

SLOW FASHION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract The garment industry is the second largest polluter of the environment. This sector is characterized by high consumption of water, chemicals, and greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, textiles make up a significant part of municipal production. In this context, the sector of so-called fast fashion, or fast fashion, producing much trend-based clothing, can be particularly problematic. This leads to frequent changes in clothing and the formation of large amounts of textile waste. Therefore, it seems crucial to increase consumer interest in sustainability issues and identify their attitudes to sustainable fashion, thus strengthening the trend of slow fashion. When buying clothes, factors such as quality, brand, price, whether the garment corresponds to current trends, and whether the clothing is made with respect for the environment can be considered. This article aims to identify the importance of the sustainable fashion factor in the consumer's purchasing decisions. The set goal will be achieved using questionnaire survey methods and secondary data analysis. The benefit of this article will be a well-arranged analysis of consumer attitudes towards sustainable fashion with a particular focus on fashion made from recycled materials.

Keywords:
consumer
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slow fashion,
sustainable
development,
SDGs

JEL:
M31, P46, Q01

1 Introduction

The fashion and garment industries are important sectors of many national economies, and evidence of the production of textiles and clothing goes back to the distant past. Mainly in the second half of the 20th century, there was a massification of this sector, which was caused by the growing demand for textiles in general and the emergence of several fashion brands that established themselves on the market mainly because they offered relatively high-quality, affordable and trendy fashion (Mandarić, Hunjet et al., 2022). The problem is that the garment industry is the second largest polluter of the environment. This sector is characterized by high consumption of water, chemicals, and also greenhouse gas emissions (Bailey et al., 2022). In addition, textiles account for a significant part of the municipal waste generated (De Oliveira et al., 2022; Filho et al., 2019). The sector of so-called fast fashion, which produces a large number of trend-based clothing, can be particularly problematic in this context. This leads to frequent changes in clothing and the creation of large amounts of textile waste (de Oliveira et al., 2022).

The situation described above is becoming increasingly unsustainable, and prominent fashion chains with so-called fast fashion are looking for ways to fulfil their economic goals and, at the same time, behave socially responsibly, especially regarding environmental protection (Bick et al., 2018). This is probably the reason why these chains are trying to focus their attention on so-called slow fashion. Slow fashion is an aspect of sustainable fashion and a concept describing the opposite of fast fashion, part of the "slow movement" advocating for clothing and apparel manufacturing concerning people, the natural environment and animals (Solino et al., 2020). One of the possibilities of so-called sustainable fashion is using recycled materials, e.g. PET bottles or other suitable materials, to produce textiles (Harmsen et al., 2021). The will on the part of these companies to bring about a positive change in their business is obvious, the question remains how consumers themselves react to these products, and it is precisely the determination of partial attitudes of consumers towards sustainable fashion that is the subject of this article.

2 Literature Review

Surveys show consumer interest in sustainability issues is growing, and engagement in this area has increased during the pandemic. This means that the trend of so-called slow fashion is gradually strengthening. As the leading representatives of fast fashion, fashion chains have also had to react to this fact and adopt sustainability aspects to the demand for less environmentally friendly clothing (Dangelico et al., 2022; De Oliveira et al., 2022). One way to make the fast fashion sector more sustainable is using recycled textiles for clothing. Therefore, fashion chains have started to use these materials to produce (Filho et al., 2019).

When buying clothes, factors such as quality, brand, price, whether the garment corresponds to current trends, and whether the clothing is made with respect for the environment can be considered (Colasante & D'Adamo, 2021). However, the question remains about how important this factor is in purchasing decisions because even a consumer's concern about the state of the environment is not necessarily reflected in his purchasing behaviour (Mason et al., 2022).

The stumbling block in this market may be whether consumers believe in the fashion chain's positive environmental impacts made from recycled materials. This is also related to whether they are sufficiently informed about this issue to make informed decisions without requiring lengthy searches for information.

Based on the literature review and set goals of the article, a research hypothesis has been established, i.e., an unverified claim that can be statistically tested. An alternative hypothesis to the null hypothesis was verified. If the null hypothesis is rejected, an alternative hypothesis is accepted. For hypothesis testing, the research chose a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, representing the risk of erroneous rejection of the null hypothesis. The following hypotheses were set:

H₀: Searching for (purchasing) clothing from recycled materials does not depend on environmental attitudes.

H₁: Searching for (purchasing) clothing from recycled materials depends on the attitude to the environment.

3 Methodology

The research was carried out as part of the research project Determinants of Consumer Behavior and their Influence on Typology, registered under the number SP2023/052 at VSB-Technical University Ostrava. The main objective of the submitted article the research was to identify consumers' attitudes to the fashion offered by large clothing chains (fast fashion) made using recycled materials. "fast fashion" is defined as "inexpensive clothing products produced by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends." This makes it easy to see why fast fashion appeals to a large market, and its low prices and trendy styles tempt people to buy large amounts of clothing simultaneously (Wu, 2020). Another sub-goal was to find out the relationship of fast fashion consumers to the environment.

The following research questions follow the defined objectives and further develop them:

- What is the attitude of fast fashion consumers to the chain of clothes offered from recycled materials, and do they believe in their environmental friendliness?
- Is there a link between the search for these products and a positive attitude toward the environment?

3.1 Research method

Primary data was collected using the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) method. It is a quantitative research method where the interviewing is carried out using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted from 11/22 to 02/2023. This method brings several advantages but also disadvantages. Benefits include speed, cost savings, and the ability to use supporting visual or audio materials. Conversely, areas for improvement can be seen in the need to access the Internet or the problem with the credibility of respondents' answers (Malhotra et al., 2017; Tahal et al., 2017).

3.2 Sample

The method was chosen to ensure a sample of respondents of sufficient size. It also considers that fashion chains often have e-shops linked to brick-and-mortar stores. It can therefore be assumed that their customers move in an online environment. The core set consisted of women and men aged 15 to 64 (residents of the Czech Republic) who visit fashion chains and, at the same time, notice clothing made from recycled materials. Included in this set were both consumers who search for and buy these products but also consumers who have noticed these garments but do not cool them. Both respondents are suitable because they have at least an essential awareness of fashion made from recycled materials and can express their views on it. The age restriction for respondents aged 15 to 64 was due to the chosen method – online interviewing. This age group can be assumed to be in the Internet environment.

The sample size was planned at 385 respondents, and the quota sampling method was chosen for selecting respondents. This method makes achieving the sample's representativeness possible by setting quotas for desired traits (e.g., age or sex). This ensures that the sample will be similar to the primary sample and thus bear the characteristics of the basic model (Tahal et al., 2017).

The gender and age of the respondents were determined as quota variables. Data from the Czech Statistical Office for 2021 determined the quotas. Gender was defined as the first quota variable. In the age range of 15–64 years, there is a slight predominance of men over women, namely by 2% (CZSO, 2022). The second quota variable was age. According to him, five age categories were formed.

4 Results

As mentioned above, the marketing research was supposed to answer two fundamental questions, namely, what is the attitude of fast fashion consumers to the chain of clothing offered from recycled materials and do the consumers believe in the environmental friendliness of fashion chain furthermore, whether there is a connection between the search for these products and a positive relationship to the natural environment. Based on the data from the survey hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted.

To obtain a general overview, one of the questions was set to get information on which factors consumers consider when buying clothes, where one of the factors was the factor of environmentally friendly production. Another research issue presented in this article is the question about attitudes toward recycled clothing. The last question that will be given space within the report will be on the attitude to the environment so that one of the research questions can be answered and the established hypothesis confirmed or refuted.

4.1 Factors considered when buying clothes

Respondents were asked what factors they consider when buying clothes. Based on the data obtained, it can be stated that the most important for respondents when buying clothes are quality (83.1%), price (76.1%), and relatively more closely followed by current trends with 34.7%. "Production with respect for the environment" is a factor 21.2% of respondents consider. The answers "look," "fits/fits," and "comfort" were added after processing the respondents' answers. The test carried out, in this case, did not reveal any dependence of selected factors on identification questions. Quality and price are the most critical factors for both women and men. However, current trends are in third place for women (32.9%) and brand (38.6%) for men, considered by 10.3% of respondents. Depending on age, the factors of quality, price, and trends are also considered the most. Regarding differences in answers by education, while respondents with primary and secondary education mainly considered price (almost 95%), quality proved to be the dominant factor among respondents with university and tertiary professional education (82.6%). For respondents with an income of CZK 50,000 or more, the most important brand is the most important after quality (55.3%). According to the answers received, this factor is the least important for the income group of CZK 40-49 thousand and CZK 10,000 and less (Mikolášová, 2023).

4.2 Attitudes towards recycled clothing

Attitudes towards recycled clothing were analyzed based on ten claims. Respondents reported agreement with the claim on a scale where one meant utterly agree and a value of 5 completely disagreed. Respondents most agreed with the statement, "Wearing clothes made from recycled materials is trendy," and the average approval rating was 2.3. On the other hand, the least respondents agreed with the statement that "Clothing made from recycled materials is timeless (not subject to trends)." In

this case, the average consent value was 3.4. Furthermore, respondents agreed more that the production of recycled garments is environmentally friendly (average value 2.4) than that its disposal is environmentally friendly (average value 2.6). It is also clear that, on average, respondents tended to agree with all statements, or their position approached the neutral point (Mikolašová, 2023).

The T-test verified whether men and women agreed with these statements on average equally. For some claims, there are more significant differences in the average rating. The test also confirmed this fact carried out for a total of 6 shares. That clothing from recycled material is of good quality, easier to maintain, unaffordable, timeless, environmentally friendly, and has a small selection. It can be seen that the average rating of men, except for the statement "Clothing made from recycled materials is unaffordable (expensive).", is always higher. This means that they expressed a lower level of approval than women. Both male and female respondents most strongly agreed that wearing clothes made from recycled materials is trendy (average value 2.1 for women and 2.36 for men). Men disagreed the most with the statement that clothing made from recycled materials is not subject to trends (average value 3.6), and women that recycled dress is easy to maintain, with an average value of 3.21 (Mikolašová, 2023).

4.3 Attitudes towards the natural environment

In this question, respondents reported on a scale how often they do a given activity related to the relationship to ecology, with the value 1=very often and 5=never. Table 1 shows how often respondents perform a given activity on average. It can be seen that respondents recycle waste most often (average value 1.5) and contribute least often to organizations dealing with nature conservation (average value 3.74). Respondents are more likely to buy natural cosmetics (average value of 2.59) than organic food (average weight of 2.8) or other products made from recycled materials average value of 2.93 (Mikolašová, 2023).

To find out whether the answers of men and women differ, a T-test was performed, which showed the difference in two activities "I buy natural cosmetics" and "I consider environmental problems to be serious, and I take them into account when making purchasing decisions." On average, women buy natural cosmetics more often than men and consider environmental issues more often.

Table 1: Attitudes towards the natural environment

Activity	Average
I recycle waste	1,5
I consider environmental problems to be serious and I take them into account when making purchasing decisions	2,62
I buy other products from recycled materials (e.g. furniture) besides clothes	2,93
I buy natural cosmetics	2,59
I buy organic food	2,8
I avoid buying products of companies that do not respect the environment	3,21
I contribute to organizations that deal with nature conservation	3,73
I find out about the environmental impacts of purchased products	3,45
I read labels on clothes to check if they have been sustainably produced	3,17
I am willing to pay more for a product that is proven to be environmentally friendly	2,92

Source: Mikolášová (2023).

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Slow fashion as an aspect of sustainable fashion is becoming a trend and necessary for the future sustainable development of society and states' economies. Sustainable fashion describes the opposite of fast fashion, part of the "slow movement" advocating for clothing and apparel manufacturing concerning people, environment, and animals (Staniforth, 2010). Sustainable fashion is becoming a trend and necessary for the future sustainable development of society and states' economies. Sustainable fashion is gaining ground in the Czech market with increasing intensity. The authors consider it necessary to remind that their positive attitude towards concern for the environment is not only manifested when buying fashion, but as the green thinking survey showed, it is also evident in daily activities.

Based on the survey, it follows that the impact of fashion production on the environment is not one of the most important from the consumer's point of view. Still, it is essential in decision-making regardless of the consumer's gender, age, and income. Respondents perceive clothing made of recycled material as trendy as the most significant advantage, and the least favorable response was the claim that dress is timeless. As for the first research question, we can declare that consumers have a positive attitude to fashion made from recycled materials. As for the second research question, the link between attitudes towards fashion made from recycled materials

and perspectives towards the environment, women have shown a more significant link between 'green behaviour' and preference for style made from recycled materials. Marketing research was carried out within the Czech Republic, so in the future, there is an opportunity to conduct the same analysis with the consumers of another country and compare the results achieved. The alternative hypothesis "Searching (buying) clothing from recycled materials depends on the attitude to the environment" was verified.

Marketing research was conducted within the Czech Republic. The results of the conducted research can bring interesting information for fashion chains about who is a specific segment of sustainable fashion products. Due to the relevance of the topic and its growing importance in the future, it is possible to use the prepared research questions and the results of marketing research to implement marketing research in other countries and thus compare consumers' attitudes in different countries. This step would lead to a more comprehensive view of the issue of sustainable fashion and its future in the eyes of consumers.

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