaline, 2011). In this age, some individuals admit that negative racial stereotypes, racism, and discrimination are still apparent. However, others actually believe that racial stereotypes, racism, and discrimination are not present in social discourses anymore at all (Haskell, 2009). This belief occurs because, as mentioned earlier, racism is not always as overt anymore as in previous decades (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Bonilla-Silva and Ashe (2014) note that racial practices in the contemporary age are embedded in the operations and cultures of organisations and institutions, avoid racial vocabulary, and are invisible to most white individuals. The covert nature of the new racism mainly serves to uphold systemic racism with new, more implicit racial terminologies being used to cover up for the racist practices. Individuals upholding this new racism do not always contribute to any explicit claims stating that people of colour are inferior, but instead they argue that racial inequalities are a result of people of colour's own deficiencies (Beaman & Petts, 2020). These deficiencies would include a lack of education, laziness, bad parenting, or a wrong work ethic. This way, colour-blind racism actually secures the notion of white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2017), which can be defined as a system in which white individuals occupy complex networks of resources and power, and hold (un)conscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement (Hylton & Lawrence, 2014). Thus, the new racism reproduces racism in a more covert manner (Bonilla-Silva, 2017).

In addition, Bonilla-Silva (2017) states that there are four central frameworks regarding colour-blind racism. These frames are as follows: “abstract liberalism, naturalisation, cultural racism, and minimisation of racism.” (Bonilla-Silva, 2017, p. 54) Abstract liberalism refers to the explanation of racial matters in rather abstract and decontextualized ways (Bonilla-Silva, 2020). This framework is built on the ideas of political liberalism (e.g. equal opportunities) and economic liberalism (e.g. individualism). The naturalisation frame allows white individuals to explain racial matters by saying that they are “natural” or “biological” occurrences. For instance, one might claim that the notion of segregation is a natural process as individuals tend to move towards people of a similar race and similar cultural values. The frame of cultural racism argues that individuals attribute racial differences to cultural practices or avoid discussions around racial difference by referring to cultural differences that are widely seen as more acceptable. The minimisation frame suggests that racism or racial discrimination is no longer of influence on the quality of

life of people or a factor affecting minorities' opportunities in today's society (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). Bonilla-Silva (2017) suggests that these four frameworks do not occur independently, but are used in combination. With these frameworks, whites try to explain racial matters, such as inequalities, racial minorities, or the lower quality of life for many people of colour.

Just as with the theory of systemic racism many influential studies on colour-blind racism have focused on the US context. However, there are several studies that have found the existence of colour-blind racism in European countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and France (Beaman & Petts, 2020; Moffit et al., 2018; Naidoo, 2019; Ware, 2014; Weiner, 2014) The study of Weiner (2014) identifies the denial of Dutch individuals of being racist which can be linked to colour-blind racism. Other studies have also discussed the existence of the colour-blind ideology in France and how it negatively affects racial and ethnic minorities in this country (Beaman & Petts, 2020; Naidoo, 2019; Ware, 2014). These findings are of importance for the European focus of this study.

Colour-blind racism is not always easy to detect because of its covertness. Moreover, individuals who draw on a discourse of colour-blindness may not always recognize that they reproduce racism; this particularly applies to white people who do not usually have any experience with racial discrimination themselves (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). However, as noted earlier, colour-blind racism contributes to the perpetuation of racism. Even though individuals might not think of themselves as being racist or participate in racist practices, they are still able to reproduce racism. Considering this, H1 states that:

H1: Those who believe that racism is not a problem anymore will bid less money for clothes worn by a black model compared to other conditions

2.3. Unconscious bias

"In the blink of an eye, unconscious bias was visible to me, an African American. A man saw my face as I walked into the store and unconsciously checked his wallet. On the street, a woman catches my eye a half block away and moves her purse from the handle of her baby's stroller to her side as she arranges the baby's blanket. In the airport, a man signals to his wife to move her purse so it is not over the back of her chair, which is adjacent to the one I am moving toward." – Moule (2009, p. 321)

Moule (2009) starts his article by describing a few observed actions taken by strangers in regular settings. These small observations made by the author raises several important questions. Why do these individuals act in such ways? Were the actions of these individuals just some overall safety precautions? Or did the colour of Moule's skin (black) have something to do with the observed actions of the individuals? Moule (2009) answers these

questions and argues that unconscious biases result in this kind of behaviour. The unconscious biases that the individuals hold, eventually lead to a concept that Moule (2009) calls “unintentional racism”. Moule (2009) defines this term as “racism that is usually invisible even and especially to those who perpetrate it.” (p. 321) A report of the Equality Challenge Unit (2013) states that unconscious biases are the unconscious associations or prejudices that individuals have regarding others which in turn influence our attitudes as well as our behaviour. The Equality Challenge Unit (2013) notes that every individual tends to have some degree of unconscious bias. These biases result in automatic responses to other people in a positive or negative manner. Furthermore, the Equality Challenge Unit (2013) argues that these unconscious biases are “deeply ingrained into our thinking and emotions.” (p. 1) Additionally, Moule (2009) explains that our own unconscious biases are rooted in the existence of stereotypes and prejudices. As we live in a society where systemic racism has existed for many years and is deeply embedded in our daily lives, it is no surprise that racial stereotypes, prejudices, and thus unconscious biases exist among people. Moule (2009) states that: “Ethnic and racial stereotypes are learnt as part of normal socialization and are consistent among many populations and across time.” (p. 322) To further support this statement, Noon (2017) argues that certain values and beliefs regarding race are so deeply ingrained in our attitudes and behaviour, “because they are learned in childhood, reinforced through peer groups and perpetuated through stereotypes in the media.” (p. 201)

A well-known experiment, the Clarke Doll experiment, has shown how stereotypes and certain values already exist during childhood. The 1954 doll study by Clark and Clark revealed the preference of children for white dolls over black dolls (Powell-Hopson & Hopson, 1988). Overall, the black dolls were described as “bad”, “mean”, and “ugly” by the children who participated in the study. On the contrary, the white dolls were classified as “good”, “nice”, and “pretty” by the young participants. The findings of this experiment illustrate how negative biases and prejudices towards black people already exist among very young children regardless of the children’s racial background.

However, it is of importance to note that the doll experiment can be considered rather outdated. Therefore, recent scholars have replicated the experiment to see whether these biases on the level of socialisation of children still exists. For example, the study of Byrd et al. (2017) replicated the doll experiment and found that children these days are still very much aware of skin colour and race. Their experiment found that there is an increase in the self-perception of black children and their study found that the black dolls were also seen as “nice” and “good to play” with by both white and black children. Nonetheless, Byrd et al.

(2017) did find that most of the children who participated in this study classified the black dolls as “mean”, which indicates an (un)conscious bias. Even though the study reflected some promising results, Byrd et al. (2017) argue that an active anti-racist society does not exist yet as negative biases persist amongst children. Another recent US study, by Sturdivant (2021), found different and less promising results. Sturdivant (2021) wanted to conduct the doll experiment in a natural setting: observing the children without asking them any direct questions. Sturdivant (2021) found that the black dolls were chosen less frequently compared to the white dolls and that they were played with differently. More specifically, the children observed more often stepped on the black dolls, while the white dolls were treated with more care. Sturdivant (2021) concludes that anti-black biases are still dominant amongst children in the US.

To place the doll experiment in a European context, in 2016, the experiment was recreated in the Netherlands. The experiment examined 159 Dutch children from different primary schools in Rotterdam and the Hague. The children were aged between 5 and 11 years old. In the experiment, it was found that the Dutch children – children of colour as well as white children – classified the coloured-dolls as “ugly”, “dumb”, and “mean” whereas the observed children more often classified the white dolls as “pretty”, “nice”, and “smart” (Veerman, 2016). This experiment also indicates the existence of racial biases in a Dutch context starting at a young age. As noted by Moule (2009), these doll experiments are of value because children’s views tend to reflect the stereotypes and prejudices persistent in society. In addition, Moule (2009) emphasises the importance of individuals’ awareness that they may have unconscious biases. When a proper awareness about these biases exist, individuals could more carefully consider their own responses and actions. The acknowledgements of unconscious biases and prejudices might help individuals to consciously work for harmony in society as stated by Moule (2009).

However, not all scholars agree with this way of thinking (Blanton & Jaccard, 2008; Tate & Page, 2019). Although there is some scholarly consensus on the existence of unconscious biases, some scholars (Blanton and Jaccard, 2008; Tate and Page, 2019) are still critical about the notion of unconscious bias. Blanton and Jaccard (2008), for example, raise the question to what extent biases are actually unconscious. Some biases may be more conscious than we could expect from individuals. Blanton and Jaccard (2008) therefore suggest that we should exercise caution before assuming or suggesting that a person holds unconscious racial biases. Tate and Page (2019) are more critical regarding the concept of unconscious bias. They critically look at the word “un” in the prefix “unconscious”. The word

“un” is where the denial of racism regarding one’s colour is maintained. The scholars argue that this word denies the possibility of someone having a conscious racial bias, and this way the term erases the possibility of racism. Tate and Page (2019) even refer to the notion of unconscious bias as “the acceptable face of racism” (p. 142). Furthermore, Tate and Page (2019) note that: “To overcome bias, an awareness of normalisation is insufficient; instead, what is needed is a more active process.” (p. 145). They describe that knowing about racial biases does not automatically result in a change of behaviour of people. However, while this statement of Tate and Page (2019) holds an important truth, I believe the importance of awareness regarding unconscious biases should be a starting point as well. An active practice against racial bias cannot be achieved with a lack of awareness.

2.4. Cyber racism

“Many desire diversity, and yet too often reproduce racism. Some are careful in their speech, but bold and overtly racist online or in the back stage.” – Burke (2017, p. 858)

Due to the rise of the Internet and web-based platforms, a new type of racism has emerged: cyber racism, or also known as online racism (Bliuc et al., 2018). Earlier studies that focused on the Internet suggested that in online or web-based environments race and the physical markers of marginalisation would become obsolete (Lévy, 2001; Poster, 2001). This way of thinking extends from the idea that the anonymity that the Web offers makes one’s identity a fluid entity. According to this idea, the Internet allows users to avoid physical markers or sources of marginalisation, such as a person’s race (Kettrey & Laster, 2014). However, as stated by Kettrey and Laster (2014), the online and offline worlds are intertwined. Therefore, they argue, race and other physical markers of marginalisation do play a significant role in online environments. Some studies argue that the Internet, or the Web, grants white users greater power than it grants users of colour (Brock, 2005; Hargittai, 2010). Moreover, Ortiz (2020) claims that “covert racism never became hegemonic online.” (p. 4) By this, the author refers to the problem that racist or discriminative practices are often more overt and clear in online environments. Kettrey and Laster (2014) believe the overt nature of online racism to be a surprising activity, because overt racism is considered to be a taboo offline. They further argue that when overt racism is expressed, it often happens in private settings with “white audiences”. However, even though it might be surprising, the authors do note that the existence of overt racism in online settings can be explained. As the Internet offers individuals a sense of privacy or anonymity – whether this is actual or just perceived by individuals – it allows users to express themselves in ways that might not be socially

acceptable in the offline world (Kettrey & Lesser, 2014). The social barriers are slightly more blurred in online settings, following from a lack of direct physical contact with another person or group. Therefore, some individuals are more likely to say and express what they really think about something in an online environment rather than in an offline environment. Luca and Svirsky (2020) agree with this explanation and note that racism and discrimination occur more easily online because people feel less accountable and are less inhibited in online environments. An earlier study of Suler (2004) argues that anonymity is not the only factor contributing to Internet-users' disinhibition, which leads to racist practices or acting out on the Internet. Suler (2004) refers to the loosening up, the feeling of being less restrained, and the more open expressions of Internet users as the disinhibition effect. To explain this behaviour, Suler (2004) argues that there are six factors that create this online disinhibition effect: dissociative anonymity, invisibility (you cannot always actually see each other online), asynchronicity (most communication is asynchronous online), solipsistic projection (there is an absence of face-to-face cues and online users usually communicate through text), dissociative imagination (the creation of "imaginary" characters online from which you can easily disassociate offline), and the minimisation of authority (there is an absence of authoritative features online). Besides these factors, Suler (2004) argues that individual characteristics of a person also play a role in the online disinhibition effect.

Considering the factors discussed, it is no surprise that some individuals more easily participate in overt racist practices online rather than offline. The six factors that Suler (2004) discussed are also representative for online second-hand fashion platforms. On these, users can be anonymous, they do not physically see each other, communication is asynchronous, there is an absence of face-to-face cues, you can easily dissociate from your account, and there is an absence of authority on these platforms. Therefore, it can be expected that overt racism occurs on online second-hand shopping platforms such as Vinted as well. As online second-hand shopping platforms are considered to be online marketplaces, the following section dives deeper into cyber racism and the effects it has on online marketplaces.

2.5. Racial discrimination on online marketplaces

Usually, web-based platforms require individuals to create their own online personal profile or account. Online marketplaces as well as social media platforms normally ask users to set up their own account. Airbnb, Uber, eBay, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook are all examples of online platforms that require a personal account. Moreover, online second-hand shopping platforms such as Vinted and Depop require people to create an account as well.

These online profiles often include one's name and a picture of the owner of the profile. Thus, the accounts easily reveal an individual's personal characteristics such as age, gender, and even a person's race. Online marketplaces do not only contain information regarding products or services that are sold, but also information about the people who sell the products or services (Levy & Barocas, 2017). On the one hand, such personal information can facilitate trust between sellers and potential buyers. On the other hand, the availability of such personal information might also facilitate discrimination based on a user's age, gender, or race. The study of Levy and Barocas (2017) found that when users of an online marketplace platform are exposed to such personal information of others, this actually impacts their online behaviour. The existence of the online personal profiles thus allows users to discriminate against one another, intentionally or unintentionally based on (un)conscious (racial) biases. Moreover, Levy and Barocas (2017) note that on online marketplaces users are able to refuse transactions, make less attractive offers, or evaluate others less favourably based on the profile information of someone else available. Considering this and the theory of systemic racism, the question arises whether, depending on an online second-hand fashion platform user's race, a black user will get less favourable interaction than a white user? With this question in mind H2 states the following:

H2: Clothes sold on Vinted by a black model will receive less interaction from Vinted users than when sold by a white model

Several studies have found evidence of racial discrimination on online marketplaces such as Airbnb, Uber, and Lyft (Edelman et al., 2017; Ge et al., 2020; McLaughlin, 2018). To illustrate, the field experiment of Edelman et al. (2017) was able to detect that racial discrimination exists on Airbnb. They found that guests who created an Airbnb account with an African American name were 16% less likely to be accepted by the host compared to identical guests with a white-sounding name. Additionally, in the qualitative study of McLaughlin (2018), it was found that people of colour in the United States, such as African Americans, often experience discrimination on Airbnb when revealing a photo of themselves and using their real name. When changing these details, the participants of the study explained that they would be able to book a place much faster and more easily. These studies show that it is more difficult for people of colour to book a stay on Airbnb than it is for white individuals. However, it should be noted that it is not only harder for people of colour to book a stay at Airbnb, but it is also more difficult to earn money from the platform for them. Edelman and Luca (2014), for example, found that white Airbnb hosts in New York City are

able to approximately charge 12% more than black Airbnb hosts for an equivalent rental. Their research shows the prevalence of discrimination in online marketplaces.

To further elaborate on the topic of racial discrimination on online marketplaces, not only accommodation opportunities or the renting of housing is limited for people of colour, but transportation opportunities as well. For example, the study of Ge et al. (2020) found that users of Uber with an African American name receive ride cancellations more often than people with a white-sounding name. This way, the online profiles of Uber users limit or withhold these individuals from proper transportation services.

Besides housing and transportation, job opportunities through online marketplaces are also affected by one's race. The study of Hannák et al. (2017) examined the existence of racial and gender biases on the online freelance marketplaces TaskRabbit and Fiverr. These platforms also require users to have a profile with their full name and a profile picture and this allows future employers to make inferences about one's gender and race. Their results indicated that race as well as gender significantly correlates to worker evaluations, which in turn could harm employment opportunities afforded to freelancers of colour.

The study of Nunley et al. (2011) researched the existence of racial biases on the online marketplace eBay. The scholars conducted a field experiment in which they sold similar products on different accounts using racially identifiable profile names. They found an existence of racial biases in a natural online product market setting. For the products aimed at whites (e.g. white Barbie dolls) they found discrimination against people of colour. However, an interesting finding is that for the products aimed at blacks (e.g. black Barbie dolls), they also found discrimination against white individuals. This study shows that racial discrimination clearly exists on online marketplaces, but exists in both ways: white individuals discriminating people of colour, and people of colour discriminating white individuals.

Lastly, another study that does not focus on online market outcomes, but rather market outcomes in general created a field experiment of selling iPods (Doleac & Stein, 2010). Some pictures included a hand of a person of colour and other images included a hand of a white person. The study found that black sellers of the iPods received fewer and lower price offers than the white sellers (Doleac & Stein, 2010). Considering the study of Doleac and Stein (2010) and the studies on discrimination on online marketplaces, it can be expected that on online second-hand clothing platforms black users will receive lower price bids than white users. Therefore, H3 states that:

H3: A black model will receive lower price bids on clothes compared to a white model

To conclude, all of these previous studies clearly indicate that racial discrimination exists on online marketplaces on the level of housing, transportation, work, and the selling of products. However, these studies specifically focus on services such as accommodation, transportation, jobs, and luxury tech products. No research studies have been conducted yet on the role that race plays in online marketplaces of online second-hand clothing platforms. Though, earlier studies (Baker, 2005; Fowler & Carlson, 2015; Lee, 2009; Millard & Grant, 2006; Reddy-Best et al., 2017) have indicated the importance of the fashion industry on racial biases, thus the following section dives deeper into the lack of diversity in the fashion industry.

2.6. Lack of diversity in the fashion industry

The fashion industry is one of the most successful, influential, and lucrative industries in the world. However, even though the industry is successful, it receives critique on many different levels: from unethical labour practices to sustainability issues, and from unrealistic beauty standards to racial discrimination. In this study, the focus is primarily on the critique of racial discrimination found in this industry. For decades now, the fashion industry has been immensely criticised for its racial discriminative practices (Newman, 2017; Reddy-Best et al., 2017). Cultural appropriation, racist advertisements, the notion of tokenism and colourism, stereotypes, and the clear lack of racial diversity in fashion campaigns, advertisements, and runway shows. These are all practices that the fashion industry has been argued to be guilty of.

The influential and pervasive nature of the fashion industry is important to consider as it affects the values and norms of what individuals perceive to be desirable, attractive, or beautiful when it comes to the beliefs of what a person should look like (Yan & Bissell, 2014). All over the world, individuals are constantly exposed to media texts that transmit and reinforce norms, values, and ideals of beauty via images of models in a diverse set of media formats such as magazines and commercials (Yan & Bissell, 2014). For years, the European, or white, standards of beauty – a fair skin, light eyes, and straight hair – have dominated the imaging of fashion brands (Baker, 2005; Bryant, 2019; Newman, 2017; Wissinger, 2012). A result of these beauty standards is that the fashion industry is known for its long history of being predominantly white. Fowler and Carlson (2015) argue that whiteness as a concept of beauty is a global trend in the fashion industry. Catwalk shows, billboards, advertisements, commercials, design textbooks, and fashion illustration textbooks consist of mainly white

models, and thus models who align with the European beauty standards (Baker, 2005). Because of this predomination of whiteness, people of colour have rarely been represented in the fashion industry for many years (Reddy-Best et al., 2017). This has led to a clear lack of diversity in the fashion industry on different levels of the fashion system.

An important level of the fashion system where a lack of racial diversity is found is in fashion magazines and advertisements. In the past few years, academics have extensively examined the representations of race in popular fashion magazines and advertisements (Baker, 2005; Fowler & Carlson, 2015; Jung & Lee, 2009; Millard & Grant, 2006). These studies consistently found evidence of a lack of racial diversity in fashion magazines and advertisements. The study of Millard and Grant (2006) analysed photographs that were selected from the well-known fashion magazines *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, and *Vogue*. The researchers selected different issues of the magazines between the years 1999 and 2000. It was found that from 1999 to 2000 there was an increase in the representation of black models from 2% to 9%. However, even though their examination of the photographs showed an increase in the amount of black models used for these pictures, most images still predominantly featured white models. Furthermore, the study of Baker (2005) looked into the fashion magazines *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue* as well. This study focused on the magazines' prints of 2002. The results of Baker's study indicated that a total of 88% of the models in these magazines were white and only 6% of the models were black. The remaining 6% was labelled as "other". Another previous study focused specifically on the models in advertisements in the fashion magazines *Elle*, *Glamour*, and *Vogue* (Jung & Lee, 2009). The authors of this study found a similar pattern: most models were white and black models were incredibly underrepresented. Jung and Lee (2009) found that only 4.5% of the advertisements included black models. Additionally, the representation of Asian models was even lower (1.2%). Finally, a more recent study of Fowler and Carlson (2015) analysed advertisements in the fashion magazines *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue*, and *Marie Claire* in the US. This study found that 83.4% of the models represented in the advertisements were white, 6.5% of the models were black, and only 1.9% of models were Asian. Although an increasing percentage over time can be found when comparing these different studies, the representation of black models is still disproportionately low compared to the representation of white models.

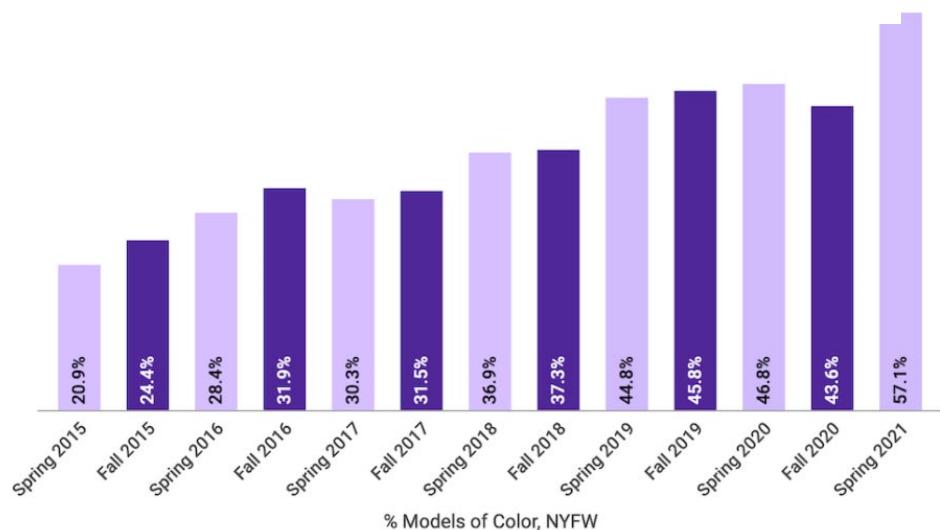
Black models have been represented poorly in mainstream fashion advertisements and magazines compared to white models. However, when represented, images tend to be stereotypical and it can be argued that these stereotypical images are negative representations.

Black women have often been portrayed as aggressive or animal-like (Baker, 2005).

According to Baker (2005), the most common images of black women in mainstream media can be classified as follows: the matriarch, the Sapphire, and the Jezebel. The Jezebel image of black women presents the sexuality of them as rather aggressive. While white women were often portrayed as more self-controlled and self-respected in their sexuality. The matriarch image does the opposite and portrays black women as mothers. Mothers who are either the head of the household or single mothers. The Sapphire image portrays black women as independent and headstrong. This image has been often portrayed in a comedic manner and not taken very seriously (Baker, 2005).

Furthermore, to continue on the lack of diversity in the fashion industry, runway shows are also a crucial level of the fashion industry's system. On the runway, designers clearly show who should wear specific pieces of clothing and how. Over the years, runway shows of different popular fashion weeks have shown to lack racial diversity when it comes to models (Reddy-Best et al., 2017; Wissinger, 2012). As indicated in the study of Wissinger (2012), a full one-third of the fashion shows of the New York Fashion Week in 2007 used no models of colour at all. In the year after, there was an increase of 6%, but the runway was still predominantly white. The New York Fashion Week is the most influential fashion week around the world. Despite these findings, it should be noted that in the past few years, a promising change can be found in the New York Fashion Week. In a diversity report of the New York Fashion Week, it was found that from 2015 to 2021 there was a notable increase in the use of models of colour in the different runway shows (Schimminger, 2020). This increase is portrayed in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Models of colour, New York Fashion Week 2015 - 2021 (Schimminger, 2020)



Finally, another important level in the fashion industry's system is that of textbooks and fashion illustration textbooks. Professors, students, and designers use these kind of textbooks to learn more about the industry and its practices. According to Reddy-Best et al. (2017), such textbooks uphold ideals and ideologies of beauty "through producing and disseminating fashions, imagery, discourse, objects, and text surrounding and relating to the body, and how individuals and groups should fashion the body." (p. 1) These books can be considered to have great influence on the perceptions and practices of individuals who are studying to work in the fashion industry. Because of this, these textbooks should include racially diverse representations as this will promote equality in all parts of the fashion industry system. The study of Reddy-Best et al. (2018) addresses the problem that fashion illustrations in design textbooks are found to lack proper diversity. Often, fashion illustrations tend to be of white models. This is problematic as this shows how fashion designs are specifically aimed at white individuals. Such illustrations take into account the aesthetics of white individuals, leaving out the aesthetics of people of colour in the process. This way, people of colour are already excluded as a target audience for particular clothes. Additionally, Reddy-Best et al. (2017) examined a total amount of 3124 images of women in fashion merchandising, apparel, and design textbooks that were published between 2000 and 2015. In this research study the results also showed the major lack of racial diversity in the textbooks. Black and Asian models were hugely underrepresented in the books.

Moreover, the study of Reddy-Best et al. (2018) argues that when individuals are repeatedly exposed to certain images in the media, this could have an impact on their self-perception and perception of others. Repetitive images consisting of particular ideologies and standards, such as the European beauty standards, can cause receivers of these images to believe this representation to accurately reflect reality. As claimed by Reddy-Best et al. (2018), the major absence of people of colour on different levels in the fashion industry's system creates an image that people of colour are of less value. Such images are troubling as they uphold ideologies in society of systemic racism. By making the fashion industry more racially and culturally diverse, a more accepting environment towards people of colour can be created.

From these previous studies it can be concluded that racial diversity in the fashion industry is rather low. However, over the years, the fashion industry has seen a slow, but considerable change when it comes to racial diversity. As stated earlier, the New York Fashion Week is seeing an increase in the representation of models of colour in fashion shows. Moreover, changes in advertising of mainstream fashion brands such as H&M present

evident changes in their representation of diverse races (Asare, 2020). Even though these are important changes, the fashion industry is still not at the point wherein it fully represents different cultures and races. The industry still needs considerable change to make the world of fashion a safe and accepting environment for all cultures and races.

Lastly, as stated before, the fashion industry is an influential industry. It impacts the norms and values of what consumers of fashion perceive as desirable and attractive. Because of this, it can be expected that on a second-hand fashion platform such as Vinted and Depop these norms and values exist. Especially with the lack of diversity and representation of models of colour, Vinted users are expected to interact differently with users of colour on the platform.

2.7. Conclusion

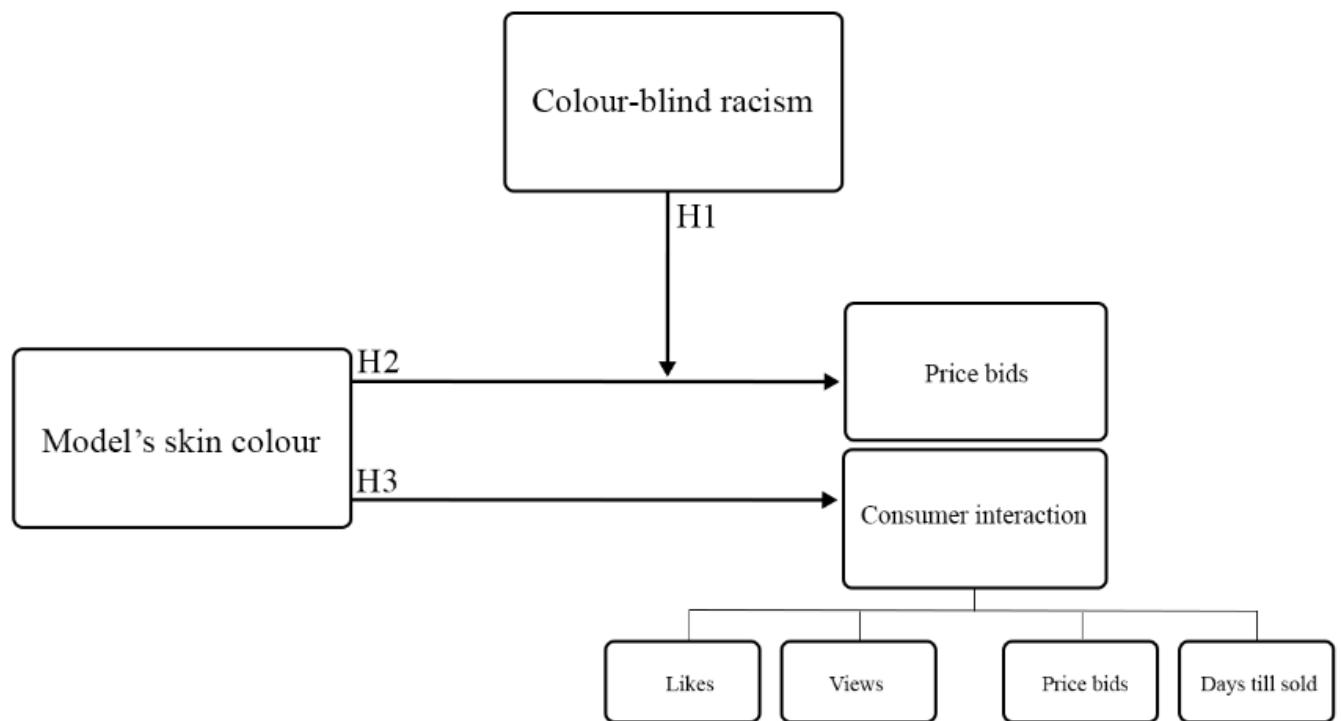
In conclusion, considering the theories discussed, racial discrimination in the US and Europe is still a major problem. However, in contemporary society, racism is often practiced in more covert ways than it used to be. In the US as well as in Europe a colour-blind ideology can be found, wherein some people assume that racism is not an existing problem anymore even though research indicates differently (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). The existence of (systemic) racism can be found at different levels in society (individual, cultural, and institutional), and in different industries. An industry of importance for this study is the fashion industry. This industry has been criticised for its lack of diversity and racial discriminative practices for many years, and it is therefore of value to research this industry. With the rise of second-hand shopping platforms, where people can buy and sell their clothes online, it is interesting to see to what extent racial discrimination exists on such platforms. As stated by Ortiz (2020), on the Internet or web-based platforms racism is more overt. This results in an online environment where people more easily, and sometimes more openly, discriminate others based on their age, gender, or race. Therefore, it is expected that black users receive less interaction or lower price bids compared to white users of such online second-hand shopping platforms.

Based on the discussed previous studies, three hypotheses were created that will be looked into for this study. An overview of the hypotheses can be found below in table 1. Additionally, in figure 2 you find a visual representation of these hypotheses.

Table 1: Overview hypotheses

H1	Those who believe that racism is not a problem anymore will bid less money for clothes worn by a black model compared to other conditions
H2	Clothes sold on Vinted by a black model will receive less interaction from Vinted users than when sold by a white model
H3	A black model will receive lower price bids on clothes compared to a white model

Figure 2: Visual figure of the hypotheses



3. Methodology

In this chapter the methodology of this study is discussed. To start with, the methods used for this study are explained and justified. Followed by this, a summary is given of the sample characteristics and sampling strategy. After this, the procedures and measures of the two experiments are discussed. Then, several important ethical concerns are considered, followed by a discussion of the types of statistical methods used to analyse the collected data. Finally, the validity and reliability of this study are discussed. This chapter is structured in a way that it discusses both experiments separately.

3.1. Methods

This study aims to find an answer to the research question: “To what extent does a model’s race have an influence on consumer interaction with clothes on sale on online second-hand shopping platforms?” To clarify, this study explores whether a model’s skin colour, and thus race, has an influence on the consumer interaction (see measure “consumer interaction” on page 32) with clothes sold on online second-hand shopping platforms. In order to examine the topic of interest, a quantitative research approach is the most suitable to use. Quantitative research is known for its ability to test or confirm a certain theory or hypothesis (Babbie, 2014). As the literature (Levy & Barocas, 2017) suggests that there is a possibility that one’s race has an influence on how someone is treated online, this study tests whether this holds true on second-hand online clothing shopping platforms. To test the hypotheses, this study has an experimental research design. Experiments allow for the manipulation of an independent variable (IV) and measure their effects on a dependent variable (DV) (Neuman, 2014). Furthermore, an experiment allows the researcher to find causality between variables (Babbie, 2014). As this study aims to assess whether a model’s skin colour has a causal effect on the consumer interaction with clothes sold on online second-hand fashion platforms, an experimental research design seems fit. With an experiment the researcher controls the IV, which in this case is the model’s skin colour. This study conducted two types of experiments: an online field experiment and an online experimental survey.

3.1.1. Online field experiment

The online field experiment was used to directly examine the differences in consumer interaction with clothes being sold online based on a model’s skin colour (black or white). The online field experiment was conducted on the second-hand clothing shopping application Vinted. Through Vinted, users can sell their clothes or search for and buy clothes (Vinted, 2021). Vinted asks users to create a profile including their name, country of residence, and a

profile picture. This allows users to learn about other users' personal characteristics. This, as discussed by Levy and Barcas (2017), might result in prejudices and different treatment of users. Therefore, Vinted was chosen as a platform to perform the online field experiment on.

3.1.2. Online experimental survey

An online experimental survey was created to further test the hypotheses. The online experimental survey was not influenced by external factors such as the algorithms on Vinted, and was therefore higher in internal validity. The algorithms of Vinted could affect the prices offered for clothing since the ones that immediately gain many likes will be showcased more often to users than ones that get fewer likes. In the online experimental survey a similar amount of respondents were assigned to one of three conditions (black model, white model, or no model). In the end, the online experimental survey included a manipulation check to see if respondents were aware of the model's skin colour. The survey was high in internal validity, while the online field experiment was higher in external validity as it took place on an actual online second-hand shopping platform. The two types of experiments and the existence of internal as well as external validity complemented each other and makes this study high in validity.

3.2. Sampling strategy and sample

The units of analysis for the online field experiment were the products sold on Vinted and the price bids offered for those clothes. To collect the data, different items were uploaded on Vinted. The researcher did not have any control on who saw the items and who interacted with the items. The experiment thus imitated the way that shopping occurs online. Therefore, the sampling strategy can be considered as accidental sampling.

For the online experimental survey, the units of analysis were individuals. These individuals are women living in Europe or who identify as European. As this study focuses on racism in Europe, this specific population was chosen. In order to reach the needed number of respondents, a combination of purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling was applied as a sampling strategy. For purposive sampling, respondents are selected based on certain criteria (Babbie, 2014). For this particular study, the criteria was as follows: (1) respondents should be female, (2) respondents should live in Europe or identify as a European citizen. In addition, convenience sampling was used as a strategy. Convenience sampling is the collecting of respondents, or data, which is most convenient for the researcher (Babbie, 2014). The researcher spread the online survey on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. On Facebook the survey was shared in different Facebook groups

related to European (second-hand) fashion fans, Vinted groups, and sustainability groups. A limitation of convenience sampling that should be considered is the possible bias in data gathering (Babbie, 2014). Lastly, snowball sampling was used to distribute the online experimental survey. This sampling strategy lets respondents recruit future respondents (Babbie, 2014). Individuals were asked to share the survey with others whom they believed to fit the sample as well. An important limitation of this strategy is that the researcher has no control over the distribution of the survey, who receives the survey, and who participates in the survey.

3.2.1. Sample online field experiment

In total, there were 5 items that created the most data during the online field experiment. Therefore, these items were the focus for analysis. These items are as follows: the Stieglitz trench coat, the yellow Nike shirt, the white Nike shirt, the multicolour Stieglitz turtleneck, and the orange Stieglitz shirt. In total, two data sets were created: one focusing on the items in particular and the second one focusing on the prices offered for the items. In table 2 below the total interactions received on the black model's profile and the white model's profile are showcased.

Table 2: Total interactions of black and white model

	Black model	White model
<i>Views</i>	1033	1492
<i>Favourites</i>	84	99
<i>Number of price bids</i>	16	19

3.2.2. Sample online experimental survey

After data cleaning, the online experimental survey recorded a total amount of 287 responses ($N = 287$). In this sample, the percentage of female respondents was 100%. The average age of the participants in this sample was 28.74 ($SD = 10.20$). The youngest person in the sample was 18 years old and the oldest 67 years old. In this sample, a total of 13 different countries where respondents currently lived were recorded. The most prominent appearing countries were the Netherlands (65.5%), Belgium (17.1%), and the United Kingdom (11.5%). In this sample, most respondents identified as white (83.6%), mixed (9.1%), or Asian (3.1%). Furthermore, 101 (35.2%) respondents were randomly assigned to the images of the black

model, 91 (31.7%) respondents were assigned to the images of the white model, and 95 (33.1%) respondents were assigned to the control condition (no model).

3.3. Procedure

3.3.1. Procedure online field experiment

In preparation of the online field experiment identical clothes were collected with the help from the following fashion brands: Adidas, Calvin Klein, Nike, Stieglitz, TOMS, and Tommy Hilfiger. When all of the items were collected, a photoshoot with a black model and a white model was scheduled. During the photoshoot the models took pictures in front of a mirror wearing the identical clothes. For every item, five different photos were taken (see Appendix A). The models took the photos in the exact same way to ensure comparability, but in different rooms to make sure that Vinted users could not notice a direct relationship between the models to prevent suspicion. When suspicion arises about the items or profiles it could happen that Vinted users interact differently with the clothes which could impact the data and results.

After taking the pictures for the online field experiment, two different Vinted accounts were created. One account for the black model and one account for the white model. After the creation of the accounts, item descriptions were written that were used for uploading the clothes on Vinted. After all of the preparation, 15 identical items were uploaded to both the profiles at the same time. Unfortunately, some difficulties occurred related to the algorithms of Vinted. Due to the algorithms of Vinted, the account of the white model was blocked due to “suspicious activities” as stated by Vinted. These suspicious activities were most likely related to the uploading of the exact same clothes at the same time. Therefore, it was decided for to first focus on the profile of the black model. In total, 15 identical items were uploaded on the black model’s Vinted profile. This Vinted profile was tracked for a total of 3 weeks, from the 14th of March 2021 till the 4th of April 2021. After the first week of the data collection there was a price reduction for the items on the 21st of March 2021. This price reduction was done to make the items more attractive to potential buyers. The earlier prices asked for the items were perceived to be too high in the first week. More interaction with the items was seen when the prices were lowered.

On the 11th of April 2021, a new account for the white model was created. With the data available of the black model, it was decided to upload the five most popular items (items with the most price bids) to the white model’s Vinted account. These five items included the Stieglitz trench coat, the Stieglitz multicolour turtleneck, the orange Stieglitz shirt, the white

Nike shirt, and the yellow Nike shirt. These items were uploaded on the white model's profile and after one week, just as for the black model's profile, the prices of the items were lowered. After one week, to ensure that the account was not blocked by Vinted again, some other popular items were added to the Vinted profile as well. The tracking of the data finished on the 2nd of May 2021.

To ensure comparability between the two profiles, the uploaded items were identical, meaning that the exact same items were used in the same sizes. To further keep both profiles comparable, the identical items were always uploaded on Sundays. Vinted gives users the option to describe the item and assign the item to particular categories: clothing category (e.g. women's dresses or women's shirts), brand category (e.g. Tommy Hilfiger), size category (e.g. S, M, or L), condition category (e.g. as good as new, new, or good), colour of the item category (e.g. black or multi-colour), and package category (e.g. it fits in a small package or medium package). The identical items were assigned to the exact same categories in order to ensure comparability. Furthermore, the prices of the identical items were also identically priced. Keeping the profiles as similar as possible, and thus creating comparability, makes the results of the online field experiment more accurate.

3.3.2. Procedure online experimental survey

The online experimental survey was created with the use of Qualtrics. As the survey was experiment-based, to eliminate certain biases, the introduction of the survey did not explain the true purpose of the study. If the purpose was introduced already at the start of the survey this could create biases in answering certain questions, or respondents answering in a politically correct or social desirable manner. Followed by the introduction, a filter question was asked: whether the respondents identified as female, male, or other. If answered male, the survey ended. After the filter question, two questions were asked related to the respondent's awareness of or familiarity with online second-hand fashion shopping platforms such as Vinted and Depop. After this, the actual experiment started. The respondents were evenly and randomly assigned to a condition. One condition included three photos of clothes worn by the black model, the second condition included photos of the items worn by the white model, and the third condition (control condition) included photos of the items without any model (see Appendix B). The items shown to the respondents were identical and included a Tommy Hilfiger shirt, a Calvin Klein dress, and a Nike shirt. Respondents were asked to fill in what price they would bid or offer for the items shown to them. After this, some questions related to the respondents' demographics were asked. Finally, if the respondent saw the images of

either the black or white model some additional questions were asked to them. First, how they perceived the attractiveness of the model and second whether they remembered the skin colour of the model (manipulation check). The experimental survey ended with a debriefing, first thanking the respondents for their participation and then explaining what the real purpose of the survey was (see Appendix C for the full online experimental survey).

Before distributing the online experimental survey, it was first tested by 6 female individuals. A pre-test of the survey is essential in testing the structure of the survey, the wording of questions or items, and to ensure that the questions measure the phenomenon under study (Babbie, 2014). After the pre-testing phase, some minor adjustments to the survey were made. Finally, the experimental survey was published and distributed.

3.4. Measurements

3.4.1. Measurements online field experiment

Consumer interaction. For the online field experiment on Vinted, consumer interaction included five sub-measures: likes, views, time until an item was sold on Vinted, the number of price bids, and the price bids.

Number of likes. On Vinted users can give a “like” or “favourite” to clothes that they see. This variable includes the total number of likes or favourites given to an item by Vinted users. The more likes an item has, the higher the consumer interaction of the item.

Number of views. An item that is uploaded on Vinted can receive views. The amount of views on an item was counted. The more views an item has, the higher the consumer interaction of the item.

Number of days till sold. The number of days it takes for an item to be sold was tracked. This indicates the popularity of an item. The less days till the item was sold, the higher the consumer interaction of the item.

Number of price bids. This variable constitutes the number of price bids on a particular item. The higher the amount of price bids, the higher the consumer interaction.

Price bids. This variable is the price in euros Vinted users offered to pay for a certain item uploaded on Vinted.

3.4.2. Measurements online experimental survey

Price bids. In the online experimental survey, participants were asked what price in euros they would offer or bid for the items shown to them. This variable constitutes these different price offers.

Colour-blind racism. To measure to what extent colour-blind racism exists among the respondents, the Colour-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) of Neville et al. (2000) was implemented in the online experimental survey. This scale consists of 20 different items (e.g. “White people in the US have certain advantages because of the colour of their skin” and “Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.”). From these 20 items, a total of 3 items were used as statements in the online experimental survey. The use of only 3 items was decided for, as using more items would make the survey too long. Furthermore, using more items would make the purpose of the study more explicit to the participants. If the purpose is too clear for the respondents this could result in biases or answering the questions in socially desirable manners (social desirability bias). Two of the items were rephrased to fit the European context of this study. The item “Racism is still a major problem in the US” was adjusted to “Racism is still a major problem in Europe”. The item “White people in the US have certain advantages because of the colour of their skin” was adjusted to “White people in Europe have certain advantages because of the colour of their skin”. The items could be answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Respondents who score low on this variable are more likely to have colour-blind racist beliefs than respondents who score high on this variable. Important to note is that in this study this scale is interpreted as a reverse scale. The variable’s internal reliability in this sample is acceptable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .79$). To distract participants from the true purpose of this study, in this part of the online experimental survey, 6 other unrelated statements were given to the respondents (e.g. “Climate change is a very serious problem around the world” and “The fashion industry should be more sustainable”). By adding these statements, it was assured that respondents did not immediately think that the online experimental survey was related to a study regarding racism.

Attractiveness. To measure to what extent the respondents perceived the black or white model as attractive the Source-Credibility Scale was used (Ohanian, 1990). The Source-Credibility Scale consists of three dimensions (attractiveness dimension, trustworthiness dimension, and expertise dimension). For the online experimental survey, the attractiveness dimension was implemented. The dimension consists of 5 items: attractive, beautiful, classy,

elegant, and sexy. The items were formulated as a statement (I think that the model used in the images before is...) and could be answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The higher the score, the more attractive respondents perceived a model to be. The variable's internal reliability in this sample is good (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$).

3.5. Ethical considerations

Due to the experimental approach of this study, some ethical considerations should be discussed. For the online field experiment, Vinted users were not aware of their participation in the online field experiment. If asked for their consent to participate in this experiment, the online field experiment would compromise the results. Therefore, to ensure valid data, Vinted users were not made aware of their participation in the study. Furthermore, all personal information that could make the Vinted users identifiable in any way is eliminated from this study and will not be shared. This is done to ensure that these Vinted users cannot be harmed in any way.

For the experimental survey, respondents did give consent to partake in the study by clicking the consent button at the start of the survey. However, as indicated earlier, the true purpose was withheld at the beginning of the survey. Therefore, a debriefing was included at the end of the online experimental survey to explain the true purpose of the research. Furthermore, participants were ensured that their answers are anonymous and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Any information that could clearly identify a respondent is excluded from this study.

3.6. Data preparation

3.6.1. Data preparation online field experiment

Every day, during the data collection phase, the data of the online field experiment was added to an online Google Sheets file. After collecting the data it was properly added to two separate SPSS files. For one dataset the units of analysis are the items and for the other data set the units of analysis are the price bids.

3.6.2. Data preparation online experimental survey

Different steps in the data cleaning phase were taken in order to prepare the data of the online experimental survey for the final analysis. After exporting the data from Qualtrics to SPSS, the first step taken was reviewing the data quality of the respondents' answers. This was done by reviewing the time in seconds that respondents took in completing the online

survey. In SPSS the median amount of seconds that respondents took to complete the survey was calculated ($Mdn = 188.00$). Respondents that completed the survey in less than 40.0% of the median completion time in seconds were eliminated from the dataset. Their answers were considered irrelevant as they completed the survey too quickly. Elimination of respondents based on time, amounted to a total of 5 respondents.

The following step in the data cleaning process was reviewing the data set on outliers. To do this, a closer look was given to the price bids on the three items. If people filled in words or Euro signs, these responses were converted to numeric values. After the quality control of the data, a chi-square test was performed to examine whether the respondents who were assigned to either the black or white model were aware of the model's skin colour (manipulation check, see table 3). The manipulation check was successful because the model's skin colour is significantly related to the skin colour that the respondents remembered, $X^2 (2, N = 192) = 173.55, p < .001$.

Table 3: Manipulation check, skin colour of the model (N= 192)

	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>I do not remember</i>	<i>Total</i>
Condition: Black model	95.0%	0.0%	5.0%	101
Condition: White model	1.1%	84.6%	14.3%	91
Total	50.5%	40.1%	9.4%	192
Chi-Square	<i>173.55***</i>			

Significance: *** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

3.7. Data analysis

In order to examine H1, multiple regression analyses were executed. The reason for this is because the hypothesis includes multiple IVs: the skin colour of the model (categorical variable) and the level of colour-blindness of a respondent (continuous variable). For this analysis a dummy variable (IV) and interaction variable (IV) were created. The DVs were the prices offered for the three different types of clothes: Calvin Klein dress, Tommy Hilfiger shirt, and yellow Nike shirt. H1 aims to find which IVs have an effect on the DV, therefore a multiple regression analysis is the best type of analysis to use for this hypothesis.

To examine H2, *t*-tests were executed. This hypothesis includes a categorical IV (the skin colour of the model, 1 = black, 2 = white) and multiple continuous DVs (views,

favourites, number of price bids, price sold, and days till sold). A *t*-test compares the means of the variables to see if there are any significant differences between groups. Therefore, the analysis used for H2 were *t*-tests.

Finally, to examine H3, ANOVAs as well as some *t*-tests were executed. The ANOVAs were executed using the data set of the online experimental survey and the *t*-tests were executed using the data set of the online field experiment focusing on the price bids of the items on sale. As the online experimental survey's IV (skin colour of the model) included three conditions (black model, white model, and no model) an ANOVA was needed. For the online field experiment the IV only included two conditions (black model or white model), therefore *t*-tests were needed. Both types of analysis compared the means to see if there are any significant differences between the groups.

3.8. Reliability and validity

The reliability of a quantitative study depends on the consistency of a measure (Babbie, 2014). In order to ensure that an important measure of this study (colour-blind racism) is reliable, a reliability test was conducted on SPSS. This test indicated that the variable's internal reliability is acceptable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$).

Besides the reliability of a study, the validity is of importance as well. The validity of a study refers to the extent in which a concept is accurately measured. It means whether a researcher measured a concept that was intended to be measured (Babbie, 2014). The existence of both internal and external validity makes this study high in validity. Internal validity refers to the extent to which a causal relationship is not influenced by other factors or variables. The internal validity was reached in this study by creating an online experimental survey. In this survey, other factors could not influence this experiment such as the algorithms on Vinted. Furthermore, the external validity was reached in this study with the online field experiment. As the online field experiment was executed on an actual online second-hand shopping platform the results can thus be applied to other situations, which makes the online field experiment high in external validity.

4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the analyses of the different hypotheses are given. This chapter starts with the results for H1, then H2, and finally H3. The types of analyses that were conducted are as follows: multiple regression analyses, one-way ANOVAs, and *t*-tests.

In the two tables below, an overview is given on the numbers of interaction on items of the two models' profiles of the online field experiment. Table 4 shows the numbers of the black model's profile and table 5 shows the numbers for the white model's profile.

Table 4: Number of interactions black model

	Views	Favourites	Price bids	Days until sold
<i>Stieglitz trench coat</i>	296	30	5	11
<i>Yellow Nike shirt</i>	76	7	3	Not sold
<i>White Nike shirt</i>	142	16	8	Not sold
<i>Orange Stieglitz shirt</i>	290	13	3	21
<i>Stieglitz multicolour turtleneck</i>	229	18	8	2

Table 5: Number of interactions white model

	Views	Favourites	Price bids	Days until sold
<i>Stieglitz trench coat</i>	457	22	4	Not sold
<i>Yellow Nike shirt</i>	124	13	2	Not sold
<i>White Nike shirt</i>	226	18	8	Not sold
<i>Orange Stieglitz shirt</i>	245	8	5	7
<i>Stieglitz multicolour turtleneck</i>	440	38	5	Not sold

Before discussing the results, it needs to be mentioned that multicollinearity was found for two IVs of the data from the online experimental survey: colour-blindness and interaction variable. However, it was found that this multicollinearity did not have an impact on the significance of the results. Furthermore, in the data set of the experimental online survey, two of the DVs – prices offered for the Calvin Klein dress and Nike shirt – were not normally distributed and they were high in kurtosis. Therefore, it was tested whether this affected the significance of the results. Fortunately, by computing new variables with a log transformation for these two DVs, it was found that the high kurtosis did not impact the significance of the results. Lastly, the other DVs – prices offered for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt (online

experimental survey), Stieglitz trench coat (online field experiment), orange Stieglitz shirt (online field experiment), white Nike shirt (online field experiment), yellow Nike shirt (online field experiment), multicolour Stieglitz turtleneck (online field experiment) – were all normally distributed.

4.1. The interaction effect of colour-blind racism on price offers

In this section, the results of H1 using the data collected from the online experimental survey are given. The hypothesis that is focused on is as follows:

H1: Those who believe that racism is not a problem anymore will bid less money for clothes worn by a black model compared to other conditions

For H1, three multiple linear regression analyses were conducted, one for every dependent variable: the prices offered for the Calvin Klein dress, the prices offered for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt, and the prices offered for the Nike shirt. As stated earlier, it was found that there exists multicollinearity between the colour-blindness variable and the interaction variable. Therefore, a new interaction variable based on log transformations was created to test whether this multicollinearity influenced the significance of the results. This test showed that the multicollinearity did not influence any significance of the results. Adding to that, the results stayed the same when creating a transformed interaction variable. Additionally, before discussing the results, the values of the dummy variable should be explained. Value 1 refers to the black model and the values that fall under 0 refer to either the white model or no model.

First of all, a multiple linear regression analysis with the prices offered for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt as criterion was conducted. The predictors were the dummy variable, colour-blindness variable, and the interaction variable. The model explains 5.0% of the variance. The model was found to be **significant**, $F(2, 283) = 4.97, p = .002, R^2 = .05$. The level of colour-blind racism was a significant positive indicator for the prices offered for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt, ($\beta = .16, p = .027$). The interaction variable was not significant in predicting the prices offered for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt, ($\beta = -.08, p = .777$). The dummy variable was also an insignificant indicator, ($\beta = -.09, p = .749$). This result shows that colour-blind racism has a significant effect on the price that respondents would offer for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt. This result means that those who believe that racism is not a problem anymore, and who score low on the colour-blind racism variable, will bid less money for the clothes regardless of the model's skin colour. Those who believe racism is still a problem, and who score higher on the colour-blind racism variable, offer higher prices for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt. Considering

this, the result is partially in line with H1, however the skin colour of the model is not a significant indicator for this relation and the hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Secondly, a multiple linear regression analysis with the prices offered for the Calvin Klein dress as criterion was conducted. The predictors were the dummy variable, the colour-blindness variable, and the interaction variable. The model explains 1.8% of the variance. The model was found to be **insignificant**, $F(3, 283) = 1.76, p = .155, R^2 = .02$. The colour-blindness variable was not a significant predictor for the prices offered for the Calvin Klein dress, ($\beta = .06, p = .389$). The interaction variable was also not significant in predicting the prices offered for the Calvin Klein dress, ($\beta = .32, p = .244$). The dummy variable was not significant either in predicting the prices offered for the Calvin Klein dress, ($\beta = -.33, p = .228$). This result means that the skin colour of the model who wore the Calvin Klein dress and one's level of colour-blind racism do not have a significant effect on the price that respondents would offer for the Calvin Klein dress. In light of H1, this means that those who believe that racism is not a problem anymore won't necessarily bid less money for the Calvin Klein dress worn by a black model than the Calvin Klein dress worn by a white model. Therefore, this result is not in line with H1.

Thirdly, a multiple linear regression analysis with the prices offered for the Nike shirt as criterion was conducted. The predictors were the dummy variable, colour-blindness variable, and the interaction variable. The model explains 2.2% of the variance. The model was found to be **insignificant**, $F(3, 283) = 2.07, p = .104, R^2 = .02$. The colour-blindness variable was a significant positive indicator for the prices offered for the Nike shirt, ($\beta = .16, p = .031$). The interaction variable was not significant in predicting the prices offered for the Nike shirt, ($\beta = -.10, p = .712$). The dummy variable was not significant either, ($\beta = .13, p = .624$). This result shows that the model is insignificant, even though one of the predictors – colour-blindness variable – had a significant effect. The result shows that people who score high on the colour-blind racism variable, meaning people who are likely to hold less colour-blind racist beliefs, would pay a higher price for the Nike shirt regardless of the skin colour of the model. Considering this, H1 can be rejected.

4.2. The effect of a model's skin colour on consumer interaction on Vinted

In this section, the results for H2 are given using the data of the online field experiment collected on Vinted. The hypothesis is as follows:

H2: Clothes sold on Vinted by a black model will receive less interaction from Vinted users than when sold by a white model

A *t*-test showed that the black model **insignificantly** received less views on clothes sold on Vinted ($M = 206.60$, $SD = 95.76$) than the white model ($M = 298.40$, $SD = 144.67$), $t(8) = -1.18$, $p = .271$. Considering the result of this *t*-test, H2 can be rejected. This means that there is no significant relation between the skin colour of a model and the amount of views, and thus interaction of Vinted users, a black or white model gets on an item sold on Vinted. Therefore, a black model will not significantly receive less views or less interaction on or with her items sold on Vinted than a white model based on her skin colour. However, it needs to be noted that the mean differences are in line with the hypothesis. The mean difference shows that the black model received less views on the items sold on Vinted than the white model.

A *t*-test showed that the black model **insignificantly** received less likes on clothes sold on Vinted ($M = 16.80$, $SD = 8.47$) than the white model ($M = 19.80$, $SD = 11.45$), $t(8) = -.47$, $p = .650$. This *t*-test rejects H2, meaning that there is no significant relation between the skin colour of a model and the amount of favourites – part of consumer interaction – a black or white model receives on an item sold on Vinted. Therefore, a black model will not receive less likes on her items sold on Vinted than a white model based on the colour of her skin. However, when only looking at the differences in means, it shows that the black model received less likes on clothes sold on Vinted than the white model, the mean differences thus support H2.

A *t*-test showed that the black model **insignificantly** received more price bids on clothes sold on Vinted ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 2.51$) than the white model ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 2.17$), $t(8) = .41$, $p = .696$. According to this result, H2 can be rejected. This means that there is no significant relation between the skin colour of a model and the amount of price bids, and thus interaction, a black or white model gets on an item sold on Vinted. In this case, a black model will not receive less price bids on her items sold on Vinted than a white model based on skin colour. When comparing the means and focusing on the mean differences, the black model actually received more price bids than the white model on Vinted. This is not in line with H2.

A *t*-test showed that the black model **insignificantly** sold clothes on Vinted in less days ($M = 15.20$, $SD = 8.56$) than the white model ($M = 18.20$, $SD = 6.26$), $t(8) = -.63$, $p = .545$. Considering this result, H2 can be rejected. This means that there is no significant relation between the skin colour of a model and the days until an item was sold on Vinted. It further shows that a black model will not take longer in selling clothes or receive less interaction on Vinted than a white model based on the colour of her skin. In addition, when considering the mean differences, the black model sold clothes on Vinted faster than the white

model. This is not in line with H2.

Finally, the data shows that the black model received a higher average amount of money for the clothes sold on Vinted ($M = 50.00$, $SD = 26.45$) than the white model ($M = 35.00$). This is not in line with H2, and the hypothesis can be rejected.

4.3. The effect of a model's skin colour on price offers on clothes

This section is divided into two subsections as the results are given for both the experimental online survey and the online field experiment. The first sub-section focuses on the results of the online experimental survey and the second sub-section focuses on the outcomes of the online field experiment. Below is the hypothesis that will be of focus:

H3: A black model will receive lower price bids on clothes compared to a white model

4.3.1. Experimental online survey

To test whether the black model receives lower price bids on the items she could put on sale compared to the white model or no model, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. This analysis was conducted for all three items shown to the respondents in the online experimental survey: the Tommy Hilfiger shirt, the Calvin Klein dress, and the Nike shirt.

To test whether the differences in price respondents offered for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt is dependent on the model's skin colour, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The ANOVA revealed a **significant** main effect for a model's skin colour on the price that respondents would offer for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt, $F = (2, 284) = 6.02$, $p = .003$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. The Tukey post-hoc comparison revealed that the respondents who were assigned to the black model offered a lower price for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt ($M = 12.27$, $SD = 7.64$) than respondents who were assigned to the images of the white model ($M = 16.76$, $SD = 9.59$), $p = .002$. Considering this result, H3 will be accepted, meaning that the skin colour of a model does have an influence on the price someone would offer for an item. In this case, respondents offered a lower price for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt worn by the black model than when worn by the white model.

To test for differences in the price respondents offered for the Calvin Klein dress depending on the model's skin colour, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The ANOVA revealed an **insignificant** main effect for a model's skin colour on the price that respondents would offer for the Calvin Klein dress, $F = (2, 284) = 0.29$, $p = .752$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$. Therefore, H3 will be rejected. This means that the skin colour of a model does not have an influence on the price that someone would pay for the Calvin Klein dress and thus indicates that skin colour does not have an effect on how much money a person would offer for a

clothing item. Therefore, a black model does not significantly receive lower price bids than a white model based on the colour of her skin.

To test whether the differences in price respondents offered for the Nike shirt is dependent on the model's skin colour, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The ANOVA revealed an **insignificant** main effect for a model's skin colour on the price that respondents would offer for the Nike shirt, $F = (2, 284) = 0.26, p = .769$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$. Therefore, when focusing on the Nike shirt, H3 will be rejected, meaning that skin colour does not have an influence on the price that people would pay for this particular clothing item.

Finally, although not related to H3, a *t*-test was conducted and indicated that the black model was significantly perceived by the sample as more attractive ($M = 3.75, SD = 0.51$) than the white model ($M = 3.35, SD = 0.61$), $t(200) = 5.00, p < .001$. This indicates that the colour of the model's skin has a significant effect on how attractive the respondents perceived the models.

4.3.2. Online field experiment

To test for differences in the prices Vinted users would offer for the clothes sold by either the black or white model, a *t*-test was conducted. The *t*-test showed that the black model **insignificantly** received higher price bids for clothes sold on Vinted ($M = 30.43, SD = 22.80$) than the white model ($M = 26.06, SD = 17.61$), $t(49) = 0.758, p = .452$. This result rejects H3, meaning that skin colour does not have a significant effect on what Vinted users would offer for an item sold on the platform. When considering the mean differences, it actually shows that the black model received higher price bids than the white model, which is not in line with H3.

A *t*-test showed that the black model **insignificantly** received higher price bids for the Stieglitz coat sold on Vinted ($M = 71.00, SD = 7.42$) than the white model ($M = 57.75, SD = 11.70$), $t(7) = 2.08, p = .076$. This results indicates that H3 can be rejected, there is no significant relation between the skin colour of the model and the amount of money in euros Vinted users would offer for the Stieglitz coat. Furthermore, the mean differences indicate that the black model received higher price bids than the white model, which is not in line with H3.

A *t*-test showed that the black model **insignificantly** received lower price bids for the orange Stieglitz shirt sold on Vinted ($M = 24.33, SD = 4.93$) than the white model ($M = 30.40, SD = 3.65$), $t(6) = -2.016, p = .090$. This result shows that H3 can be rejected, the skin colour of the model does not have a significant effect on how much money Vinted users would offer

for the orange Stieglitz shirt. When comparing the mean difference, this result does indicate that the black model received lower price bids for the item than the white model, which is actually in line with H3.

A final *t*-test showed that the black model **significantly** received higher price bids for the Stieglitz multicolour turtleneck sold on Vinted ($M = 35.13$, $SD = 5.77$) than the white model ($M = 28.00$, $SD = 2.83$), $t(11) = 2.547$, $p = .027$. This result indicates that the model's skin colour does have a significant influence on the prices offered for the Stieglitz multicolour turtleneck. However, when considering the mean differences, this result shows that the black model received higher price bids than the white model, this is not in line with H3 and the hypothesis will therefore be rejected.

When comparing the price bids of the yellow Nike shirt for both the models, it was found that the black model ($M = 10.00$, $SD = 1.00$) received the same average in price bids as the white model ($M = 10.00$, $SD = .00$). There is thus no difference and H3 can in this case be rejected. This means that the black model did not receive lower price bids than the white model for the yellow Nike shirt.

Additionally, when comparing the price bids of the white Nike shirt for both models, it was found that the black model ($M = 10.31$, $SD = .96$) received the same average in price bids as the white model ($M = 10.31$, $SD = .80$). Considering this, there are no mean differences, so in this case H3 can be rejected. This means that the black model did not receive lower price offers for the white Nike shirt than the white model.

5. Discussion

In this final chapter there is a discussion section that interprets the main findings of both experiments. After this, in the conclusion section, an answer to the research question of this particular study is given. Finally, the limitations and strengths of this study are discussed and recommendations for future research are considered.

5.1. Discussion

To begin with, some interesting results related to H1 will be discussed. The results of the Tommy Hilfiger shirt suggest that people who scored high on the colour-blind racism variable, which actually means that a person is less likely to hold colour-blind racist beliefs (see measure colour-blind racism on page 33), would offer a higher price for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt regardless of the model's skin colour. In addition, the data of the Nike shirt also suggests that those who score high on the colour-blind racism variable offered a higher price for the Nike shirt regardless of the model's skin colour. However, the results of the Calvin Klein dress show differently and indicate that skin colour nor the level of colour-blind racism have a significant effect on the prices respondents would offer for the Calvin Klein dress. So, why do the results of the Tommy Hilfiger shirt and Nike shirt specify that individuals who are less likely to hold colour-blind racist beliefs would offer a higher amount of money for the clothing items regardless of the model's skin colour? It could be argued that people who are less likely to hold colour-blind racist beliefs are better or higher educated than individuals who are more likely to hold colour-blind racist beliefs. A better education could be a result of living in a wealthy environment which could lead to having more income available to spend on clothes. Thus, wealth and income can be confounding variables. Arguing from this point of view, it can be predicted that people who do not hold colour-blind racist ideologies are wealthier, have more income, and can thus bid higher prices for the clothes sold on Vinted. What is further interesting to note, is that overall the respondents of the survey scored quite high on the colour-blind racism variable in this study ($N = 303$, $M = 3.79$). This means that on average the respondents do not immensely hold colour-blind racist beliefs. This finding does not fully support the existent literature on colour-blind racism in Europe that suggests that people from European countries hold colour-blind racist beliefs. Multiple studies (Beaman & Petts, 2020; Moffit et al., 2018; Naidoo, 2019; Ware, 2014; Weiner, 2014) indicate that colour-blind racism is very prevalent in European countries in contemporary society. However the findings of this study show a slightly different situation. This outcome is important as it contradicts with the existing literature.

Moving on, the second hypothesis revealed some more valuable results. When only comparing the means when focusing on the interaction that both models received on their Vinted profiles, it can be concluded that the black model clearly received less consumer interaction than the white model. However, most of these results are statistically insignificant, so the colour of a model's skin does not necessarily impact the consumer interaction on items sold on Vinted. One of the reasons that the white model might have received more interaction on the uploaded items, as can be seen from the results, is because the black model actually sold (see tables 4 and 5 on page 37) the Stieglitz multicolour turtleneck in two days, the Stieglitz trench coat in 11 days, and the orange Stieglitz shirt in 21 days. The white model only sold the orange Stieglitz shirt in seven days. Because the other items were not sold on the white model's profile, the items were longer available to Vinted users. This allowed for more interaction with the clothing items. Additionally, this could explain why, for instance, the Stieglitz multicolour turtleneck received more views and favourites on the white model's profile than on the black model's profile. Moreover, a compelling result from the online field experiment is that the black model actually sold more clothes on Vinted and received more price bids on clothes than the white model. The results indicate that there is no significant effect of skin colour on these occurrences, but it is worth to mention. A factor that influenced the larger amount of price bids and faster selling of the items could be the time period wherein the items were uploaded. As stated in the methods chapter, the items of the black model were uploaded in a different period of time than those of the white model. For example, it could have happened that in the specific time period when the data was tracked for the black model more people were searching for a trench coat (as it was more in the beginning of Spring) than in the time period that the white model uploaded the trench coat (later in Spring). Skin colour is thus not a significant or proper factor in explaining the consumer interaction of both the profiles in this case. Other factors might be stronger in explaining these results. For instance, in the online experimental survey it was found that respondents significantly perceived the black model as more attractive than the white model. This finding could also have had an effect on Vinted users in the online field experiment. It might have happened that if the black model was perceived as more attractive this could have impacted the amount of time until an item was sold and the amount of price bids received. Moreover, as stated earlier, there were no significant relations found between skin colour and consumer interaction, so it can be stated that a model's skin colour was not a determining factor in the level of interaction the profiles received on Vinted. This finding is not in line with what Levy & Barcas (2017) suggest regarding different treatment based on one's profile characteristics on online

marketplaces. Their study argues that personal information available on one's online profile (e.g. name, profile picture, and race) impacts how online buyers interact with someone's profile. Considering the theories of systemic racism and unconscious bias they would argue that race is a determining factor in the interaction with items sold on an online platform, but the results of this particular study reject this.

Lastly, we take a look at the findings for H3. First of all, the results of the ANOVAs executed for H1 regarding colour-blind racism indicate that skin colour is not a significant factor in determining the prices respondents would offer for the different clothing items. Therefore, H3 and the theories of cyber racism and discrimination on online marketplaces is not supported by these results. As stated before, these theories argue that racism is more overt online and in turn would lead to the skin colour of the model – or race – being an indicator for the differences in prices offered for an item (Brock, 2005; Hargittai, 2010; Levy & Barocas, 2017). The fact that skin colour does not have a significant effect on the price someone would offer for a clothing item is a valuable finding.

However, when focusing on the specific analyses executed for H3 in the results chapter, a thought-provoking discovery was found in the data of the online experimental survey. The Tommy Hilfiger shirt showed a significant effect of a model's skin colour on the amount of money respondents would offer for the item. The result is therefore in line with H3, meaning that the black model significantly received lower price bids for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt based on the colour of her skin. However, the other two items – the Calvin Klein dress and the Nike shirt – showed an insignificant result, arguing that skin colour does not have an effect on the prices offered for the items. A considerable reason why there was significance for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt is that this item was first shown to all respondents during the online experimental survey. What could have happened is that for this image respondents were actually more aware of the skin colour of the model as it was the first picture shown to them. While for the following two items respondents could have been more focused on the items itself rather than on the skin colour of the model. Their unconscious bias might have come into play for the first image shown to them: it was their first impression of the model. This point of view suggests that one's race matters during first impressions and actually supports the theory of unconscious bias which argues that people unconsciously have prejudices ready and in this way perpetuate unintentional racism (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013; Moule, 2009). This argument can be supported by the Accessibility-Diagnosticity Framework. Taking this framework into consideration it can be assumed that for the first image and item – the Tommy Hilfiger shirt – the skin colour of the model could have been

used as a diagnostic source of information for the respondent, assessing the price offer based on existing prejudices regarding one's skin colour. However, when seeing the following images with the same model but different clothing items, respondents had to rely on their own memories (accessibility) when assessing the value of the product (Menon et al., 1995). For the other images they needed to be more focused on the different items and thinking of what price offers would fit those items instead of focusing on the skin colour of the model. To sum up, this finding is in line with the theory of unconscious bias (Moule, 2009) and the different treatment of people of colour on online marketplaces (Levy & Barocas, 2017).

Finally, when considering the results of the online field experiment and only comparing the means, it indicates that the black model actually received higher price bids for the clothes sold on Vinted compared to the white model. However, the results are insignificant and a claim that the skin colour has an actual influence on the price bids cannot be made. As mentioned earlier, in the online experimental survey, the black model was perceived as more attractive. The attractiveness of the model could for the online field experiment also be an indicator of why the black model received higher price bids. Having said that, another result that is valuable to discuss is that of the Stieglitz multicolour turtleneck. This result is significant and showed that the black model received higher price bids than the white model based on skin colour. A reason for this could be because of the time period in which the item was uploaded. The item was uploaded in March, so the weather in Europe could have been colder and Vinted users were more likely to search for warmer clothes (it is a full length sleeve turtleneck) than Vinted users would search for in May (a period closer to warmer weather). To further elaborate, this particular finding is inconsistent with what studies related to racial discrimination on platforms such as Airbnb, Uber, TaskRabbit, and Fiverr have found (Edelman & Luca, 2014; Hannák et al., 2017; McLaughlin, 2018). These studies actually found that the influence of skin colour leads to disadvantages for people of colour. A reason why the findings of this study differs is because of the platform looked into. Airbnb, Uber, TaskRabbit, and Fiverr are service-oriented platforms. Therefore, the personal characteristics of an Airbnb host or Uber driver might matter more to people than on an online second-hand fashion platform. In addition, the iPod experiment of Doleac and Stein (2010) also indicated that sellers of colour receive lower price bids for the iPods than white sellers. A reason for this might be because of the value of the product sold. Luxury tech products are more expensive. Thus, when arguing from the unconscious bias and systemic racism point of view, some individuals might trust sellers of colour less (due to racial prejudices) than white sellers with such expensive products. As the clothes used for this study

are not as high in value as an iPod, people who hold unconscious biases might not be impacted as much by a Vinted seller's skin colour than when in the process of buying more expensive products.

5.2. Conclusion

In this section an answer is given to the research question: "To what extent does a model's race have an influence on consumer interaction with clothes on sale on online second-hand shopping platforms?" It can be concluded, based on the findings of this particular study, that overall a model's skin colour does not have a statistically significant influence on the consumer interaction with clothes sold on online second-hand shopping platforms. Other factors can be more relevant for the differences in interaction, such as the time period that items were uploaded or how attractive the model is perceived. Nonetheless, even though most results indicate that skin colour is not a determining factor, one result actually suggests that there is an existence of unconscious bias and shows how skin colour does have a significant influence on price offers. The Tommy Hilfiger shirt – an image first shown to respondents in the online experimental survey – showed that the black model received significantly lower price bids. As it was the first image shown and thus the first impression of the model for the respondents, the skin colour therefore could have had an impact on the price they would offer. This suggests that unconscious biases might exist on online second-hand fashion platforms.

To conclude, even though most results offer positive and interesting indications, the finding that unconscious biases might be prevalent on online second-hand shopping platforms is important information. It shows that racism does not overtly occur on these platforms, but still exists in some sense in the form of unconscious biases and is therefore more covert. In sum, even though this study might point into the direction of a less racist or biased Europe, we are definitely not there yet. What is important to mention is that many of the studies cited in this particular study were published before the BLM protests of last year. Taking this into consideration, the effect of the protests could be a possible explanation for differences between this study and previous research. To finalise, this research study aimed to create more awareness regarding unconscious biases and systemic racism. When creating awareness regarding such a large problem, as a society we can think of solutions to stop this problem and create a fair and safe environment for everyone, no matter one's race.

5.3. Limitations

To better understand this study, it is of value to reflect on its limitations. First of all, an important limitation of this study to discuss is the influence that the algorithms of Vinted had on the execution of the online field experiment. A result of the algorithms, as discussed in the methods chapter, was that the first profile of the white model was blocked by Vinted. Because of this, the data could not be gathered at the exact same time as the data of the black model's profile. This resulted in another factor that needed to be taken into account, namely that the time period in which the items were uploaded on Vinted could have had an impact on the results. For example, Vinted promotions such as discounts on shipping costs were different during the two time periods in which the data was collected. When there is a large discount on the shipping methods available on Vinted, users might be more likely to buy a specific item as the shipping method has become cheaper. The final data gathering of the white model's profile on Vinted took place, for one day, on an important day in the Netherlands: King's day. This day is known for its tradition of selling your old belongings, such as clothes, to others. Vinted used this day as a promotional day as well and this could have influenced the data as more users might have been active on Vinted this particular day. Furthermore, the different time periods could impact the results as Vinted users might have different needs during these months. As explained earlier, in the beginning of March users could still be looking for warmer clothes compared to April.

Another limitation of the online field experiment is the time frame of three weeks in which the data was gathered. On Vinted it can sometimes take longer than three weeks for an item to be sold or to actually receive different price bids. If the data tracking time would have been longer, there might be a possibility that items used for the experiment would receive more price bids which would create more data to compare. In this study, eventually, only the five items discussed got the most price bids, while the other identical items did not get any price bids in the time frame of three weeks. However, a strength of this study lies in the fact that two types of experiments were used. To make up for the less price bids on Vinted, the online experimental survey added extra data regarding price offers of respondents. This way, the analyses could still be executed properly with the data of the online experimental survey.

Finally, a limitation of the online experimental survey was the missing demographical question related to the respondents' educational level. Respondents were not asked about their highest achieved educational level. This is unfortunate as the statement made about individuals holding less colour-blind racist thoughts are likely to be higher educated cannot be statistically supported in this study. A factor that made up for this limitation is that the random

assignment of respondents in the online experimental survey created a balanced distribution of educational levels among the respondents even if their level of education was not specifically measured. Nevertheless, if this study would be replicated at some point in time, it is recommended to ask respondents about their educational level.

Lastly, the online experimental survey used – to measure colour-blind racism – only three items of the CoBRAS. Therefore, arguments regarding colour-blind racism might be slightly weak in this study. Thus, a recommendation for future research would be to use more items of the scale to strengthen arguments.

5.4. Future research

Based on the limitations discussed above, a recommendation for future research is to make sure that the online field experiment is not intervened with by algorithms on Vinted that could lead to blocking one or more profiles under study. This, to reduce extra factors (e.g. the time periods in which items are uploaded) that could intervene with the data gathering and the results. For a future study, an alternative for Vinted whereon an online field experiment can be conducted is Depop. Nonetheless, Depop also has community guidelines and algorithms which should be considered carefully before executing an experiment on there. Moreover, when conducting an online field experiment like the one from this study, it is recommended to extend the data gathering period to more weeks. This eventually collects more data which could be helpful for the research in comparing the data.

In addition, as there is still a lack of scientific studies on the effects that a model's skin colour could have on the interaction with fashion items on the consumer side, it could be interesting to execute some more experiments on different platforms. For example, social media platforms such as Instagram or Facebook. To illustrate, an experiment in collaboration with fashion brands could be done to test if photos posted on Instagram of clothes worn by a black model receives less likes or less interaction than photos of clothes posted worn by a white model. Adding to that, content analyses can be conducted on Instagram to compare the interaction with photos including a black model and the interaction with photos including a white model. Do photos with black models get less interaction than photos with white models, the other way around, or do they receive similar interaction?

Another recommendation for future research is to focus on a more qualitative approach regarding the topic of this study. A future study could look into the experiences, perceptions, and opinions of black as well as white users of online second-hand fashion platforms to see whether there is a difference in their experiences for selling their second-

hand clothes online. Do black users experience more difficulties in selling clothes compared to white users? Such research could complement and enrich the existing quantitative studies.

Lastly, when considering that there were higher price bids for the Tommy Hilfiger shirt, for future research, studies could look into the differences between clothing brands. Do people bid higher prices for Tommy Hilfiger shirts than for Nike shirts? Are some clothing brands associated to a particular ethnic group and does this influence the amount of money individuals would offer for a clothing item from that brand?

There is still much to learn and research on the existence of (un)conscious biases in every day life's activities and people their actions and thoughts. This study is a starting point in experimental research regarding the effects of a model's skin colour on consumer interaction with products, in this case clothes, on online second-hand fashion platforms.

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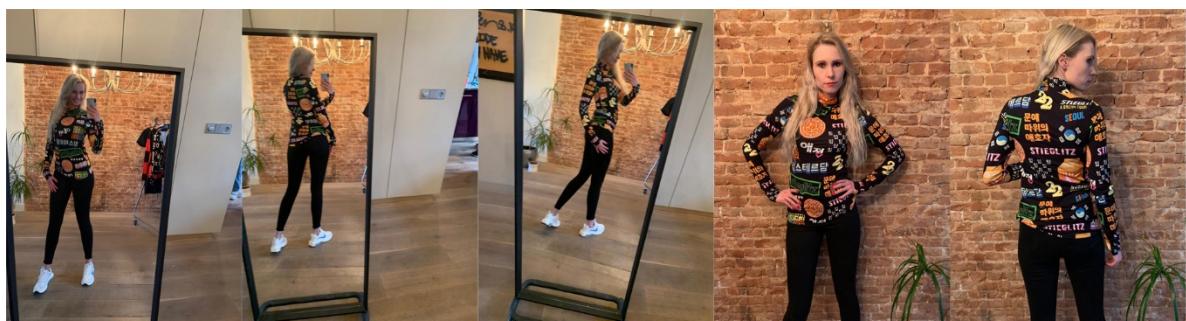
8. Appendices

On the following pages, the appendices are showcased: the images used for the online field experiment, the images used for the online experimental survey, and finally an overview of what the online experimental survey looked like.

8.1. Appendix A: Images online field experiment







8.2. Appendix B: Images online experimental survey



8.3. Appendix C: Online experimental survey

Dear participant,

Welcome to this online survey! Thank you for taking the time to participate in my research study. I am a student at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. Currently, I am writing my thesis for the Master program Media and Creative Industries. My thesis focuses on the online shopping behaviour of **European women** with a focus on online second-hand fashion platforms, such as United Wardrobe, Vinted and Depop. As my study focuses on European women, I would like to ask you to only fill out this survey if you identify as female. If you are not familiar with online second-hand fashion platforms you can still fill out the survey.

Filling out this online survey will take you approximately **4 minutes**. There is no right or wrong in answering the questions, I am interested in your personal opinions and thoughts! You have the right to withdraw participation at any point during this survey, for any reason, without any prejudice. The answers that you provide are anonymous. Your answers will be treated with confidentiality and they are exclusively used for my research study and will not be shared with third parties.

By clicking the consent button below, you acknowledge that your participation in this survey is voluntary and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

- I give consent, let's start the survey
- I do not give consent, I do not wish to participate

I identify as:

Female

Male

I'd rather not say

Other



Have you ever viewed, sold and/or bought any type of clothing on an online second-hand fashion platform? (e.g. United Wardrobe, Vinted, Depop)

Yes

No



Which online second-hand fashion platform(s) do you use or have you used? Note: multiple answers are possible.

Vinted

United Wardrobe (now Vinted)

Depop

Poshmark

ThredUp

Other



For the following questions, you will be exposed to pictures of second-hand clothes. After viewing the image, you are asked what price you would bid/offer for the items if you were to see them on an online second-hand shopping platform. Just act as if you are viewing the item on an actual online second-hand clothing platform. There is no right or wrong.





This is a black oversized Tommy Hilfiger shirt/dress. What price would you bid/offer for this item in euros? Please only fill in a number.



This is a denim Calvin Klein dress. What price would you bid/offer for this item in euros? Please only fill in a number.





This is a yellow Nike T-shirt. What price would you bid/offer for this item in euros?
Please only fill in a number.



This is a black oversized Tommy Hilfiger shirt/shirt dress. What price would you bid/offer for this item in euros? Please only fill in a number.





This is a denim Calvin Klein dress. What price would you bid/offer for this item in euros? Please only fill in a number.



This is a yellow Nike T-shirt. What price would you bid/offer for this item in euros? Please only fill in a number.





This is a black oversized Tommy Hilfiger shirt/dress. What price would you bid/offer for this item in euros? Please only fill in a number.



This is a denim Calvin Klein dress. What price would you bid/offer for this item in euros? Please only fill in a number.





This is a yellow Nike T-shirt. What price would you bid/offer for this item in euros?
Please only fill in a number.



For this part of the survey, I would like to ask you about your opinion(s) on current topics of debate in Europe. Please specify whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Climate change is a very serious problem around the world	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People should buy more second-hand clothes instead of fast-fashion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Racism is still a major problem in Europe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promoting gender equality is important to ensure a fair and democratic society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
White people in Europe have certain advantages because of the colour of their skin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men in Europe have certain advantages because of their gender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
White people are more to blame for racial discrimination than racial and ethnic minorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The over-production of fast-fashion should stop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The fashion industry should be more sustainable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I am ... years old. Please fill in a number (e.g. 22, 31, 45 etc.)



What ethnic origin do you identify as?

White

Mixed

Black

Asian

Arab

Other



In which country do you currently live?

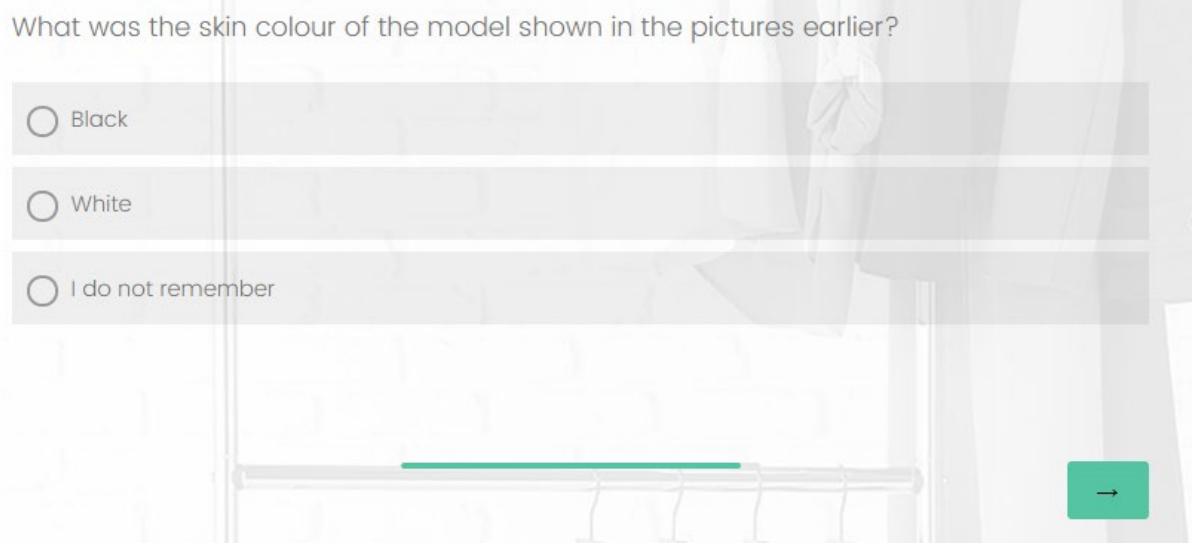
▼

→

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: I think that the model used in the images before is...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Attractive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elegant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Classy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beautiful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

→



What was the skin colour of the model shown in the pictures earlier?

- Black
- White
- I do not remember



That was it! Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this online survey. Your help is very valuable and highly appreciated.

Before you go, I would like to tell you a little bit more about my research study. You have participated in an experimental survey, meaning that this survey was an experiment. You were exposed to a different set of images than other participants. There were three types of pictures: one with a black model, one with a white model, and one with no model. My research study focuses on (un)conscious racial biases in online shopping and the existence of it on second-hand online clothing platforms. With this study I aim to research whether there are differences in the price people would bid for a specific item dependent on a model's skin colour.

Again, your answers are anonymous and are treated with confidentiality.

If you have any further questions about my research study, please contact me through e-mail: unconsciousbias2021@gmail.com