



Sustainable Branding

Consumer's perception in the fashion industry

Falilat Badmus

BACHELOR'S THESIS
April 2024

International Business
Marketing

ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
International Business
Marketing

FALILAT BADMUS

Sustainable Branding: Consumer perception in the context of fashion industry

Bachelor's thesis 34 pages, appendices 1 pages

April 2024

This thesis aims to address a noticeable action gap between consumers that when it comes them making a sustainable fashion purchase decision. This thesis will be exploring the consumer's understanding of what it means to be sustainable in the context of fashion and how sustainable branding influences purchasing decision.

This thesis is using a data derived from an interviewed 20 consumers with locations primarily situated in Europe and their answers will serve as a reflective guide in understanding this situation better.

This collected result is aimed to be valuable to fashion brands and marketing managers in creating a standard sustainable marketing strategy to highlight the company's sustainable values and practices. This would serve as an avenue to educate the consumer and help them make a sustainable fashion decision.

Key words: sustainable branding, consumer, green marketing

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	5
2	THESIS PLAN	8
	2.1 Thesis Topic	8
	2.2 Thesis Objective and purpose.....	11
	2.3 Thesis Structure.....	12
	2.4 Research question.....	12
	2.5 Concept.....	13
3	LITERATURE REVIEW	14
	3.1 Sustainability.....	14
	3.2 Greenwashing.....	15
	3.3 Sustainable Branding	16
	3.4 Green marketing	17
	3.2 Sustainable Fashion	19
	3.3 Fast fashion	20
4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	22
	4.2 Data Collection	22
	4.3 Limitation.....	23
	4.4 Data Validity.....	23
	4.5 Result and analysis	24
5	RECOMMENDATION	27
6	CONCLUSION.....	29
	REFERENCES	31
	APPENDICES.....	34
	Appendix 1. Research questions	34

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

EU	European Union
SDG	Sustainable development goals

1 INTRODUCTION

There has been a rise of numerous companies adopting sustainable business into their practices recently, this includes obtaining industry sustainability certifications, corporate indexes, value inclusion and advertising. (Salem Group 2023)

However, these has seemed to be ineffective towards reaching the end consumer. (Theresa et al., 2021)

While companies are paying a lot of fees yearly towards their sustainable practices, they seem to still be failing at effectively communicating their acquired industry standard practices, and the sustainable values in their products in a simple message to their consumers.

There is a chance some of these sustainable practices has been majorly driven by both government regulations and the consumer's demand for ethical products from brands (Carrigan & Attalla 2001).

On the regulatory aspect, governments around the world have now been implementing strict environmental policies, and there has been more of these regulations within the EU jurisdiction.

This is to address the ongoing climate change, pollution, and resource consumption. This has in turn mandated businesses to adopt more sustainable approach to comply with these regulations to avoid legal penalty from the government.

Moreover, there has now been consumer's awareness on sustainability and a rise in demand for ethical products. Due to available information through the internet and social media, consumers have become more enlightened about the vital role they play on environmental and social impacts through their purchasing decisions.

This has resulted in a spike in favour of existing businesses that has demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, whether they are into eco-friendly products, supply chains transparency, or fair labour practices.

In response to these pressures, there has been a shift with businesses as they have begun implementing sustainability into their primary strategies, this is not only to fulfil regulatory requirements and consumer demands but as well to gain a competitive advantage and boost their brand's reputation. This is to note that, the shift towards sustainability should not be considered just a trend or phase but an essential change in how businesses operate in the modern world.

The fashion industry has been called out severally for its unsustainable practices, the industry ranks as one of the biggest sectors contributing harm to the environment. There has been raised issues such as unethical textile sourcing, mass production, child labour, poor working conditions, and inadequate waste disposal practices have underscored the industry's urgent need for change. There has still been a vast majority of fashion brands that are underperforming to the industry's sustainable regulations.

According to an analysis made by Business Insider (Morgan 2019) on "fashion production comprises 10% of total global carbon emissions, as much as the European Union. It dries up water sources and pollutes rivers and streams, while 85% of all textiles go to dumps each year."

There has since been a significant change in consumer's attitudes towards environmental messaging from fashion brands. This change is evidenced by the rise of thrift stores and the growing popularity of slow fashion brands that prioritise ethical and sustainable production processes.

The main objective of this thesis is to examine how sustainable branding is important towards consumers perception in the fashion industry. Particularly, the study will be focusing on how sustainable branding influences consumers sustainable fashion decision, according to Polonsky, "*Environmental marketing can be used to achieve organizational objectives*" (Polonsky 1994).

This will poise as an avenue into exploring factors influencing consumer decision-making and the direct impact on businesses. Additionally, the role the marketers plays in branding sustainable businesses will be investigated.

The methodology approach of this thesis, this research will be utilising an empirical qualitative approach, which entails literature review and interviews with consumers to have a data on the importance of sustainable branding to them. The findings will contribute to existing knowledge in the field and provide insights for future research. The study will conclude with reflections on its theoretical and practical implications, addressing the question of how sustainable branding is essential towards consumers making sustainable fashion decisions.

2 THESIS PLAN

This thesis plan will serve as an anchor to give a good preview of the chosen topic, objectives, and relevance of the study. Further into the pages, there would be an outlined key concept to be delved into, the chosen methodology, and as well note the significance and connection of marketing within the context of the thesis.

The focus of this thesis will be an attempt to investigate sustainable branding and how it is perceived by consumers, focusing on the fashion industry.

The structure of the thesis will be in a systematic progression, starting with an introduction to the chosen topic with a relevant literature review. This will be followed by the thesis plan, thesis topic, objectives, purpose of the thesis, and research question, methodologies, result, recommendation, and conclusion. Furthermore, this thesis will present the findings of the researched study, subsequently followed by a discussion of projected limitations, and possible implications for practice.

Finally, the conclusion will be a summary of the findings, recommendations will be presented which will aid future research, and possibly provide a broader insight into the significance of the study within the field of marketing and sustainability.

2.1 Thesis Topic

This thesis topic is sustainable branding, consumers perception in the context of fashion industry, this explores into the core aspect of modern consumer behaviour. It acknowledges the significant role that branding plays in influencing consumer preferences. It is without doubt that, majority of human purchasing decision stemmed from a form of marketing, this is not only limited to just goods and services that are regularly consumed, but it also however extends to other

aspects of our lives for instance the places we visit, the public services we use, and societal opinions.

In consumer economies, where purchasing decisions are heavily moulded by marketing strategies, it's crucial to understand how marketing influences on both sustainable and unsustainable consumption decisions.

“Within consumer economies however our consumption is facilitated and influenced by marketing thinking, processes and practices, and for that reason marketing sometimes takes the blame for the unsustainable nature of our consumption” (Kjellberg 2008).

While marketing has often received the share of criticism for aiding overconsumption of unsustainable products, it is to acknowledge if by anything, it is also marketing that has the power to make a significant difference towards more sustainable consumption.

According to Bell and Beattie, marketing can play a pivotal role in developing more sustainable systems of production and consumption within our societies in future (Belz & Peattie 2012).

In the world of consumer marketing, there has been a notable bridge between societal concerns about sustainability, consumer behaviour, and marketing practices. This bridge has now brought about series of developing research into how marketing strategies and practices influences various aspects of consumption, such as, price sensitivity, product choice, and post-purchase behaviour.

This study will be focused on the end consumers. In an aspect of business-to-customer marketing (B2C), marketing plays an important role to the sustainability of consumer lifestyles. Thus, which make consumer marketing most befitting for this thesis.

According to Lucia & John (2015) in Handbook of Research on Sustainable Consumption, "*There is a growing phenomenon within marketing practice over the last three decades has been the intersection between societal concerns about sustainability, consumer behaviour and the marketing of products and services across a range of key markets*" (Lucia & John 2015).

By focusing on sustainable fashion and the role of branding messaging in influencing consumer purchasing decisions, this thesis aims to contribute to these ongoing discussions on sustainable consumption, and impact of green marketing. It recognizes that marketing can be a powerful tool for promoting sustainability and seeks to explore how environmental sustainability messaging can be effectively integrated into marketing strategies to drive positive consumer behaviours.

One prominent observation made from research has been, sustainable fashion brands do not effectively communicate their values to their consumers which could have been a reason for the action gap with the consumers towards their sustainable action when it comes to fashion.

Some of the factors that contributed to this issue could be:

- Lack of efficient sustainable marketing focused campaign.
- Fashion brands not prioritising sustainable branding.
- Lack of education and awareness marketing campaign by the fashion companies to address its sustainable values.

Through an extensive investigation of consumer perceptions and behaviours within the context of sustainable fashion, this thesis aims to assess results which will be informative towards making a sustainable marketing strategy and contribute to the development of more sustainable consumption.

Understanding the influence of sustainable branding on consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions, businesses can benefit into tailoring a better sustainable marketing strategy to align with consumer preferences for sustainability, In the end resulting to more responsible consumption practice.

2.2 Thesis Objective and purpose

The primary objective of this thesis is to understand how sustainable branding affects consumer's perception, in the context of fashion. The aim is to properly understand how consumers perceive a sustainable branding, how it affects their purchasing decision, and be able to recommend practical ways to implement an effect sustainable marketing strategy.

Further into this study, the methodology will be extensively discussed on how the objective will be achieved. The result gathered during this research will be used as a basis of evaluating the significance of sustainable branding and its impact on consumer's decision.

This thesis purpose is to gather insights that will be beneficial not only to businesses but as well encompass various stakeholders which includes marketers and consumers, by encouraging greater adoption of sustainable practices.

The overall objective of this thesis "sustainable branding, consumers perception in the context of fashion" is to understand the existing action gap with the consumers and encourage a more sustainable lifestyle among consumers with marketers embracing a more sustainable marketing strategy. Lastly, this thesis aims to reveal the crucial role of marketers in moulding the right strategies that promote sustainability, which will contribute to an environmental impact.

Further into this academic research paper, it will delve into the research questions in details, giving clarity for this thesis process. These research questions would shed more light into sustainable branding, consumers perception in the context of fashion, this will serve as a guide for marketers and companies in understanding how much impact they have on consumer purchasing decisions and, by extension, the environment.

2.3 Thesis Structure

This structure of this thesis is in six chapters and subchapters giving in-depth knowledge on each chapter for better clarification. It starts with an introduction to the thesis, thesis plan, sustainable branding, research methodology, recommendation, and conclusion. The theories will serve as a theoretical framework of this thesis.

2.4 Research question

This thesis aims to explore series of questions to give a clarity to the sustainable branding, consumers perception in the context of fashion industry. The main question is:

“Do fashion brands effectively communicate their sustainable actions to their consumers?”

This is research questions is to align it with the main objective that is to properly understand how sustainable branding can influence consumer’s perception on a brand or product, in this context it will be delving into the fashion industry.

Subsequent questions to be explored would be:

“What is consumers loyalty to fashion brands that are sustainable?”

“How can fashion brands effectively communicate their sustainability values to consumers in a way that motivates sustainable purchasing behaviour?”

The first sub questions are trying to understand consumers loyalty towards sustainable lifestyle choices in the fashion industry, this is to better understand the action gap with consumers and have a possible answer to the quiz of it is due to ignorance of the consumers. The second sub question drives a more concise

question to analyse the actionable steps fashion brands can deploy to create a sustainable branding that resonates with the consumer.

This aims to understand the effect of sustainable branding on consumer's perception in the fashion world and the key triggers that makes this effective.

This thesis aims to concentrate on giving a comprehensive response to these research questions, the result will serve as guide for the entire process the whole thesis, and aid future researchers on this.

2.5 Concept

This thesis will be an introduction and explanation of sustainability, sustainable fashion, and how sustainable branding is perceived by consumer in fashion towards their purchasing decision. The theories will serve as a theoretical framework of this thesis.

The literary review will establish the base, conducted interviews, and theoretical framework for the thesis. The terms "sustainable branding" and "sustainable fashion" will be explained here, because this thesis topic is sustainable branding, consumers perception in the context of sustainable fashion, it is important to know, understand, and be familiarised with the definitions of these terminologies.

By defining these terms, it serves as a guide of clarification to readers to have a better understanding of the topic and the crucial concepts that requires, this is to take into consideration when creating a sustainable marketing strategy.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review section will focus on the theoretical framework and the core aspects of sustainability that are deemed relevant in fashion. Examining the main aspects surrounding sustainability that pertain to the fashion industry.

Furthermore, will be looking closely into what sustainability means, green washing, sustainable fashion, and fast fashion. Carefully examining the deciding factor of these terminologies and how they could help in building a sustainable branding that could properly be perceived by the consumer in the fashion industry. lo

Therefore, it is important to give a detail explanation of the necessary theories to give a good clarity of this thesis topic and aim. The information used for this are sourced mainly from conducted interviews, reliable articles, journals, and published books in related field. This is used for varying opinions and a good authenticator to the reliability of claims made.

Lastly, there has been publications by government organisations, non-government organisations been used, the EU has over the years pressured companies to publish their sustainable claims to enable fact checking on tenuity, and not a situation of greenwashing. Further into this study, sustainability will be extensively discussed and as well as greenwashing.

The main site used to source the information was on google scholar with keywords being sustainable branding, sustainability, fast fashion, and sustainable fashion. This brought up varieties of publications related to this topic.

3.1 Sustainability

What is sustainability? Sustainability was becoming a concept in 1987 with the publication of the Brundtland Report which notified the effect of environmental actions on economic and global development. Nowadays, sustainability has now

been seen as a buzzword and a box to tick off for corporations trying to adhere to government regulations.

In simpler term, sustainability is making everyday choices with consciousness of its effects on the future, while sustainable development is the comprehensive approach to process that leads to achieving sustainable goals. (Shaker 2015)

There are three components or pillars that make up sustainability, which are namely environmental, economic, and social.

Environmental sustainability is perhaps the most common pillar and made referenced to a lot of times when people think or talk about sustainability. Environmental sustainability involves taking care of the nature while being careful of our actions that could directly impact it, like deforestation, pollution, waste generation, carbon footprints, and water usage. (Enel 2023)

Social sustainability could be seen as how well beings of people and communities are met with same strength of equality and fairness. Social sustainability sees to the affairs of workers to be working in a good condition, no child labour, fair wages, everyone having access to basic human rights, access to education, and employment irrespective of cultural background. is about treating employees fairly and ensuring responsible, ethical, and sustainable treatment of employees, stakeholders, and the community in which a business operates. (SDG 1 2020).

Economic sustainability involves a company in operation must be making enough profit that can sustain the future of the company. This way, the company is not just making money anyway but in an efficient, innovative way that provides stability to the income of the company and keep them running for a long time.

3.2 Greenwashing

Greenwashing can be defined as an explicitly or non-explicit action by an organisation inferring they are taking an action towards environmental impact, to

deceive stakeholders. This could be in their messaging or on their products (de Freitas Netto et., 2020, 7-10).

Organisations often exhibit greenwashing by marketing a sustainable initiative they are doing that is not actually happening. This could ultimately have a great consequence on the company's financials (Conaway et al., 2012).

There are three ways greenwashing can be done. Corporate legitimacy theory, this is a situation where the pragmatic and moral legitimacy are reduced, another method of greenwashing is selective disclosure, this is when the bad environmental impacts are stated, and the positive ones exaggerated.

Lastly, decoupling, is when the company claims to be making a sustainable action but there is no proof or evidence of the claim. (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020, 6).

A common example of greenwashing in fashion is when companies use words like "eco-friendly" without giving a notable example of what part or process of the product that is eco-friendly or beneficial to the environment.

Unfortunately, misinformation about sustainability gains popularity, this happens because they are often amplified by marketers without any investigation of how genuine the companies are making efforts to make environmental impact (Anguelov 2021, 48).

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the fashion companies, and the marketers to tell a true story on the sustainability value of the company supply chains. This information should include evidence and the solutions they are creating for the social and environment. Sustainability is a delicate topic, and it is required for fashion brands to be honest and transparent when they implement it in their messaging. (Anguelov 2021, 53).

3.3 Sustainable Branding

What is sustainable branding? Sustainable branding is an approach, that implements the integration of environmental, social, and economic issues into its business operations. A business that is considered sustainable is to be able to

engage in products that are ethically sourced, a good working condition for its workers, and an environmentally friendly supply chain process.

The EU regulations governing sustainability regulations in business and businesses seeing a shift in demand from consumers for a sustainable brand has made many companies lean more into adopting sustainable practice. It has been seen that companies that are seen as sustainable are one with competitive advantage, reputation among consumers which differentiates them from their counterparts in the business.

This is why it is important for fashion brands to be sustainable.

Furthermore, within the European Union market, the EU directives has created an acceptable benchmark to be adhered by. Based on the research done on this thesis, which would be extensively analysed later, an observation made from the response indicates the consumers are ready to patronise a sustainable fashion product.

However, one nagging question toward this was “how do they know which company is a sustainable fashion brand when they do not effectively communicate their values?”. This was a situation of the consumers are ready to get into sustainable fashion but inadequate sustainable branding from the fashion companies separates them from taking the right action in this direction.

One notable advantages of sustainable branding are that it gives businesses a competitive advantage and build consumer trust. Consumers though do have reservations towards cost of sustainable brand are still willingly to pay extra for a sustainable product, as they believe this is a social for them to make an impact to protect the environment. (Mulder & Wempe 2017).

3.4 Green marketing

This terminology has been subject to numerous interpretations by different theorists over the last half century. However, to simplify its definition based on various studies, green marketing is the marketing strategy targeted at promoting environmentally friendly products and way of life.

The first time “green marketing” was accepted as a concept was in 1967, with one of the early journals “Ecological marketing” by Henion & Kinnear (1967) they were one of the first giving it more meaning by stating green marketing as marketing initiatives emphasizing on eco-friendly industries, focusing on the consistency of brand goals with consumer needs while considering environmental impact.

Beyond the marketer’s role to appease to the needs of the consumer’s needs, marketing is subjected to some ethical conducts to consider the long-term effects on its end consumer, and the society.

According to (Sheth et al. 1988) *Social responsibility in marketing covers a broad range of issues such as government regulations, environmental impact, consumerism, political and social marketing*. Given the immense responsibility marketing has in collecting and converting resources into products, it is not unexpected that there is conflict on the approach this is implemented (Sheth et al. 1988).

Coddington & Walter (1990) considered green marketing as a set-in motion marketing actions that detect environmental management as a form of business. Mintu & Lozada (1993) referred to green marketing as the implementation of marketing gear to kickstart the exchanges that favours the protection and preservation of the environment.

According to (Polonsky 1994) *it regarded ecological or green marketing as actions targeted at fulfilling the human needs with less drastic effects on the environment*.

(Chan 2004) gives its a new definition, defining green marketing *as the branding of products believed to be environmentally friendly, emphasising a holistic approach to marketing that encompasses production, promotion, usage, and disposal practices that minimize environmental harm*.

Green marketing is attributed to different funnels of activities, which are sustainable tailored marketing strategies, adaptation of product, new product, changes to supply chain, and packaging modifications.

3.2 Sustainable Fashion

The European Parliament in (2020) cited that the fashion industry is one of the largest contributors to pollution in the world which was primarily because of over production to meet the demand of consumers within a short period of time for maximum profit. The industry has well been flagged over the years on its poor waste management of excess products (McNeil and Moore 2015).

Sustainable fashion is a type of fashion model which prioritises environmental and societal impact, considering how ecological and ethical could be merged into profitable business ventures.

This layered concept comprises of numerous aspects, which includes material sourcing (I.e. "recycled," "organic," or cruelty-free options), production methods ("handmade," "vintage," or "custom-made fashion"), locality ("locally sourced fashion"), and in accordance with fair trade regulations.

Over the last decade, there has been an evolvement to slow fashion movement, with sustainable products now regarded with new terminologies to appeal to new generations, terms like eco-friendly, green-, and ethical-fashion (Carey and Cervellon 2014).

One of the first movements was criticism from animal rights activists for the use of fur or animal skin in fashion clothing products (Emberley, 1998). It could be argued that the fashion industry is among the top two recorded to be the most polluted industry in the world, with every garment cycle a danger to the planet and its recorded irresponsible social actions with the supply chain (Business of Fashion 2015).

Sustainable fashion is not reduced to just the finished products like many people perceive it as, sustainable fashion as well encompasses the company's supply chain. As earlier stated, the supply chain of a fashion brand has a direct impact on not only environmental impact but social impact as well (Valor 2007).

Sustainable fashion could be traced as far back as 1960, the emergence was because of consumer's awareness of their fashion consumption impact on the environment because of the process of manufacturing of their purchased clothes, this called for a reform in the industry (Jung and Jin 2014).

At first, before "eco-fashion" gained momentum, it was initially met with scepticism in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the reasons being that the movement had the anti-fur campaigns, a campaign aimed at curbing animal cruelty in the fashion industry, and this ruffled some feather in the late 1990s. According to Joergens (2006) ethical fashion is defined by fair and just labour conditions, sustainable business models, the use of environmentally friendly materials (Johnston 2012), and considerations of certifications and traceability (Henninger 2015).

This thesis will be defining sustainable fashion as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (WCED 1987). This definition is the most cited definition used to date (Baumgartner, 2009).

Sustainable fashion has been regarded as an oxymoron, it is assumed that fashion is always in, and out of styles, which could be contradictory to the long-term perspective of sustainability (Walker 2006). A piece of clothing can be transformed from simply being a wearable item to a unique creation that suggests creativity and character, as well as expressing a particular identity (Poon and Fatt 2001).

3.3 Fast fashion

Fast fashion became a topic of discussions prominently when environmental consciousness became a factor of purchasing decision for consumers. Fast fashion could be referred to the production of low-cost fashion products that imitates an original fashion style and are produced at a fast rate to circulates the market.

This fashion model puts an emphasises on fast production, distribution, and marketing processes, this enables retailers sell at a cheap cost to encourages overconsumption.

Over the past decade, there has been a rise in fast fashion, which is a response to consumers' insatiable desire for new clothing at a rapid pace, and cheap cost. Referencing a documentary produced by *The True Cost* (2015) It highlighted how the world consumes around 80 billion new pieces of clothing every year, 400% more than the consumption twenty years ago.

This has compounded these environmental and ethical concerns. There has been numerous journals and articles highlighting on the harmful impact of fast fashion practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is defined as the process and techniques implemented to research a selected topic, this enables the researcher to have an objective overview of the topic, and decide on the reliability, and validity of the topic studied. (Saunders 2009).

In this case, the research topic is “sustainable branding: consumer’s perception in the fashion industry” and broadening the knowledge with research question “Do fashion brands effectively communicate their sustainable actions to their consumers?”

There have been numerous studies on sustainable branding in the fashion industry and more results came up on sustainability in fashion at the time of research for this thesis.

To get a better comprehensive understanding of this topic, qualitative research was conducted through primary data sources to be able to fully understand the consumer’s perceptions on sustainable branding in fashion. To give room for diversity, the research was conducted with people majorly living in Europe.

Qualitative research is non numerical and characteristically subjective. A primary source is referred to as source of information that provides a first-hand account of a situation, shows original data, or it could be a document that shows first-hand account of an historical data. There are different ways to acquire primary source, which includes: an interview, photograph, documentary, diaries, letters, or a scientific study in a journal. (Healey library 2024)

3.4 Data Collection

This research approach of acquiring data was through conducted interviews which are a qualitative research method for primary source data collection, the primary goal of the interview was to get an in-depth knowledge to get a diverse

response to give more clarity to the topic from the point of view of the people selected for the interview (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011, 95.).

This was an In-depth interview which the conversations were between the researcher and the interviewee, with more of active asking and listening to the responses.

It was a guided and semi-structured interviews with an outlined topic, but they were worded and sequenced differently. The tone of the conversation was somewhat conversational in a relaxed way and informal. While it is guided, there was a room for a flow according to each interviewee. (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011, 102.)

Consent was requested of all involved interviewed individuals to their interviews recorded and used of the purpose of this research.

This research took place mainly digitally with the interviews conducted on Microsoft teams, this gave it an informal flow of discussion while there is still a flow to the questions with average time of the interview being twelve minutes. Interview questions were designed as open, asked directly. The conversations were recorded digitally, transcribed for data analysis, and referencing.

3.5 Limitation

The limitation to this thesis research is in the numbers of interviewed consumers, with a few 20 people interviewed in total, it is not possible to make generalisation with this study. Thus, making it subjective in claims and finding.

3.6 Data Validity

For the reliability of this thesis, the limited number of consumers interviewed might pose for concerns towards its reliability. Reliability of a research is to

whether data collection or analysis procedures will be with a consistent result. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016, 305).

In a qualitative like this, in practicality it is almost not feasible to guarantee that other research results from another researcher will replicate this finding because of its subjective nature. (Saunders et al. 2009, 326-328.)

Validity is defined as to how best a research finding can give an accurate description or explanation of a research with a form of proof to attest it. The purpose of using validity to evaluate qualitative research is to make sure that the report is precise, and accurate. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016, 305.) However, in qualitative research, validity is not an easily attainable goal to accomplish (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011, 48).

In qualitative research, validity types often include it being theoretical, descriptive, and interpretative, theoretical. What it means to be descriptive validity is that the actual description is mostly precise.

Theoretical validity deals with the adequacy of the suggested theory. Moreover, it is essential validity is demonstrated, for example, the explanation of a mentioned term. (Ghuri & Gronhaug 2010, 210-211.)

The theoretical background of this research is mainly from conducted interviews, scientific journals, and published research. Therefore, the validity is not affected. For a scientific backing, all research materials used well interpreted, and analysed. The questions in the conducted interviews were with clarity and adequately answered in confirmation to the study.

3.7 Result and analysis

The theoretical framework of this thesis evaluated various aspects sustainability, sustainable fashion, green marketing, sustainable branding, and fast fashion.

This is an empirical study with no commissioning company, the research was conducted as qualitative research, interviewing consumers, this is a primary

source approach to have a first-hand account on the perception of sustainable brand when it comes to the fashion industry, and why there is an action gap.

Analysing based on the collected data and theory, the following information gave clarity to the research questions.

“Do fashion brands effectively communicate their sustainable actions to their consumers?”

From responses gathered during this research, it was observed that the action gap exists majorly because sustainable fashion brands fail to communicate their sustainable values to their consumers.

“Yes, there's still a lot of gaps that they need to fill when it comes to communication of company sustainable values, they need to also try to use other communication methods.

Adding to advertising, not just the product, not just influencers, make sure that when you are advertising using other means, other media, new media try to add it as a key prop key part of the message, not just the not just the properties, the characteristics of the products not telling me that oh, this is a long sleeve shirt.

Tell me about the materials that it was made for.” (Akinmade 2024, Recording 13:03)

According to studies on consumers, they seem to be ready to take incorporate the sustainable lifestyle, and support companies that are sustainable responsible (Barone et al., 2000).

From consumers responses, they are loyal to brands that take corporate social responsibility seriously and this could be seen as the company's influence on consumers with their sustainable branding.

This further reflects on the significance of branding, how it has a direct impact on customer opinions about social responsibility of companies should not be overlooked, and how all these contributes to general perception of the consumer on the company (Kang and Hustvedt 2014).

Sustainable branding gives fashion companies a competitive advantage, it builds, and strengthen trust. Consumers are willingly to pay the cost of sustainable products because this gives them a sense of purpose towards protecting the planet (Mulder and Wempe 2017).

One notable advantages of sustainable branding are that it gives businesses a competitive advantage and build consumer trust.

Companies can build a positive reputation by addressing social and environmental issues. When they address issues like this, it appeals to the consumers that are sustainability conscious or making attempt to be one. This is a way to connect to their emotion and build loyalty. (Kotler and Keller 2016)

4 RECOMMENDATION

Sustainability is now getting implemented in many countries across the and consumers are getting conscious of this but there is still a lot of gaps noticed in the fashion industry, it is the response of the fashion companies to educate, and market their sustainable values to the consumers.

During the time of research for this thesis, consumers were asked on what recommendation that would give the fashion industry in improvement to see to reach the consumers and this was some of the answers:

“So, I think for me, I would say, fashion brands should try and make and products that won't cause damage to the environment.

That's one and try to let your consumers know as well that you're doing the right thing and give them reasons why they should obviously stick to brands that do the right thing, because I know there's a lot of industrialization going on and very soon you know, the afforestation is not going to be happening.

We hope it still stays the same way, but there's a lot of things going on. Climate change, global warming, and we don't want all that to mount up because, Oh well, we are taking fashion brands and we're producing using sustainable textiles...

So yeah, a lot more of information should be put out there.

And I'm not just for the clothing in industry, the whole production, no, there is a science to everything, and I think they should be much.

Information going out to the public to say, oh, this this is this is the dangerous that could be done if you know, you know doing things the right way or you know or if you're encouraging certain kind of brands or the way they're their production is done.

So yeah, there should be a lot more awareness basically on that and they should also, and they should also push for more opportunities in renewable energy, waste management and sustainable designs.” (Precious 2024, recoding 3. 20:8)

“I think the whole idea of sustainable fashion itself is a big initiative, and it's nice to see that fashion brands are taking this initiative towards a, you know, greener future.

Greener environment. So, I think this would something be very helpful and if many brands incorporate this idea in, in their business. And I think that would be very helpful.

And in terms of communication or the way how they communicate, I think like I said, it's just that like this is not really spoken of much. So, if it does kind of like become more of a big thing. So, they kind of need to like really to put it out more so that people have really.

Or people know about sustainable clothing, and they have knowledge about this. Then I think that would be very helpful for consumers.” (Prithviraj Kalburgi 2024, recording 4. 13:07)

From these responses, consumers are ready to be sustainable but there is a need for action from the fashion companies to meet their desire by adopting sustainable stagey in their marketing. Companies that adopt sustainable branding have advantage of winning consumers trust and gain merit over other companies that do not communicate their values. Mulder & Wempe 2017).

5 CONCLUSION

The main of this thesis was to understand the reason for the action gap with consumers that claim to be sustainable with their contradictory action towards taking sustainable action when it comes to fashion, how to properly implement sustainable branding, and expectations from consumers.

This thesis is relevant to fashion business owners, marketers, and consumers that are interested in adopting sustainability into the core of their businesses.

20 consumers across Europe were interviewed to know more about how they perceive sustainable branding and how it influences their sustainable decisions when it comes to fashion.

Questions were asked about barriers encountered when trying to buy sustainable fashion products and the two consistent answers to this was, cost, and unawareness of companies that are sustainable because values were not communicated.

It is evident it is not enough for fashion companies to be sustainable but as observed, there are still a lot of consumers unaware of what sustainable fashion is, it's direct effect on people in the supply chain due to unfair labour, uncondusive working environment, use of child labour, and the environmental impact it has from waste generation due to overproduction.

Knowledge is such a powerful tool and if consumers are made aware of this information. From the conducted research, consumers are ready to get into sustainable fashion but do not know how or which fashion brand, fashion brands implementing sustainable branding will nudge them into making a better sustainable action when it comes to fashion.

Fashion brands need to prioritise their sustainable branding like their other products showcase to carry their consumers along on their sustainable prices, and values. This is not only good for the business to get a competitive advantage

but will be helping the planet by one person that is embracing sustainability lifestyle.

REFERENCES

Anguelov, N. The sustainable fashion quest: Innovation in business and policy. First ed. Boca Raton, FL: Routledge: 2021. Read 6th March 2024

Barnes, Liz., and Gaynor. Lea-Greenwood. *Fast Fashion*. 1st ed. Bradford, England: Emerald Group Publishing, 2006. Print.

Consumer Behavior Characteristics in Fast Fashion. Textilhogskolan. Sweden. URL: (<https://hb.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1312256/FULLTEXT01>)

Cude, B.J. 1993. Consumer Perceptions of Environmental Marketing Claims. An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Consumer Studies & Home Economics* 17. (3) . 207–225.

DAHL, Richard. "GREEN WASHING: DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE BUYING?" *Environmental health perspectives* 118.6 (2010): A246–A252. Web.

De la Motte, Hanna et al. *Sustainable Fashion and Textile Recycling*. Basel: MDPI - Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, 2022. Print.

EU Consumers to Be Better Informed on Sustainability of Products Hamburg: dpa Deutsche Presse-Agentur GmbH.

EU Proposes New Consumer Rights on Sustainability and a Ban on Greenwashing. *Sporting Goods Intelligence Europe*. 2022. Print.

Fischer, D. 2016. Sustainability communication. In *Sustainability Science*, Edited by Springer: Dordrecht, pp 139- 148. Available at: (https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-7242-6_12) Read at: Feb 25th.2024

Fletcher, K. (2010) Slow fashion: An invitation for systems change. *Fashion practice*, pp 259- 265. Available at: (<https://doi.org/10.2752/175693810X12774625387594>) Read: 15th March 2024

Fouziya, R., & Gracious, J. 2018. Awareness of green marketing and its influence on consumer perception: An exploratory study. *Sumedha Journal of Management*, 72, 62-68. Retrieved from. <https://libproxy.tuni.fi/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fawareness-green-marketing-influence-on-consumer%2Fdocview%2F2149602740%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D14242>

Gerlich, Michael. 2023. The Rise of Collaborative Consumption in EU Member States: Exploring the Impact of Collaborative Economy Platforms on Consumer Behavior and Sustainable Consumption

Green Strategy (2019) Seven forms of sustainable fashion. Available at: (<https://www.greenstrategy.se/sustainable-fashion/seven-forms-of-sustainable-fashion/>) Read: 14 March 2024.

Green Marketing as a Positive Driver Toward Business Sustainability, edited by Vannie Naidoo, and Rahul Verma, IGI Global, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central, (<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tampere/detail.action?docID=5799421>) Han, S.L.C., Henninger, C.E., Apeageyi, P. and Tyler, D. 2017. Determining effective sustainable fashion communication strategies. Sustainability in fashion. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 127-149. doi: (https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51253-2_7)

Hasanspahic, M (2016) Sustainable fashion practices, strategies and meanings. Available at: (<http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=8879292&fileId=8879299>) Read: 19 March 2024.

Henninger, C.E., Alevizou, P.J. and Oates, C.J. (2016), "What is sustainable fashion?", Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 400-416. (<https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-07-2015-0052>)

How data is making the business case for sustainable fashion Josh Ayto, Hayeon Kim September 2020 (<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-emea/consumer-insights/consumer-trends/how-data-making-business-case-sustainable-fashion/>)

Lee. Eun-Ju et al. 2020. How to Nudge Your Consumers toward Sustainable Fashion Consumption: An fMRI Investigation. Journal of business research . 642–651.

Malhotra, Naresh K. 2016. Marketing in and for a Sustainable Society. First edition. Bingley. England.

Marketing in and for a Sustainable Society, edited by Naresh K. Malhotra, Emerald Publishing Limited, 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tampere/detail.action?docID=4586025>. Created from tampere on 2024-02-29 19:47:37.

Palomo-Domínguez, Isabel, Rodrigo Elías-Zambrano, and Víctor Álvarez-Rodríguez. "Gen Z's Motivations towards Sustainable Fashion and Eco-Friendly Brand Attributes: The Case of Vinted." Sustainability (Basel, Switzerland) 15.11 (2023): 8753-. Web.

Rausch, Theresa Maria, and Cristopher Siegfried Kopplin. "Bridge the Gap: Consumers' Purchase Intention and Behavior Regarding Sustainable Clothing." *Journal of cleaner production* 278 (2021): 123882-. Web.

Richford, Rhonda. "Sustainability: European Fashion Alliance Addresses Regulation Concerns at EU Parliament." *WWD* (2023): 2-. Print.

Schuetze, Thorsten, and Lorenzo Chelleri. "Urban Sustainability Versus Green-Washing—Fallacy and Reality of Urban Regeneration in Downtown Seoul." Sustainability (Basel, Switzerland) 8.1 (2016): 33–33. Web.

Shen, Bin et al. "Perception of Fashion Sustainability in Online Community." *Journal of the Textile Institute* 105.9 (2014): 971–979. Web. United Nations (2021) Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all. Available at: (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/>)

Suciu, Sorin. "COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINABILITY." *Professional communication and translation studies* 11.11 (2018): 3–6. Web.

Van der Zee, Eva. 2022. Sustainability Labels in the Shadow of EU Consumer Law. *Studies in European Economic Law and Regulation*. Vo I. 22. Switzerland. Springer International Publishing. Wank, et al. 2023. Read: 1 April 2024

Wicker, A (2020) Fashion has a misinformation problem, That's bad for the environment. Available at: (<https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2020/1/27/21080107/fashion-environmentfacts-statistics-impact>) Read at: 1 April 2024.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Research questions

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Introduction and Background: What is your interest in sustainable fashion?
2. Perception of Sustainable Branding: What comes to mind when you hear the term "sustainable fashion brand?" Can you recall any sustainable fashion brands you've encountered? What makes them stand Out?
3. Influence of Sustainable Branding on Purchasing Decisions: Have you deliberately chosen a fashion item because of its sustainability credentials? What factors influence your decision to purchase from a sustainable fashion Brand
4. Challenges and Barriers: a. Do you encounter any challenges when finding or purchasing sustainable fashion items?
Do you believe sustainable fashion brands effectively communicate their values to consumers?
Have you encountered any greenwashing in fashion?
5. Brand Loyalty and Trust: a. Do you feel more loyal to sustainable fashion? brands compared to traditional fashion brands? Why or why not?
Have you ever stopped purchasing from a fashion brand due to sustainability concerns?
6. Future Expectations and Recommendations: a. What improvements or What changes would you like to see in the sustainable fashion industry?
In your opinion, what could fashion brands do to better engage consumers in sustainable practices?

