



# Master Thesis

How does the perception of sustainability affect  
consumer behavior within the garment industry?

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MSc. Business Administration and Economics (Marketing)

Alik Mstoyan, Matus Rovder and Konstantinos Tasiopoulos

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Supervisor: Jonas Strømfeldt Eduardsen,

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## Preface:

The project was written and investigated as a part of the 4th semester of the MSc Program in Marketing at Aalborg University Business School. The basis of the project is based on the increased fascination regarding the Perception of sustainability, and the effects it has on consumer behavior. The researchers want to express gratitude to our Supervisor, Jonas Strømfeldt Eduardsen, for help and advice, regarding the project.

## Declaration of Authorship

This project was written by: Alik Mstoyan, Matus Rovder and Konstantinos Tasiopoulos.  
The researchers use references according to APA 6th.

## Statement



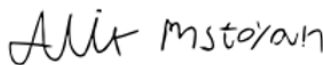
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Matus Rovder  
Study nr. 20182624



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Konstantinos Tasiopoulos  
Study nr. 20201852



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Name: Alik Mstoyan  
Study nr: 20176372]

By signing this document, the researchers confirms that all the group members have participated equally, and secondly: that everyone is responsible regarding the content.

## Abstract:

In this day and age, there is a visible paradigm shift with regard to sustainability. Large fast fashion brands such as H&M, Zara and others, are discovering the strategic value of appearing more sustainable. Using an extended version of Ajzen's theory of planned behavior and conducting a survey that investigates the participant's knowledge regarding the sustainability within the fashion industry, the researchers tried to discover what the average consumer's perception of sustainability really was, as well as understand their depth of knowledge regarding how sustainability worked in regard to the garment industry, more specifically the fast fashion industry. The authors of this research paper focus on three different dimensions to achieve this objective: (1) What are the key elements which positively affect consumer intention towards sustainable behavior? (2) To what extent does pricing affect consumer behavior regarding sustainability in the garment industry? (3) What additional prices are consumers willing to pay for more sustainable fashion products? The purpose of this paper is to get a better understanding of How does the perception of sustainability affect consumer behavior within the garment industry.

## 1.0 Introduction

In the introduction part of the project, the researchers will provide the readers with the background of the investigated concepts, will inform them about the relevancy of the research and finally will present the Problem Formulation (PF), the research questions and the project outline of the paper. While terms such as sustainable fashion and consumer behavior seem known to the audience a small introduction will be given as a way to familiarize the audience with the investigated topic. Firstly, the researchers will provide some information about the research background of the paper.

## Research Background

The concept of sustainability is not new; however, it received much attention in 2015 when "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" was adopted. As it is highlighted in the preamble part of the agenda:

*"This Agenda is a plan of action for people, the planet, and prosperity."*

(UN 2015b, p. 3)

In addition to that, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals," which is *"The world's shared plan to end extreme poverty, reduce inequality, and protect the planet by 2030"* (United Nations Foundation, n.d, p.1), *depict the needed changes for the world. Both SDGs and the 2030 Agenda* aim to develop a concrete plan for individuals, governments, and companies to achieve SDGs goals in 15 years. Sustainable development is a collaborative process, and actions should be taken at all levels, from production to consumption. While in some cases, corporations, NGOs, and individuals behave sustainably without any dictation, there are other examples where governments had to implement regulations or incentives to achieve that sustainable transformation. Different components of this plan are referred to different actors. Hence this paper will focus on the consumer side, and the respective agenda in that direction will be taken into account. All in all consumers have an essential role in that sustainable transformation because their nature is multidimensional, from their desire to their actual behavior and even their knowledge of sustainable issues. In that direction as we can see in a Deloitte's report of 2020 and a Business Wire's study both of which focus on consumers' willingness to pay more for eco-friendlier and sustainable products. We realize that consumers generally tend to prefer more sustainable products, services, and companies that behave accordingly, and especially the younger generations. However, this tendency does not necessarily come in alignment with their actual behavior (Business Wire, 2021; Deloitte, 2021).

Additionally, in other cases, even when they think that they behave more sustainably, they are not doing so due to their lack of knowledge and ability to distinguish non-sustainable from sustainable products and companies. Even though we have evidence that consumers are moving in the right direction, we still are not there and need to accelerate this behavior as a way to be able to meet global sustainable goals. In that context, the researchers will focus on

consumption, and they will try to investigate their behavior towards sustainability in the garment industry. The selection of that specific industry is related to its importance as, in many cases, companies of the industry have been accused of their non-sustainable operations. In addition to that, consumers and their buying behavior and overconsumption increase sustainability issues in the garment industry. Investigating that topic is essential as it contributes to the existing literature by focusing on the consumers' side and a specific industry. In that sense, the below research questions are formed as a way to respond to the paper's problem formulation. (Gomes de Oliveira et al. 2022)

## Problem Formulation and Research Questions

PF: How does the perception of sustainability affect consumer behavior within the garment industry?

Project's Problem Formulation is related to consumer behavior in the garment industry and towards sustainability. In that context the research team develops three research questions in order to address that problem from both a theoretical and a practical side. They aim to investigate the important factors which affect consumers behavior. In addition to that, they investigate consumers' willingness to behave sustainably. Finally they focus more on the pricing factor and try to quantify the price premium that consumers are willing to pay for sustainable products. In that direction the aim is to identify not only whether consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable fashion products, but also how much. Additionally, the research group investigates whether other factors such as gender or age, can affect the perception of sustainability in the garment industry. To address that problem formulation the below Research Questions have been formulated.

RQ1: What are the key elements which positively affect consumer intention towards sustainable behavior?

In this research question the researchers investigate and define the most significant elements that positively affect consumer intention to buy sustainable products, and therefore adopt sustainable practices. This question will be answered through the conducted survey, while the

survey is based on Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior and the chosen elements. Having said that, the researchers present the second research question.

RQ2: To what extent does pricing affect consumer behavior regarding sustainability in the garment industry?

Price has an essential role in consumers choices, and especially for the more price sensitive consumers. That combined with the perception that sustainable products tend to be more expensive or more premium, creates a potential gap between consumers' intentions and behavior. In that context, the researchers aim to investigate how important the price is for the consumers of the garment industry and in relation to sustainability. Furthermore, they target to investigate to what extent the price affects consumer behavior towards sustainability. This question will be answered with primary data generated from a survey conducted to a broad audience of people.

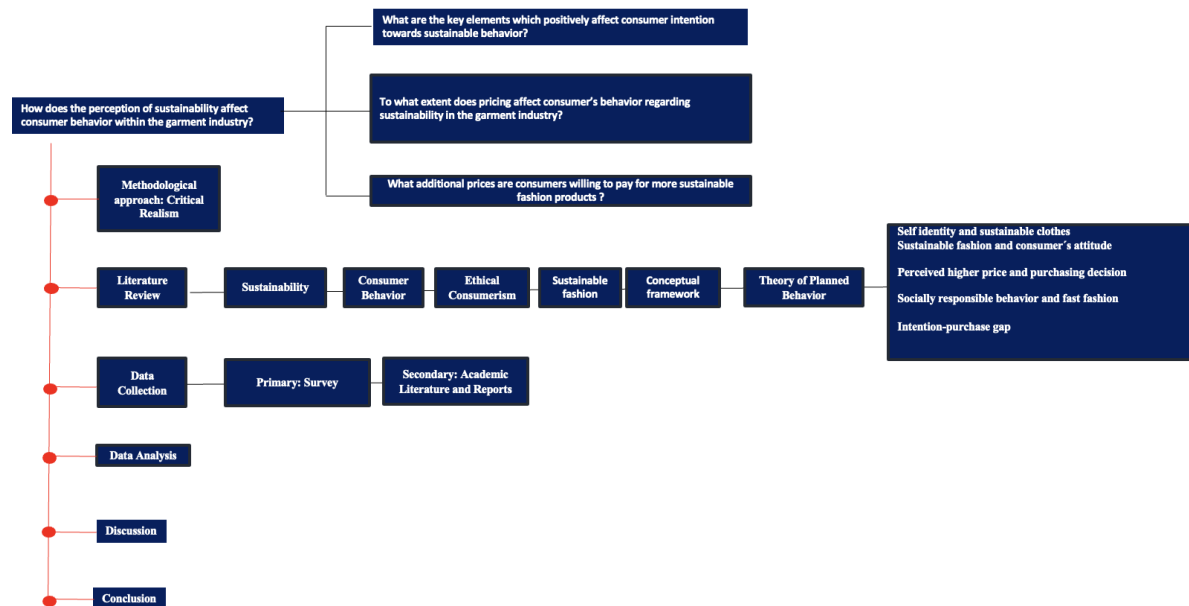
RQ3: What additional prices are consumers willing to pay for more sustainable fashion products?

Finally, the third research question is related to the price premium that consumers are willing to pay for more sustainable products. Building on the claim that sustainable products and more precise sustainable fashion products tend to be more expensive, the researchers focus on the premium prices that consumers are willing to pay to have more sustainable products and to contribute to the minimization of social and environmental issues. This question is being answered with the survey, where consumers are providing their responses regarding the premium prices, they are willing or not to pay.



# Project Outline

The below outline presents in detail the different elements of the paper. In general it could be used as a guidance for the audience, as it depicts the different chapters and their most important sections.



## 2.0 Literature Review

### Sustainability

#### What is sustainability

Sustainability is many things, but what does the concept really cover? It is there several bids, but one of the popular definitions of sustainability comes from The "Brundtland report" from 1987. In the report, sustainability was presented as one the broad and holistic concept that includes social, economic, and environmental aspects - and that is the starting point for the way we understand sustainability today.

In 1987, the Brundtland Commission published the report Our Common Future (also called Brundtland report). The report was the first to focus on global sustainability and provided a broad approach to sustainability that included the social, economic, and environmental aspects. The Brundtland Commission's goal was to show the way to future development "(...) which meets the needs of present generations without bringing future ones generations' ability to meet their needs at risk (Keeble, 1987)

#### The concept of sustainability is holistic.

So, why should we also think about social and economic sustainability, and what does it mean? The strength of thinking sustainability broadly and holistically is that it involves all three aspects and focuses on their relationship. It is an expression that the world exists in different areas that affect each other. Therefore, there is a need to think more broadly and also involve social and economic aspects.

This can be seen in several companies, for example, which have begun to focus more on the triple bottom line, where social and environmental considerations are also taken into account in addition to the economic ones. (Keeble, 1987) The same is seen in the construction industry and urban planning, where sustainability is no longer just about the environment but also how people, for example, the city and its buildings, live and use. In practice, however, there will be some areas where either the economic, environmental, or social weights are the heaviest. (Keeble, 1987) Having said that, the researchers will showcase various aspects of sustainability below.

### Social sustainability

Social sustainability which emphasizes on the human factors and sees people's lives, behaviors, and well-being as crucial to creating a sustainable society. In addition to that it ensures inclusion and diversity, housing for all, and creating a safe environment concerning cities and architecture. (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2019) Socially sustainable urban areas evolve from the way people use them. Therefore, designers and architects talk a lot about the social life that cities must provide. They look at how the physical environment and the social environment affect each other - both in terms of how people use urban areas and how some urban areas can negatively affect human actions. For example, in socially stressed residential areas that are often similar in both the physical and social, one can look at whether there might be something in the very physical structure that influences the behavior of the residents in a negative direction. (Scoones, 2010) At the same time, work is being done on how the choice of materials and location in space can evoke emotions and create new (sustainable) actions, and change values and, not least, consumption patterns. In this way, there has been a focus on how the spaces between the houses play a significant role concerning the lived life and communities, which are two essential dimensions when behavior patterns need to change. (Scoones, 2010)

## Economic sustainability

The economic part of sustainability is most often the least weighted concept of sustainability. This is partly because sustainable solutions are often more expensive than ordinary solutions - both when it comes to buildings, materials, food, etc. This is due, for example, to the fact that many sustainable technologies are still in the development phase or are produced in such small quantities that the price is still relatively high. (Scoones, 2010) Therefore, it is important to understand economics broadly when talking about economic sustainability. It is essential to look at the economy in the long term and from a holistic perspective. This can be seen when it comes to the construction of buildings. For example, there is more and more talk about total value, which covers both the cost of building a new structure and the future maintenance costs, repair, operation, etc. (Scoones, 2010)

Therefore, thinking and working sustainably also require a change concerning results and expectations. Sustainable development is a long process that will yield many results, but not in the form of simple arithmetic, where two plus two gives four. More in the direction of long-term effects where there is a more significant gain to be had if done correctly. Some improvements are not immediately visible within a short time horizon but appear continuously and multiply profits. (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2019)

The state also plays a significant role when it comes to economic sustainability. Firstly it is most often the state that today has to cover the expenses and unintended consequences that one unsustainable development brings with it. But at the same time, the state also has excellent opportunities to improve sustainable development - for example, by making different incentives that support growth in both sustainable construction, sustainable technologies, sustainable transport, etc. Through various schemes, taxes, and fees, the state can help make it worthwhile to think sustainably. Not only as a citizen but also as a private company. (Scoones, 2010)

## Sustainability today

The holistic concept of sustainability has been widely used since 1987 and has been further developed. Globally, there has been a development from a narrow approach to sustainability, which has focused primarily on global warming, to a broader concern in concerning the state of the cities, the global environment, lack of resources, etc. But sustainability is a complex concept that in practice is only agreed upon in relation to the general and the whole overarching principles. The Brundtland report's definition of sustainability provides a broad and general understanding of the principles of the area. From there, various concrete sub-definitions can be created, initiatives that can have a tangible impact on the world. Sustainability is perceived differently around the world, each country has its own challenges with regards to its strategy towards sustainability. (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2019)

## Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

When we look at the fashion industry including fashion items, processing, manufacturing and employment it can be noticed that economic growth in 2014 has doubled compared to 2000. Moreover, total trade of fashion apparel attained 726 billion US dollars (Strijbos, 2018). O'Connell (2019) stated that the global fashion industry market increased in 2017 to slightly more than 5 percent and in 2020 growth rate reached 6,2 percent. One of the most significant reasons behind this growth was fast fashion brands such as for instance H&M or Zara that have been producing tremendous amounts of fashion apparel. H&M itself had the largest share on the global market in 2017 which was 1,4 percent. Such a large market share and market growth indicates that a huge amount of fashion items is being produced and also obviated in a very short time (O'Connell, 2019). Due to the above mentioned reasons, serious environmental problems have been created. In 2019 UN Trade and development UNCTAD (2019) stated that the fashion industry is being seen as the second largest polluting industry in the world and pointed out that fashion brands and the overall fashion industry spend 93 billion cubic meters of water every year. In addition to that 500.000 tons of microfiber are utilized while producing materials for clothes manufacturing and there is also great industrial

carbon emission (Chan et al., 2018b). In order to provide an example of how huge carbon emissions are being produced by the fashion industry, we can compare it to global maritime shipping in combination with flights worldwide (Horne, 2012).

Based on these statistics from past years, customers started to have a need for sustainable clothes. Customers' awareness and interest towards sustainability has increased which led to a natural reaction of fashion brands who started to realize the seriousness of the issue. Several fashion brands started to develop sustainable business plans for the future in order to satisfy customers needs (Shi et al., 2020). It can be stated that environmental issues in the fashion industry are significant problems. However, it is only one part of the problem. Social and ethical issues occurred as well. The apparel industry is considered as labor intensive business which causes many fashion brands and especially fast fashion brands to focus on low production cost by manufacturing clothes in the countries where the salary range is very low which will bring financial benefits for the company (Colucci et al., 2020). From the past years it was noticed that some of the fashion companies were using child labour for their production and manufacturing of the clothes which is huge violation of the ethics (Siegmann, 2008). Because of reported cases and issues in the fashion industry, the general public raised awareness towards corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the apparel industry. The failure in corporate social responsibility might cause bad reputation of the brand and harmful consequences for the business. Guo et al. (2020) stated that increased public awareness about sustainability in the fashion industry launched keen competition. However, buying clothes from sustainable fashion brands is not vastly represented in customers' behavior despite the fact that many people expressed their positive attitude towards sustainability and sustainable practices. This inconsistency between attitude of the customers and actual behavior is described as an attitude behavior gap (Soyer and Dittrich 2021). From the research it can be observed that many consumers are concerned about environmental, social and ethical issues that occur in the fashion industry and have also developed a positive attitude towards sustainable practices. But on the other hand, low prices of fast fashion brands seems to be a crucial and significant factor for the consumers and that is the reason why fast fashion still dominates the industry (Paço et al. 2020). Even though it has been recorded that multiple positive changes have occurred in the fashion industry it is very complicated to sustain those practices in such a large globalized supply chain. Moreover, in a fierce competition, companies are pressured to cut costs in order to stay competitive or maintain competitive advantage which makes it really challenging for them to stay sustainable (Henninger et al.

2016). Jeong and Ko (2021) stated that the gap between customer's positive attitude towards sustainable practices and actual behavior might be lessened if sustainable brands will be able to satisfy consumers' needs and spread the knowledge about sustainability among the people. As it was pointed out by Connell (2010) barriers such as lack of knowledge, low accessibility of information and societal norms can slow down the process of developing a positive attitude towards sustainable clothes and practices in general. Furthermore, greenwashing proved to be a problem since it has a negative effect on trust of the customers. Greenwashing can be characterized in many ways but one of the most common understanding of this term is fake green marketing which creates doubt of the consumers on sustainable brands and companies. Even though many companies are able to establish a trustworthy image of the brand, it is very difficult to sustain in the long run (Rahman et al. 2015).

Bianchi and Gonzalez (2021) noted that on Chile's market sustainable fashion brands are perceived as a high end fashion and considered as expensive. Hence, green and eco-friendly customers are expressing their attitude by buying from second-hand stores instead of spending money on expensive sustainable brands. Rausch et al. (2021) identified that customers buying their clothes online are focusing on attributes such as comfort, price-performance ratio and quality rather than sustainability. Despite that, while buying sustainable clothes, clothing attributes, working conditions and ethical wages proved to be important factors for customers. Moreover, knowledge and a positive attitude towards the environment is linked to increased intention to implement sustainable behavior and purchase sustainable products which can positively influence the individual's surroundings as for instance family and friends and convince them to engage in such a behavior (La Rosa, 2021). Having said that, the researchers on the next subchapter will focus on consumer behavior.

# Consumer Behavior

In this chapter, the researchers will focus on the concept of consumer behavior and will provide the academic background of the theory.

## What is consumer behavior?

When describing Consumer behavior in an economic context, it is essential to also focus on the theory of Behavioral Economics. Nowadays, Behavioral Economics is being used as the basis to develop the proper strategies for individuals to select the most applicable and essential for them, products and services. (Sousa Lourenço, 2016; World Bank, 2014). Initially, the concept of Behavioral Economics was related to individuals' actions across the decision-making process and the potential improvement of their choices. Looking into the theory, someone can state that there is a differentiation among different researchers. For example, Neoclassical and governmental economics consider consumers as more rational actors that select the goods based on logical criteria. (Reisch & Zhao, 2017, p.3) In contrast, psychologists believe that consumers' are not always making the best possible choices as they used to behave in predefined ways that could affect their final choices. (Kahneman, 2003; Simon, 1956; Luth, 2010). Nowadays, consumers' strategy focuses more on the unique characteristics and preferences of the individual; for that reason, they need to be able to know all the information of a product or service. In that context, the information paradigm" is one of the most significant concepts. It highlights the importance of transparency and the in-depth description of a product for the consumer to be able to make the best choice. (Oehler and Wendt, 2017) Considering those factors, consumer behavior is mainly related to an individual's preferences and economic situation. While this conventional statement focuses more on the preferences and ignores individual favoritism, Thaler (2015) states the opposite and highlights the importance of Consumer's unique characteristics. (Thaler, 1985; Reisch and Sunstein, 2015; Thaler, 2015) It is not wrong to say that consumer behavior is a complex and multidimensional concept, mostly nowadays with the wide variety of the offering goods. In that context, behavioral economics focuses on empirical data and identifies efficient and prosperous guides that will help consumers make decisions in their best interest. (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008; Oliver, 2017)



Regarding the interrelation of Consumer Behavior and Behavioral Economics, two major concepts related to that are the "reference point" and the "loss aversion" (Reisch & Zhao, p.6), (Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler, 1991). While the first one focuses on the outcome of one choice compared to a standard measurement, the latter focuses on the choice to avoid a loss over the risk of gaining more. Based on such concepts, consumers tend to prefer the safest route and evaluate the results based on a reference point. That leads them to prefer to retain their existing decisions instead of trying to find the best possible offer. An insightful example from the literature is related to the percentage of organ donors, which is much higher in cases where the automated choice accepts the donation. (Johnson and Goldstein, 2003) Several researchers have focused on various effects that influence consumers' decisions; however, in this paper, we will not analyze in-depth the literature of such effects. The next part aims to investigate further the history of the Consumer Behavior concept.

### History of Consumer Behavior

The analysis of Consumer behavior as a concept has been investigated for over 50 years by several researchers. Foxall (2001) describes it as the process of describing individuals' economic consumption by considering behavioral principles. Additionally, he reflects on the interrelation of marketing and economic psychology. He mentions that the theory of consumer behavior mainly focuses on the effect of behavior principles on an individual's economic consumption. (Foxall, 2001, p.165) In marketing, the discussion around a possible interpretation of Consumer's actions based on behavioral analysis was initiated in 1970 and 1980. In 1970 Berry and Kunkel, in their article "In pursuit of consumer theory," focused on behavioral sociology, tried to identify what motivates the consumers. (Berry & Kunkel, 1970) In addition to that, an investigation in that direction was made by Berry in 1968 and 1969, where he focused on the concept of the image, which was investigated under different circumstances. The following important research was done by Nord et al. (1980), where they looked into the theory and various approaches to investigate their relevance with marketing. One year later, in 1981, Rothschild and Gaidis presented some behavioral psychology and marketing applications. (Rothschild & Gaidis, 1981) During that time, the majority of the research focused on contingency-shaped behavior.

While Peter and Nord were two of the researchers who investigated this approach, Foxal (1988) proposed a revised approach that focused on language's effect on consumers' choices. Foxal, by focusing on the "critical-comparative role," created the potential of an actual connection between marketing and the analysis of individual behavior, which could be described as the starting point of a practical application of consumer analysis. (Foxal 1988) After the transition of consumer behavior analysis from laboratory to real-life cases, the authors started getting an observational role. In that direction, they tried to analyze consumers' behavior regarding their preferences and decisions. One revolutionary research in that direction was done by Russell Belk (2014), who ignored the previous approaches and focused exclusively on the inspection and analysis of consumers. While their work had potential, it was not fully utilized as other researchers started to shift to different approaches. (Sheth, 2021) In the meantime, the concept of consumer behavior started to receive even more attention. Nowadays, consumer behavior research is being expanded and considers new factors such as GDP, sustainability, ethical dimensions. The new areas of interest combined with old-fashioned and innovative developments introduce new routes of investigation. Hence, besides the history of the concept, it is also important to look at a few theories and models which developed in the same period. (Sheth, 2021; Foxall, 2001) One of the first theories in that direction was the "Theory of buying behavior" by Seth et al. (1969). They focused on an individual's motives in the selection process of a brand, and they proposed three dimensions regarding the decision-making process. Those dimensions are; "Problem Solving, Limited Problem Solving, Habitual Response Behaviour ." (Howard & Sheth, 1969).

A Few years later, Narayana et al. (1975) focused on the variety of the brands that a consumer may consider regarding a product or service. Based on that claim, they developed a framework that investigates consumers actions when they have a variety of choices. (Narayana & Markin, 1975) A year later, in 1976, Mintzberg et al. created the Mintzberg model to help simplify the concept of consumer behavior by creating a methodized model. The Mintzberg model highlighted the need for more structured ways to help identify the complex and multidimensional concept of consumer behavior. (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Théorêt, 1976) In the same direction in 1982, Keeney presented the four-stage decision-making process. A structured model that focuses on four levels to describe the decision-making process's issues. Trying to identify the criteria that influence consumers behavior.

(Keeney, 1982) In addition to that, Sheth et al. (1991) presented five values that affect an individual's choices across the buying journey.

Those values are; functional, social, conditional, emotional, and epistemic. (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991) Almost one decade later, in 2003 and while the technology of the internet started to become more widespread, Smith and Rupp presented a model focused on the internet that examined consumers' online behavior. In 2007 McKinsey's dynamic model of the consumer decision journey was presented. A model with four stages that investigate a consumer's actions from consideration until evaluating his/her experience of using the product/service. (Stankevich, 2017, p.9) Additionally, one more theory in this paper focuses on, and it will be further analyzed, is the "Theory of Planned Behavior" generated from Ajzen (1985).

All in all, both new and old theories are reformed and used in contemporary marketing issues. One relatively new concept with much attention is consumer behavior concerning sustainability. (Stankevich, 2017; Ajzen, 1991)

### Consumer behavior and sustainability

Sustainability is a collaborative process, and in order to have a positive impact on the world, companies and consumers should work together for the same purpose. Companies' sustainability is not enough and should be combined with Consumer's willingness to operate in the same way. For that reason, the companies need to understand consumers' behavior concerning sustainability and increase their awareness of such issues. Additionally, consumer overconsumption negatively affects the environment and society in several ways, such as higher emissions, increased water usage, energy consumption, and worker's exploitation.

An insightful example in that direction is the fast-fashion clothing brands, many of which produce their products in developing countries. That behavior is affiliated with traditional marketing, and due to that, there is an arising need for an interrelation of sustainability and consumer behavior. That need was mentioned by Ripple et al. (2017), who highlighted the negative effect that traditional forms of marketing have on the environment. (Ripple et al., 2017; Stern, 2000) In that direction, the companies need to change their operations and

marketing and start focusing on more sustainable practices. In that way, they will improve their brand image and productivity. (Sørensen et al. 2022; Brown and Dacin 1997; Luo and Bhattacharya 2006; Olsen, Slotegraaf, and Chandukala 2014; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). Besides the fact that more sustainable operations could positively impact the firm, the firms should not only focus on the reformation of their operations but also the promotion of such initiatives. That will help the consumers shift to a more sustainable way of living. Such activities result in additional benefits for the firms regarding brand awareness and a positive reputation. (Kotler, Kartajay, and Setiawan 2010).

While the need for a way to change consumer behavior is visible through the literature, there are no clear ways; how to achieve it. All in all, the issue is related to the misalignment between consumers' beliefs and actions. One interesting concept related to Consumer behavior and sustainability is "Ethical Consumerism". (Healey, 2013; Kim et al., 2017; White et al., 2019)

### Ethical Consumerism

Ethical consumerism goes one step ahead of consumption ethics which focuses on a set of guidelines a consumer should follow to be considered ethical. In contrast, ethical consumerism reflects the entire consumer behavior across a buying journey and his/her life. (Muncy & Vitell, 1992). Cowe and Williams (2000) describe this concept by providing a chunk of social and environmental issues that affect consumers' choices. Some of them are "climate change, human rights, and animal welfare ."(Kim, Hwang, & Kim, 2017, p.8), (Cowe et al., 2000). In addition to this approach, Hofmann et al. (2012) spotlight the connection between a consumer's positive emotions of an overall sustainable lifestyle with their intention to behave according to ethical consumerism standards. While ethical consumerism as a concept is straightforward, there is a contradiction among people on the degree to which a person should operate in a sustainable way to be characterized as an ethical consumer. Many activists connect ethical consumerism with the complete denial of supermarkets and processed meat. Though, for many, ethical consumerism is related to

buying a less harmful product for society and the environment. However, besides the evidence showing that consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable products when that requires extra effort, they prefer their convenience. (Healey, 2013; Kim et al., 2017; Hofmann et al., 2012) In that direction on the next subchapter the researchers describe the elements which influence consumer intention towards sustainable behavior.

## Elements influencing consumer intention towards sustainable behavior

### Self-identity and sustainable clothes

The main problems of the garment industry are the negative social and environmental impacts of cost driven fast fashion. That is the reason why consumption rate of social and environmental resources is being considered as one of the key challenges for sustainable consumption (Cobbing and Vicaire, 2016; Lehmann, Tärneberg and Tochtermann, 2018). According to Jiménez Sánchez and Lafuente (2010), environmental consciousness can be defined as “a multidimensional behavior-oriented concept (i.e., the propensity to engage in pro-environmental behaviors)”. Moreover, when it comes to the definition of social consciousness, Questia (2019) has defined as “consciousness shared by individuals within a society. It essentially means to be conscious or aware of the problems within a society or community”. Environmental consciousness and social consciousness are two out of three pillars of sustainability (Adam, 2006).

Sparks (2000) stated that self-identity is linked with self-perception. That shows how the person sees himself or herself within a society (Conner and Armitage, 1998). It has been expressed by other scholars that taking into consideration self-identity while investigating consumer behavior. Das (2015) noted that the consumer is more likely to make a purchase if the specific purchase will strengthen the individual's identity. That mechanism is being perceived as even more applicable in connection to environmental and social beliefs of behaviors. Self-identity and product suitability have been proved to be a significant variable when it comes to sustainable consumption behavior and attitude towards such a behavior (Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Ozaki, 2010; Kang, Liu and Kim, 2013). Therefore it can be

stated that self-identity is one of the key elements that has a significant effect on an individual's purchasing behavior.

As it was pointed out before, self-identity plays a significant role in regards to fashion consumption and consumer behavior. Individuals tend to express their personality and attitude through the choices of clothes they are buying (Pan et al., 2015). Fashion is a symbol of materialism and has the ability to express a person's identity (Dittmar, Beattie and Friese, 1996). Hustvedt and Dickson (2009) pointed out that individuals who are buying sustainable cotton clothing are obtaining strong self-identities and are perceived as socially and environmentally conscious individuals. According to Ries et al. (2012), self-identity is a useful variable when using Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior since it reduces sometimes low connection of subjective norm towards intention. In addition to this, Niinimäki (2009) stated that social orientation and attitude towards sustainable consumption significantly affect consumers' purchasing decisions.

### Sustainable fashion and consumer's attitude

Many researchers were investigating customer behavior towards sustainable practices and sustainable fashion in general (e.g. Jägel et al. 2012; Shen et al. 2012). However, there can be observed differences in their conclusions when it comes to whether the consumers are willing to pay a higher price (premium price) for a sustainable product. For instance Shen et al. (2012) stated that consumers that have a positive attitude towards sustainable practices and are concerned about environmental and social issues have a willingness to pay higher price and purchase sustainable fashion. On the other hand, Henninger (2015) claims the opposite and disagrees with previous findings. Many consumers will make purchase decisions of sustainable products only when the price is not higher compared to unsustainable products therefore they are not willing to pay a premium. Currently, the sustainable products are still being perceived as more expensive ones. Hence, some of the consumers will rather choose less expensive options (Rutter, Armstrong, and Blazquez 2017).

In addition to this, Jägel et al. (2012) stated that individuals who are concerned about environmental or ethical issues are more likely to buy sustainable clothes. However, it could

be also observed that even environmentally concerned individuals did not make purchase decisions since the price was a more important factor for them. Hur and Cassidy (2019) pointed out that sustainable fashion offering is pretty small which can lead to little information provided and low level of awareness towards sustainable practices in the fashion industry. The same issue was pointed out by Connell (2010) who noted that in general there is lack of knowledge and awareness about sustainable practices and negative effects of unsustainable production. As it was proved, individuals are not usually connecting fast fashion brands with negative environmental, social and ethical impacts (Goworek et al., 2012).

Since knowledge appears to have a significant impact on behavior, previous researchers were focusing on studying the relationship between environmental knowledge and sustainable behavior. For instance Vicente-Molina et al., (2013) claims that the higher level of knowledge about environmental impacts, the higher likelihood that the individual will adopt pro-environmental behavior. From the previous studies it has been proven that knowledge about sustainability positively affects the attitude which is one of the elements in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Kaiser et al., 1999).

### Perceived higher price and purchasing decision

In the eyes of consumers sustainable fashion is in many cases linked with higher price (McNeill and Moore, 2015) and that is in general for consumers, the biggest barrier in order to adapt sustainable behavior (Chekima et al., 2016). Diddi et al. (2019) noted that purchasing apparel from sustainable companies and brands is not affordable for all consumers which is causing problems even for the consumers that would like to consider that option. However, Dodds et al. (1991) claims that there is positive linkage between perceived value and willingness to purchase the product. These findings were supported by (Sener et al., 2019) who found the positive relation between perceived value and purchase intention of sustainable fashion. Hence, it can be stated that positively perceived value might be connected to positive attitude therefore higher chance that individual will perform such a behavior. Even though companies can argue that higher prices are caused by maintaining social and ethical principles and clothing is made from environmentally friendly materials most of the consumers are trying to get the most value for the money therefore choosing

cheaper options of fast fashion brands (Harris et al., 2016). According to Joergens (2006) majority of the consumers choose price, quality and style of the apparel over environmental, social and ethical concerns. Even when it comes to unsustainable fashion, it was proved that higher prices negatively affects consumers' purchasing behavior (Lee and Kim, 2013). Based on above mentioned ideas it can be stated that high price sensitivity negatively affects the attitude of the consumers therefore willingness to adapt sustainable behavior.

### Socially responsible behavior and fast fashion

In recent years, fast fashion brought a revolution to the garment industry and influenced attitudes of many people (Bruce and Daly, 2006). It can be mentioned that lower production costs and shorter durability of clothes developed an environment of impulsive buying (McNeill and Moore, 2015). The study by Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) proved that especially young people, with the meaning of generation Y, are the ones that showed high consumption of fast fashion and low level of the awareness of the impact of such a behavior. Hence, even though generation Y is more interested in sustainability then previous generations and expressed that they are willing to pay a premium for such products, it can be at the same time observed that they enjoy fast fashion brands and fast fashion consumption (Lundblad and Davies, 2016). With that being said, it can be stated that when speaking of fashion consumption, interest in environmental and social issues does not necessarily mean actual behavior based on those values (McNeill and Moore, 2015). Due to this fact, social responsible consumer behavior was previously investigated by many scholars (Han and Stoel, 2017). Social responsible consumer behavior can be defined *“as a person basing his or her acquisition, usage, and disposition of products on a desire to minimize or eliminate any harmful effects and maximize the long-run beneficial impact on society”* (Mohr et al., 2001, p. 47). Moreover, Roberts (1993) stated that socially responsible consumer behavior is *“one who purchases products and services perceived to have a positive (or less negative) influence on the environment or who patronizes businesses that attempt to affect related positive social change”*. (Roberts 1993, p.140)

It has been proved that a positive attitude towards sustainable practices might positively affect socially responsible consumer behavior (Park and Lin, 2018) but academic literature



also provides evidence that despite strong positive intention individuals not always adapt such a behavior when it comes to actual purchase decision (Pakpour et al., 2014).

### Intention-behavior gap

As it was previously mentioned, willingness to behave sustainably does not always necessarily translate into actual behavior of the person. In general, there are multiple motivational factors that have influence on the decision making of an individual which can cause difficulty to understand such processes and it might appear that social and ethical motivations might come as a secondary (Bray, Johns, & Kilburn, 2011). According to Bray et al. (2011) there are several factors that might cause a barrier between sustainable intentions and actual behavior of the customer as for example price, experience, quality or lack of information. Research of green marketing is providing several reasons for such a dissonance. For example lifestyle (Connolly & Prothero, 2003), demographics (Bray et al., 2011), knowledge or social norms (Do Valle, Rebelo, Reis, & Menezes, 2005) might be factors causing intention-behavior gap. According to McNeill and Moore (2015) some of the consumers prefer fashionability over sustainability therefore they have no desire in adapting the sustainable behavior and show no interest in sustainable practices. To sum it up, the intention-behavior gap is one of the biggest challenges when it comes to sustainable consumption in the fashion industry.

### Sustainable fashion and consumption

Fletcher (2007) noted that sustainable fashion is about “designing, producing, consuming and living better” where “designers, buyers, retailers, and consumers are more aware of the impacts of products on workers, communities, and ecosystems” (p.61). Also the other scholars agree with Fletcher that the main goal of sustainable fashion is to focus on developing processes that respect environmental and social aspects of sustainability (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010; Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013). Fletcher (2007) claims that for sustainable fashion it is possible to reach this definition by emphasizing quality over quantity. Hence, in order to implement such a design process, companies should spend time on

creating each individual fashion item rather than creating a huge variety of clothes and vast amounts of each type of fashion item. By that, suppliers would have more power to plan their orders and would not be forced to make unrealistic demands on employees just in order to meet the deadlines (Fletcher, 2007).

When we look at it from the other side, therefore the consumer side, the consumer also holds a significant amount of power in sustainable practices and development. They can express their needs and demands towards companies and their rules including social practices, human rights, environmental rules and a lot more (Lavorata, 2014). Many studies were conducted in order to investigate consumer point of view and what is the reason behind not implementing sustainable behavior in their lives. From the previously conducted research it appears that willingness to pay price premium might be the key factor for the consumers and their decision making process. (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2019) Casadesus-Masanell et al. (2009) conducted a study with the result that consumers of Patagonia fashion brand are willing to pay higher price if they were sure that the fashion items are made out of organic cotton. Moreover, Hustvedt and Bernard (2008) found out that consumers would be willing to pay \$1.86 of price premium for socks that are from organic materials. Based on the study by Miller (1992) price premium up to 10 percent would not affect consumers willingness to purchase an organic or sustainable product. But according to Chan and Wong (2012) 25-30 percent of the price premium would be seen from consumers' point of view as unacceptable. In another study Dean et al. (2012) claims that consumers are willing to pay higher prices or price premium when the value of the fashion item exceeds the perceived value of the clothing. Moreover, Mostafa (2007) states that focusing on green consciousness of the consumers is very important. When the consumers believe that their purchasing habits have a positive impact on the environmental problems they are more likely to buy the sustainable products even if they are more expensive than unsustainable ones. In addition to this, environmental impact is not the only aspect of sustainability that consumers care about.

Ethical aspects are also the ones that have the ability to increase interest from the consumers. However, even though ethical consumption and ethical manufacturing practices appear to be significant in the eyes of the consumers, there is usually a dilemma between purchasing fashion items for low prices and ethically made fashion items (Phau et al., 2015). It was proved in study by Chan and Wong (2012) that even if the consumers are aware of the environmental, social and ethical issues in the fashion industry and have positive attitudes

towards sustainable practices, they are not willing to make sacrifices therefore they are not willing to pay more for sustainable fashion. Even if this attitude-behavior gap can be the main barrier towards sustainable consumption, according to a study by Niinimäki (2010) some of the consumers would be willing to pay higher prices if the sustainable fashion items were of better quality.

### Sustainable fashion and self-image

The interest for sustainable fashion consumption is not only because of the needs of the consumers but also one of the main reasons is self-expression. That is due to external influence for outer image. Via individual image the person is able to express personality, values, personal style and need to stand out of the crowd. Academic literature proves that individuals are buying products that have the ability to boost their self-concept or self-image (D'Souza, 2015; Goldsmith et al., 1996; Niinimäki, 2010). The word self-concept is linked with self-perception therefore how the individual sees himself or herself and what values and identity a person has (Fournier, 1998; Goldsmith et al., 1996). According to Sirgy (1982) there are four psychological dimensions of self-image. First one is the *actual self* which refers to the most realistic perception of self. Second is *ideal self* refers to how a person would like to perceive themselves. Third is *social self* which refers to how society perceives the individual. Fourth is *ideal-social self* which refers to how the individual would like to be seen by others. All four dimensions are generally accepted in psychology, the most of the scholars were focusing on actual self and ideal self when studying consumer behavior (Anand and Kaur, 2018). Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) stated that people in general value the concept of self therefore their actions and behavior is motivated by protecting and boosting their image. Hence, it can be stated that the individual's self concept can be negative or positive but the majority of the population has a positive perception of themselves which they are trying to maintain (Noh and Mosier, 2014).

According to Kim (2015) people who have negative self image or self-perception are usually buying products that have the ability to boost their confidence and therefore bring them a little closer to their ideal self. Damon and Hart (1992) expressed themselves as follows: “People whose self-concept is organized around their moral beliefs are highly likely to

*translate those beliefs into action consistently throughout their lives”* (p.445). Meijboom and Brom (2012) noted that moral ideals have the ability to reflect into actions which can help to understand and communicate environmental, social and ethical problems of sustainability. The relationship between moral identity and fashion consumption has not been studied in depth but it can be stated that morals are directly linked to self-concept which influences an individual's behavior and even purchase decision (Yen et al., 2017). Anand and Kaur (2018) claim that individuals tend to align their actions with their self-image. For instance, there is a low chance that the consumers who put a lot of value on integrity will buy counterfeit items (Phau and Teah, 2009). In addition to that consumers of sustainable products tend to be more unselfish compared to the consumers that are buying unsustainable products therefore the reasoning of their actions is based upon their morals (Barbarossa and De Pelsmacker, 2016).

### Sustainability in fashion in relation to generation Y and Z

As it was previously mentioned, individuals tend to express their personality through choice of the fashion products (Khandual and Pradhan 2018). In general, consumer's consumption in many different fields of the industry is affected by a natural need of an individual to communicate his or her values and most importantly identity (Smith and Whitson 2018). In order to promote sustainability and sustainable behavior, consumers need to have knowledge of such practices and what positive impact each consumer can have on the environment and other elements of sustainable practices. Because of the identity and image, there are nowadays much more people who want to be fashionable than those who implement environmentally and ethically sustainable buying behavior. Hence, it can be stated that there is a conflict between fashion consumption for the fashionable goal and limited consumption for sustainable goal (McNeill and Moore 2015). Birtwistle and Moore (2007) claim that the above mentioned conflict is due to the fact that consumers have little knowledge about the negative impact of the unsustainable fashion industry. Emekci (2019) stated that those who care about the future of the environment should control their buying behavior and pay attention to their habits. That applies especially to younger generations where the consumers are aware of the environmental, social and ethical issues in the fashion industry and understand that there is a need for a change in purchasing behavior (Dabija and Babut, 2019).

Majority of generations Y and Z are the ones that are aware of environmental issues because of the external pressure from individuals or businesses from various fields of industry. Moreover, generations Y and Z hold significant economic power since their purchasing habits and buying behavior have ability to change many companies including the fashion ones (Oláh et al. 2019).

After having defined the elements, the researchers will proceed with Ajzen's theory of Planned Behavior.

### Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior

The studies of the people's behavior and customer behavior were widely researched by many scholars in order to understand, explain and predict an individual's behavior. For that purpose many theories have been used but one of them was used extensively which is Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985). The theory of planned behavior presume behavioral intention to be the most significant and only element that predicts actual behavior. It can be mentioned that TPB is an extended version of theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein and Azjen, 1975) in which the intention is influenced by a collection of beliefs and attitudes. Those attitudes and beliefs are showing the likelihood that the individual's intention will turn out to actual behavior. In the theory of reasoned action there are two variables that are influencing the individual's intention which are behavioral and normative. Behavioral belief represents the person's attitude towards adapting and performing specific behavior and normative beliefs represent the ones that are affecting the person's subjective norms about adapting and performing certain behavior (Madden et al., 1992). Theory of reasoned action suggests that when attitudes towards specific behavior and subjective norms are propitious, it is boosting the individual's intention to adapt and perform specific behavior. As opposed to the theory of reasoned action, the theory of planned behavior includes an additional variable that is affecting an individual's intention which is perceived behavioral control. This third additional variable can be described as a confidence of the individual to possess the resources and capacity that is needed in order to be able to perform certain behavior. In other words, the variable stands for the level of difficulty to perform specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Hence, theory of planned behavior can be explained as follows: *"Intentions to perform behaviors of*

*different kinds can be predicted with high accuracy from attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control; and these intentions, together with perceptions of behavioral control, account for considerable variance in actual behavior”* (Ajzen, 1991; p. 179).

The TPB is perceived as a suitable and relevant theory in connection to environmental behavior (Yazdanpanah and Forouzani, 2015; Zhang et al., 2019). Moreover, an extended version of this theory has been applied in context of sustainable fashion in order to predict the behavior of the consumers towards sustainable products (Bong Ko and Jin, 2017; Kang et al., 2013; McNeill and Venter, 2019; Varshneya and Pandey, 2017). It has been proved by several researchers that three variables included in the theory of planned behavior are the finest predictors of an individual's intention towards sustainable behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Lam and Hsu, 2006). Bong Ko and Jin (2017) claim that perceived behavioral control positively affects the intention of buying sustainable products. In addition to this Zhang et al. (2019) proved that variables included in theory of planned behavior positively influence purchase intention towards so called green products. Ajzen (1991) stated that theory of planned behavior is flexible and adaptable for new constructs if needed. Therefore it can be assumed that extended versions of the theory are effective the same way as an original theory.

### The theory of planned behavior in context of sustainable fashion

When the individual is buying new clothes, it is the way how he or she wants to express their personality therefore the act of buying new clothes is perceived as hedonistic (Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibañez, 2012; Sundström, Hjelm-Lidholm and Radon, 2019). Therefore it can be stated that fashion items obtain social purpose. The theory of planned behavior was widely used in social research in order to predict the individual's behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Razzaq et al. (2018) noted that the majority of the researchers are using the theory while studying environmental consumer behavior. In studies of Kang, Liu and Kim (2013) and Bong Ko and Jin (2017) it was proved that attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavior control have an influence and direct impact on an individual's intention to buy sustainable fashion products. However, according to Spaargaren (2003), in the context of

sustainability and sustainable practices individuals seem to be inconsistent. For instance, it has been proved by Diekmann and Preisendoerfer (1992) that the individuals that expressed positive attitude towards sustainability and in general were environmentally concerned, were the ones that are using their car the most. This can have several reasons but the most probable is that this singularity is caused by better economic conditions therefore better education etc. By that being said, it appears that while studying sustainable behavior of the consumers there is a need for a comprehensive model that would provide wider understanding.

In the following section the research team will focus on the Methodology where they will focus on Philosophy of Science, the Research Design, Survey Design and finally they will present the conceptual framework of the paper.

## Methodology

### Philosophy of science

In the following chapter, the choice of the paradigm of this academic paper will be identified. In philosophy of science we can distinguish among several different paradigms. “A paradigm is a fundamental image of the subject matter within a science. It serves to define what should be studied, what questions should be asked, and what rules should be followed in interpreting the answers obtained” (Törnebohm, 1974). In addition to this, Törnebohm (1974) noted that the paradigm incorporates ontology, epistemology and methodology where ontology is dealing with the nature of existence and epistemology is dealing with nature of knowledge. Methodology part of the project includes description of techniques that are going to be used in order to generate knowledge about the investigated phenomenon (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009, p. 3 & 12).

#### Critical realism

In this academic paper, critical realism has been chosen as a paradigm. Critical realism was originally developed by Roy Bhaskar in the 1970s and has been evolving and developing for several years (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 1998). When talking about

critical realism, there is one key characteristic that has to be mentioned which is refusal of the 'epistemic fallacy' (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 36). 'Epistemic fallacy' can be explained as a combination of reality and our knowledge about it. However, in critical realism there is presumption that there is only one true reality and our obtained knowledge is affected by the individual's point of view and understanding of it (Fuglsang, Olsen & Rasborg, 2014, p. 171-173). Hence, one true objective reality exists apart from our thoughts and understanding of it. Above mentioned statement is suggesting that in the project one truth will be reached while other researchers could reach another result therefore answer to the subject. As a consequence of it, it can be stated that the object being studied is not changing as a result of obtaining new knowledge about it (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2014, p. 22). Because of the fact that as authors of this paper we respect one true reality of the subject, it will be possible for us to create only a possible version of it, which will be based on our empirical data.

In order to provide the most possible truth, this academic paper will be based upon already existing knowledge about the subject which in the chosen paradigm is perceived as an obligation for the creation of new knowledge (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2014, p. 22). The epistemological point of view in critical realism is relativistic which means that as authors of this paper we believe in one true reality but at the same time we are aware of the fact that this reality is affected by social factors since all individuals have different understanding of the subject (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2014, p. 35). Even though the goal of the research is to be as close to objectivity as possible, it has to be mentioned that our research will consist of subjective elements such as for instance collected data or the choice of academic articles used in order to provide existing knowledge about the subject.

### Three ontological domains

Bhaskar (1978) stated that the social world and natural world are functioning in similar principles and subjects being studied can be broken down into more simple or basic layers. The explanation for this structure can be explained as follows: 'the inner composition making each object what it is and not something else' (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 47). Critical realists are trying to find vertical explanations which link the events and experiences into 'generative mechanism' (Bhaskar, 1978). As researchers, we will attempt to find those mechanisms in



order to get a more detailed understanding of the subject. Bhaskar stated that the reality consists of three domains (Bhaskar, 1978)

*“The events must occur independently of the experiences in which they are apprehended.*

*Structures and mechanisms then are real and distinct from the patterns of events that they*

*generate; just as events are real and distinct from the experiences in which they are*

*apprehended. Mechanisms, events and experiences thus constitute three overlapping domains*

*of reality, viz. the domains of the real, the actual, and the empirical”* (Bhaskar, 1978,p. 56)

Firstly, there is an empirical domain which includes all observations and knowledge that has been gathered about reality. This domain consists of all theory, models and empirical data that has been collected. By using different academic articles and journals it will be possible to take into consideration different points of views which will provide helpful insights in order to get closer to objective reality (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2014, p. 21-25). In this academic paper, survey and academic literature will be used for better understanding of the subject. Secondly, the actual domain is composed of events and objects that exist. It is essential to note that events, phenomena and objects exist in the world even when they are not experienced or observed. These events, phenomena and objects are created by previously mentioned mechanisms. Thirdly, the real domain is composed of mechanisms that are interacting among each other and creating above-mentioned events, objects or phenomena (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2014, p. 23-25). For us as researchers it is impossible to directly observe all mechanisms even though they exist. In this project we will try to identify some of them through already existing knowledge and data collected (empirical domain) which will bring us closer to objective truth.

	<i>Domain of Real</i>	<i>Domain of Actual</i>	<i>Domain of Empirical</i>
<i>Mechanisms</i>	x		
<i>Events</i>	x	x	
<i>Experiences</i>	x	x	x

Figure X Bhaskar's three domains: populating entities (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 13)

## Research Design

In this chapter, the researchers develop the research design of the paper. The research group develops the paper's research design in a way in which it depicts the plan of answering the research questions. In addition to that, the research design provides precise information regarding the data collection methods, the process and the analysis of the data. Finally, it also highlights how the selected methods, processes, and decisions affect the research outcome. Hence, as a starting point for this part of the paper, the researchers will focus on and analyze the parts of the paper's research design. (Craig, 2003; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019)



Figure 1: Research design

## Data collection method

First and foremost, the researchers highlight the data collection methods. The primary data describe the collected from the authors' insights, while the secondary data are related to previously collected information from other individuals or organizations. (Ajayi, 2017). The data could be either quantitative or qualitative, and the differentiation between them is done based on the existence or non-existence of numbers. Hence the collected data that include numeric data could be described as quantitative, and the ones that include other data sources such as words, symbols, audio, and more as qualitative. It should be mentioned that researchers have raised the issue of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data. Even though the importance of that distinction is highlighted by Saunders 2019, there are cases in which it is essential to analyze qualitative data in a quantitative process and the other way around. In that direction, this paper focuses on one form of data, even though it considers the criticalities raised by previous literature. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019)

Henceforth, this paper consists of primary and secondary data; however, those methods refer only to primary data, which are solely quantitative. As described in the literature, the most common ways to generate quantitative data are through experiments and surveys. In this paper, the researchers implement only the survey method with which they aim to collect data relevant to the audience's behavior towards sustainability, the premium prices they are willing to pay for sustainable fashion products, and their knowledge of the concept of sustainability. More precisely, the survey focuses on a population demographic and collects relevant insights that help the researchers to investigate this paper's objectives. More in detail, the survey design, and its importance will be described at a later stage of the project. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019)

Moving forward to the second element of the research design, the researchers describe the purpose of the research.

## The purpose of the research

Moving forward, the researchers focus on the purpose of that paper. Based on Saunders et al. (2019), there are five forms of research studies, namely, Exploratory, Descriptive, Explanatory, Evaluative, and mixed studies (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019, p. 188)

This paper has an explanatory nature, as it focuses on an extended version of Theory of planned behavior and aims to investigate the interrelations between the different elements that affect consumer behavior towards sustainability. In that direction, the researchers collect quantitative data from a survey. Their analysis aims to identify the factors affecting consumer behavior and more in detail how; consumer sustainable behavior is affected by pricing. In addition to that, the researchers aim to collect relevant information to investigate the reasons behind consumers' non-sustainable behavior and the misalignment between consumers' environmental consciousness and actual behavior. The data collection method and the methodological approach are aligned with the explanatory form of studies. Furthermore, it is essential to highlight that while exploring a phenomenon, the scope of the research could be affected as the generated data may influence researchers' views on that phenomenon. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019)

## Research Strategy and approach

The next part of the paper's research design reflects the "Research Strategy," or the researchers' process of answering the paper's problem formulation and research questions. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019) Alternatively, Kuada (2012) refers to it as the project's blueprint. In that direction various strategies could be followed, but one cannot claim that there is one best strategy, as each of them has specific characteristics. In this paper, the "Research Strategy" is related to a survey conducted on a random sample of population and which will be further explained later in this paper. In regards to the approach of the project, the researchers focus on a deductive approach. The fundamental concern in the deductive approach is to find the logical conclusion of what is observed, which means that this approach generates information about the person through the application of general laws and ideas (Danermark et al., 2005, 80). Because the theories and literature are utilized as a context for studying how the concept of sustainability affects consumer behavior. In addition to that, they contribute to the identification of the most important elements that affect

consumer behavior towards sustainability in the garment industry, and finally the effect of pricing on those consumers.

(Parker, 1998; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019; Rovder, 1992)

## Time Horizon

The following part is linked to the project's "Time Horizon." The time horizon is crucial as it affects the results and their importance for the future research. The time horizon of this project could be described as a snapshot or, as it is mentioned by Saunders (2019), cross-sectional. In that direction, this paper focuses on a phenomenon and investigates it in a specific period. As in most Time Horizon cases, this project is constrained as it is being conducted as part of the researchers' master thesis. The Time Horizon approach will have some limitations, as the time was limited in regards to the data collection process, and more precisely to the survey. That means that the amount of answers is limited and the researchers should be critical of the conclusions. Additionally, the implementation of a survey is also described as the most common data collection method in those cases, which aligns with the project's data collection process. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019)

Moving forward the paper focuses on the conducted survey.

## The conducting of surveys

### What is a survey:

In a survey, a larger group of consumers is asked the same questions and give their answers in some predetermined response categories. The research group decided to focus on a random sampling of participants. Hence, the respondents were randomly selected in such a way that they reflect the group of consumers that one wants to know something about. A questionnaire survey provides a picture of consumers experiences and assessments of selected themes, and the results can be translated into numbers. (Kelly et al., 2022)

## Why Are we using a survey?

Surveys are suitable as a tool for systematically to measure and follow up on, for example, the quality of the activities for example at a ward or a hospital (e.g., by pre- / post-measurements). Via survey managers and employees can gain knowledge about the prevalence of e.g., experiences and assessments seen from the patients' point of view or test hypotheses. Surveys thus become a valuable tool in the work of continuously maintaining and improving the quality. Since the research focuses on consumer level, the researchers implement a survey in order to collect more relevant insights from a broader audience. Additionally, the multidimensional nature of the consumers is being captured through the random sampling of the survey participants. Having that said, the survey helps the researchers to have a many sided look on consumers insights, rather than a narrowed view. (Kelly et al., 2022)

## How to choose a demographic group:

As a rule, all potential consumers can participate in one survey. In addition, it can be a challenge for consumers to answer a survey if they do not read the language that the survey is written in. (Kelly et al., 2022) If you choose to have the data collection carried out electronically, you must consider whether consumers are used to handling tablets or computers.

With those questions answered the research team decided to look into the different types of questions that could be included in surveys. We found five different examples of questions that could be asked and those are the following: (Kelly et al., 2022)

1. Assessment questions: measure consumer's experiences and satisfaction, for example in relation to the actual content of a service (Good / Bad), the satisfaction with a benefit (To a large extent / To some extent / To a small degree / Not at all) or the amount of the benefit (Too much / Appropriate / Too little). For example: How do you assess the extent of the information you received about your product/service when you purchased it? (Too much / Appropriate / Too little). (Kelly et al., 2022)

2. Action questions: illuminate people's actions and behaviors in one given situation. Eg: How often do you buy clothes from fast fashion chains such as H&M ? (Several times daily / Daily or almost daily / 1 or 2 times a week/ 1 or 2 times a month / Less often / Never). (Kelly et al., 2022)
3. Prioritization questions: measure what people find important. For example: How important is it for you to get information about your product when you are in the purchasing stage? (Very important / Important / Less important / Not important at all)
4. Open questions: Open-ended questions allow the consumer to elaborate on an answer either in relation to a specific question or in general to all the questions in the survey. Answers from open-ended questions can be a valuable qualitative supplement to the other issues with closed response categories. (Kelly et al., 2022)
5. Background knowledge questions including (age, gender ,nationality, wages etc.) can uncover essential characteristics of the consumer group included in the study. For example, it may be interesting to examine whether there are differences in the assessment regarding the consumers when it comes to culture, nationality or income. (Kelly et al., 2022)

It should be mentioned that throughout the data collection process of the project 159 individuals answered the survey. The survey was mainly distributed through social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn, and shared with other students of the University of Aalborg through its respective Social Media groups. The survey was designed based on Ajzen's theory of Planned Behavior and the questions were related to the previously defined elements. Finally, regarding the above mentioned types of questions, the survey includes; Assessment, Action, Prioritization and Background questions. Further information for the collected data will be presented in the Analysis chapter of the paper. (Kelly et al., 2022)

Having said that, the next part of the Methodology refers to the conceptual framework of the paper.

## Conceptual framework

In this chapter, the researchers will provide an illustrated overview of the study. The objective of the study is to investigate the effect that sustainability has on consumer behavior. To do that the research group attempts to understand and identify the most significant elements that are influencing consumer behavior towards sustainable fashion products, and focuses mostly on the price factor. In that context, the theoretical foundation is based upon the Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) Theory of Planned Behavior is a suitable tool and effective model in order to investigate consumers' intention toward specific behavior through analysis of three determinants (Muthu, 2019) Even though the original theory includes three determinants, the authors of this academic paper decided to use an extended version which they developed themselves based on Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior with an additional fourth independent determinant which is self-identity. An extended version of the theory will provide a more detailed analysis of the subject and a better understanding of the problem.

Firstly, attitude towards behavior can be described as the opinions and attitudes of an individual towards a specific subject. In this research, three elements for this determinant were chosen which are knowledge about sustainability, awareness and personal attitude. The decision about the elements made by the researchers is supported by Jägel et al. (2012) who claim that individuals who are concerned about environmental and ethical problems are more likely to buy sustainable clothes. Moreover, Vicente-Molina et al., (2013) noted that a higher level of knowledge of such issues can increase the likelihood that the individual will adapt sustainable purchasing behavior and buy sustainable clothes. Secondly, one element has been chosen for a determinant called subjective norm. According to Lee (2008) an individual's surroundings can have a significant effect on behavior and especially it applies for younger generations and that is the reasoning behind the choice to include an individual's surroundings in our model. Third independent determinant is perceived behavioral control. Choice of the elements in the third determinant includes quality, price and design. According to Joergens (2006) majority of the consumers choose price, quality and style of the apparel over environmental, social and ethical concerns. Hence, price, quality and design are considered to be important in our study. The researchers add one more additional independent determinant to theory which is self-identity. Das (2015) stated that the consumer tends to



make a purchase if the purchase will strengthen the individual's identity. This mechanism is considered as even more applicable in connection to environmental and social beliefs of behaviors. In addition to this Meijboom and Brom (2012) stated that moral ideals have the ability to reflect into actions of the consumers which can lead to implementing purchasing behavior that takes into consideration environmental, social and ethical aspects. The whole illustrated overview of the study can be seen below.

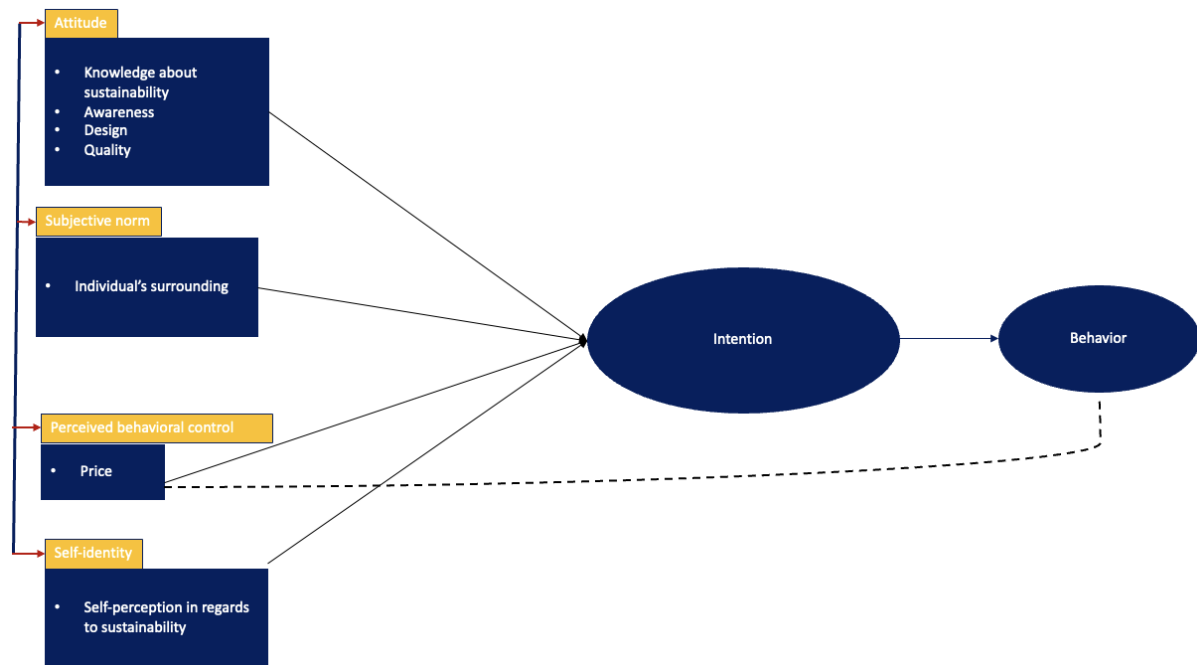


Figure 2: Conceptual framework

Having that said it should be mentioned that all four independent variables of the framework are interconnected among each other.

## Chi-square:

Chi-square is a test of whether the distribution in one group has an effect on the distribution in another group.

What is examined is thus the significance of categorical variables for other categorical variables. For example, you can have a variable called complication yes / no, and here your population will be divided into those who have complications and those who do not have complications. At the same time, one's population will typically also be divided into men and women or treatment A and B or other divisions. What you can then see is e.g. what percentage of women had complications, and what percentage of men had complications, and one thus asks whether gender matters for the frequency of complications. It can be tested using chi-square. (Forskerkurser, 2016)

It may be that 10 percent of the men had complications and 5 percent of the women had complications. At first glance, one would think that there is a difference between the two, but as with all other observations in research, one has to test whether the difference is also statistically significant. If a chi-square results in a statistically significant result, it can therefore be concluded that there is a difference in the frequency of complications between men and women. (Forskerkurser, 2016)

There are a number of prerequisites that must be met in order for chi-square to be made. The most important premise is that there are enough observations in all categories. As a rule of thumb, there should be more than five observations at each location. So more than five women with complications, more than five women without, more than five men with complications and more than five men without complications.

The interpretation of the chi-square test is relatively simple, as long as you only have two categories for each variable, i.e man/woman and complication yes/no, but if you have several categories, the interpretation will be a little more difficult. It may be that you have a variable with three categories, for example three different regions, where you want to investigate whether there is a difference in the complication rates. (Forskerkurser, 2016)

If you get a statistically significant p-value in your chi-square test, it can be difficult to conclude where the difference lies if, for example, you had observed 10 percent complications on Sjælland, 8 percent on Fyn and 15 percent in Jylland. Then you have to investigate where the statistical difference is - is it between Fyn and Jylland, between Sjælland and Jylland or between Fyn and Sjælland. This can be done by calculating confidence intervals for the proportion or number of patients with complications. (Forskerkurser, 2016)

It is important to note that since the data collection of the conducted survey is as limited as it is, some of the conclusions brought up within the analysis as well as the discussion of the paper, could be merely coincidental instead of factual. In certain areas of the discussion the research group has tried to gather data from other studies or surveys that look into the same issues within the research paper, to either confirm or challenge the data gathered by the research group.

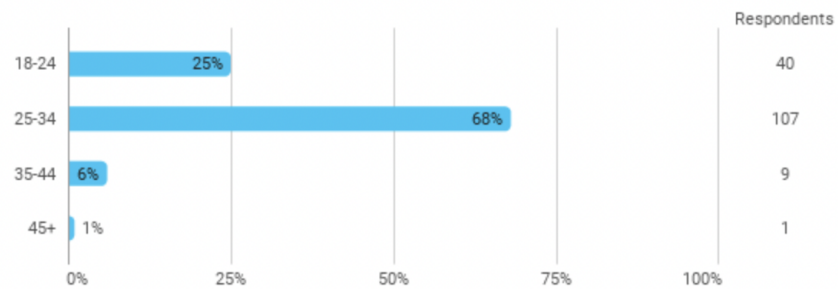
## Analysis

The first section of the analysis will look into the survey the research group has conducted, the research group will look into each of the questions they have asked all of the participants of the survey and analyze the data each of the questions have provided one by one.

1) 2) 3)

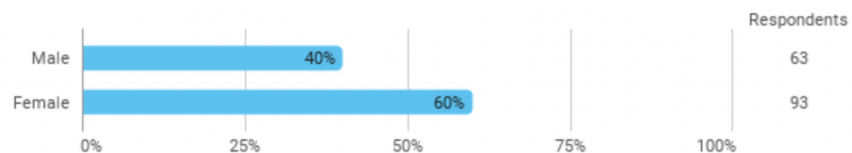
The first three questions for our survey are introduction questions to give the research group a better understanding of our participants. The research group felt that it was appropriate to inform the participant that they should be able to answer whether or not they agreed with the fact that the research group would be processing personal data in accordance with GDPR regulations. The research group also believes that it is necessary to know the participant's gender, to see if there are any differences or similarities between the two genders. Lastly, the research group wanted to look into how participants of different age groups would be answering the survey, which is why they added a question to learn the ages of the different participants.

What is your age?



+ Add ▾

What is your gender?



At this section of the analysis the research group is going to further analyze the survey conducted, by looking into each individual survey question thereafter allocating those specific survey questions to the most relevant Research Question. The reason for this allocation is to clarify the relevance of each individual survey question, and how they contribute to the answering of the Research Questions. In that context firstly we will proceed with Research Question 1 and its corresponding survey questions. Moving forward we will do the same for Research Question 2 and Research Question 3. However, it should be mentioned that there are survey questions which contribute to more than one Research Question. For the sake of not repeating what has already been stated beforehand the research group decided to showcase the survey questions only once, therefore the relevance of those survey questions with more than one Research Questions will be highlighted.

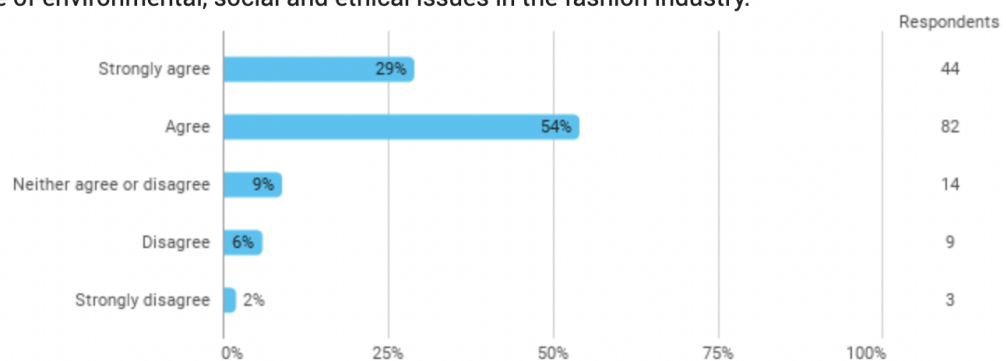
## Research Question 1

Survey question 4: "I am well aware of environmental, social and ethical issues in the fashion industry."

In this question, the researchers are trying to determine how knowledgeable the common consumer is regarding the social and ethical issues within the fashion industry. One of the reasons for this question is to better understand the potential results of the upcoming questions. Since this question can be a bit miss leading because it is difficult to measure one person's awareness of any particular issue, the research group thought that it would be fitting to have five different options to answer this question. Those five are: strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree and strongly disagree.

As we can see from the picture below, the data showcases that 29 percent of the survey respondents strongly agree with the statement and 54 percent of the respondents agree with the statement. This could indicate that the survey group is quite knowledgeable with regard to this topic. This could mean that all of the upcoming data is more valid because of the fact that the people who answered the survey deemed themselves quite knowledgeable within this field of study. It has to be said that question four of the survey is very closely linked to question five, while question four asks if the participants of the survey are well aware of the environmental, social and ethical issues in the fashion industry. Question five looks into a more detailed description of the participant's awareness of sustainability within the fashion industry.

I am well aware of environmental, social and ethical issues in the fashion industry.

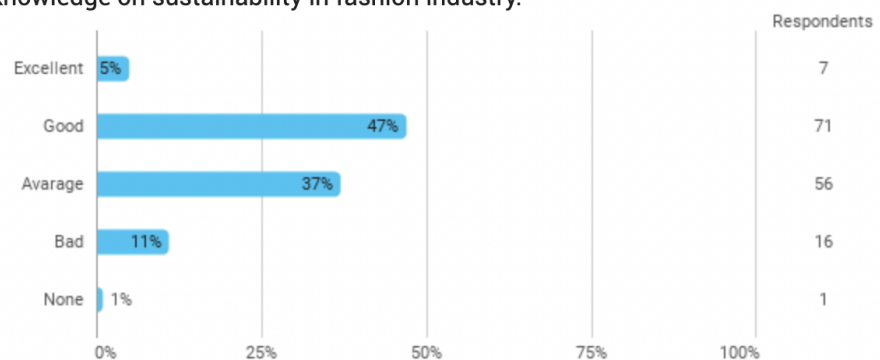


Survey question 5: "How would you rate your knowledge on sustainability in the fashion industry?"

The fifth-question of the survey is interesting because it in some ways conflicts with the previous question. When we asked the participants of the survey whether or not they were

aware of the environmental, social and ethical issues within the fashion industry. We can see that 29 percent of the participants agree with that statement, but when we ask a slightly different question which is: how would you rate your knowledge of sustainability in the fashion industry. We can see that only 5 percent of the participants answered that they had an excellent understanding of sustainability in the fashion industry. One would assume that if a participant answered that they strongly agreed with the statement that: *"I am well aware of the environmental, social and ethical issues within the fashion industry"*, then they would also have excellent knowledge regarding the sustainability within the fashion industry since environmental social and ethical issues have strong ties to sustainability. As we can see the data does not make this connection, which could indicate that the people exaggerate their knowledge when you ask them more vague questions. The data further showcases that 47 percent of the participants believe that they have a good understanding of sustainability within the fashion industry, and another 37 percent rated their knowledge as average.

How would you rate your knowledge on sustainability in fashion industry.

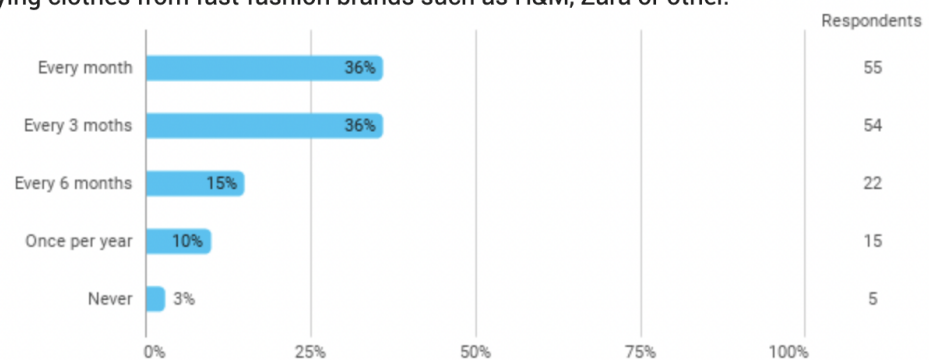


Survey question 6: "How often are you buying clothes from fast-fashion brands such as H&M, Zara or other?"

With the sixth-question, the research team is trying to figure out how often the participants buy clothes from fast fashion stores such as H&M. This question is crucial since it can indicate how much exposure the participants get to these fast fashion brands. What we mean is that if a participant were only to shop at the fast fashion brands once a year, then they would not have that many opportunities to consider what and how their purchasing decisions affect the environment surrounding them. The picture below illustrates that 36 percent of the survey participants shop at fast fashion stores every month, and another 36 percent do at least every three months. This tells us that the participants are very familiar with the fast fashion

brands. The data also indicates that since such a large number of participants shop at these fast fashion stores so frequently, it could be assumed that any small changes in the consumers who are purchasing products from these fast-fashion chains, could lead to big changes. Further on, in the analysis section of the project, the research group will look closer into how this question has been answered with regards to gender and age, as well as what might have caused the different groups to have answered as they have.

How often are you buying clothes from fast-fashion brands such as H&M, Zara or other.



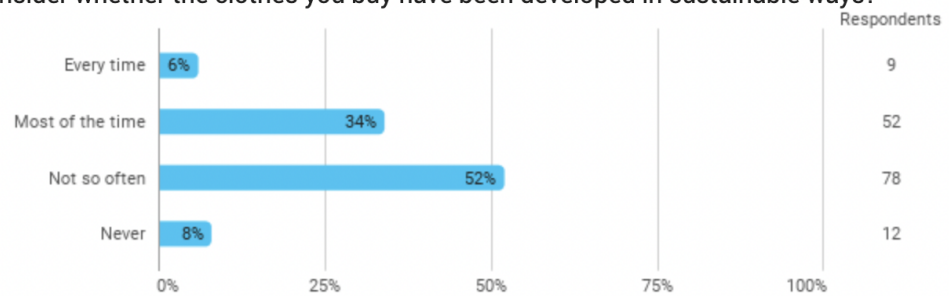
It is important to note that this survey question not only helps the research group to better understand research question one, but it can also be implicated to get us a better understanding of research question two. In that context this survey question contributes to RQ2 as it showcases the frequency with which the consumers are buying products from fast-fashion brands. That could be an indicator related to price, as the fast-fashion products are considered as low-priced.

Survey question 7: "How often do you consider whether the clothes you buy have been developed in sustainable ways?"

With this question of: *"How often do you consider whether the clothes you buy have been developed in sustainable ways?"* This shows us that the majority 52 percent answered not so often to this particular question, this further strengthens the observations made in the previous question, being that if more consumers thought about how their clothes were developed then these small pedals could lead to a large rock slide. It is quite alarming that 72 percent of all the participants answered that they shop at fast fashion brands very often, and 60 percent of

the participants answered that they rarely or never consider whether or not the clothes they buy were produced in a sustainable way.

How often do you consider whether the clothes you buy have been developed in sustainable ways?

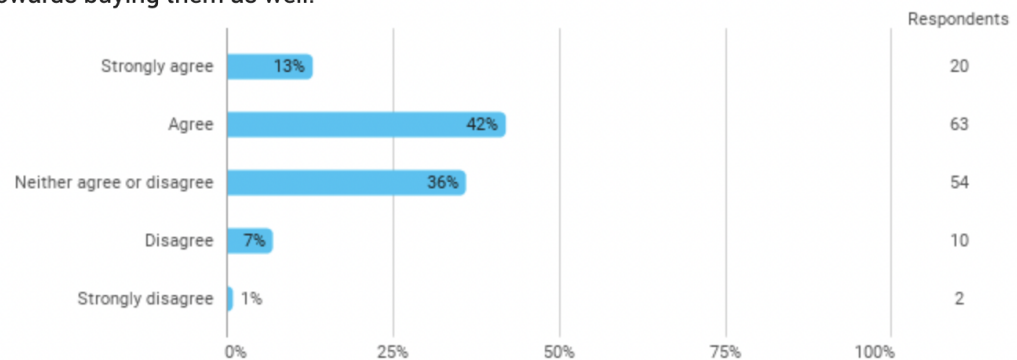


Survey question 8: "If people in my social environment would wear sustainable fashion products it would positively affect my intentions towards buying them as well."

The eighth-question of the survey delves deeper into how the participant's social life and environment affect their intentions to buy more sustainable fashion products. As the picture below illustrates, 13 percent of all the participants strongly agree with the fact that their social environment has an effect on their purchasing decision towards sustainable clothes, while another 42 percent of the participants simply agree with the fact. This data tells us that 55 percent of the participants would be willing to change their purchasing decision solely on the fact that more people around them are doing the same. This is interesting because of the fact that it tells us that it is not only price, availability, or ethics that decide why people are becoming more sustainable. This data could also mean that the fashion chains do not have to convert 100 percent of their consumers to think in a more sustainable way but perhaps only a majority of the consumers. As the data shows, If companies manage to be successful in converting a certain number of consumers to be more sustainable, then more will follow in their footsteps.



If people in my social environment would wear sustainable fashion products it would positively affected my intension towards buying them as well.

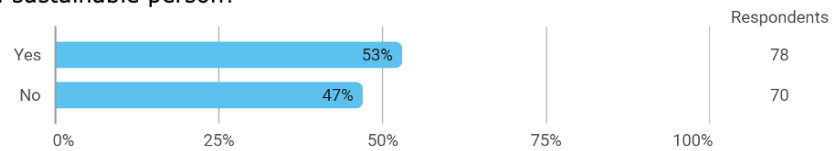


Survey question 9: "Do you perceive yourself as a sustainable person?"

In that question, the researchers aim to learn how consumers define themselves towards the concept of sustainability. In that direction, the researchers will identify whether consumers' opinions align with their actual behavior or if there is a potential misalignment.

Though, it should be mentioned that sustainability tends to have an objective nature, as individuals characterize a product, service, or a company as sustainable in different terms. As in the case of ethical consumerism, other consumers believe that in order to be ethical, a consumer should avoid anything related to a negative for the environment or the social activity, e.g., increased CO2 emissions or high water consumption. While others consider themselves as sustainable consumers only if they tend to select the less harmful choice for society and the environment. In that context, a less sustainable consumer believes he/she is more sustainable than individuals who behave more sustainably. For that reason and concerning the consumption trends that negatively affect the world, the researchers define the sustainable consumer as an individual who is willing to make sacrifices to have a more sustainable product. Additionally, he/she is not frequently purchasing fast fashion brands which is one of the most significant sustainability issues in the garment industry. Based on survey results, we can see that 53 percent of participants consider themselves sustainable, while 47 percent believe they are not sustainable.

Do you perceive yourself as a sustainable person?



Looking more profoundly at the data and concerning the gender, we can see that we have an equal percentage in both cases for men as both cases received 50 percent. In the case of women, we can see that the percentage of those who believe they are sustainable is higher with 55 percent. (Vitell & Muncy, 1992)

Do you perceive yourself as a sustainable person?



Do you perceive yourself as a sustainable person?



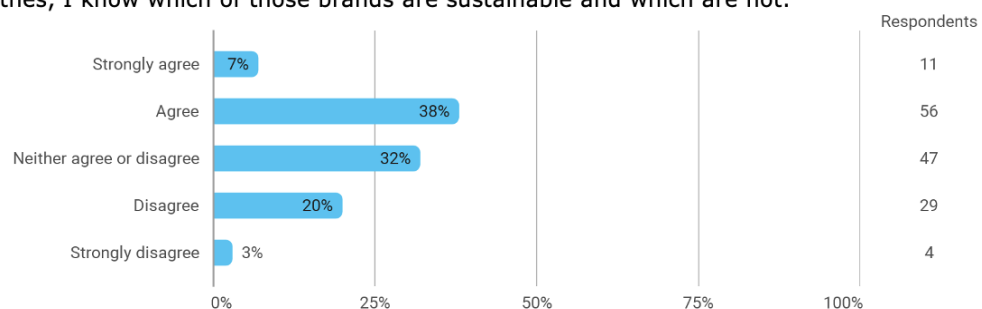
Based on the data we see that women tend to believe they are more sustainable. With that in mind we will proceed with the next question which focuses on consumers' knowledge on sustainable brands.

Survey question 10: "When I buy clothes I know which of those brands are sustainable and which are not."

Nowadays, consumers are more knowledgeable regarding the concept of sustainability and have a preference for more sustainable products and companies. This phenomenon appears more among the younger generations. However, in many cases, the companies are facing increased demand for green products. For that reason they tend to communicate their contribution to sustainable issues and generally focus on green marketing. In that context, corporations promote their positive effect on the world without necessarily informing consumers about the non-sustainable aspects of their products and operations. In addition to that, there are cases in which companies provide misleading information in the context of sustainability. This is not always against the law, as the companies can claim that their products contain a percentage of the sustainable coil without highlighting that this percentage refers only to a part of the clothing. In other cases, the companies add disclaimers though they are not always easy to see, as they use small letters and footnotes. That concept is called greenwashing, and many known big companies have been accused of such behavior. (Lukinović & Jovanović, 2019)

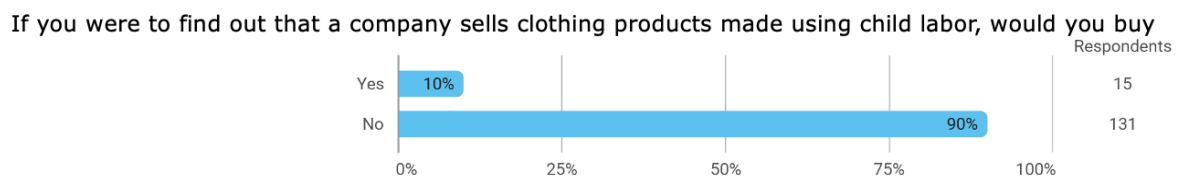
Having this in mind, this question aims to find whether consumers are knowledgeable or believe they know whether the brands they are buying are sustainable. Through the survey, we can see that 45 percent of the respondents believe they know when they purchase a product if the brand is sustainable or not. The split in the case of the positive reply is: 38 percent Agree, and 7 percent Strongly Agree. However, the difference is not significant with those who are unsure whether their buying brands are sustainable. 32 percent answered that they neither agree nor disagree when 20 percent stated that they do not know which of the brands they are buying are sustainable.

When I buy clothes, I know which of those brands are sustainable and which are not.



Survey question 11: "If you were to find out that a company sells clothing products made using child labor, would you buy them?"

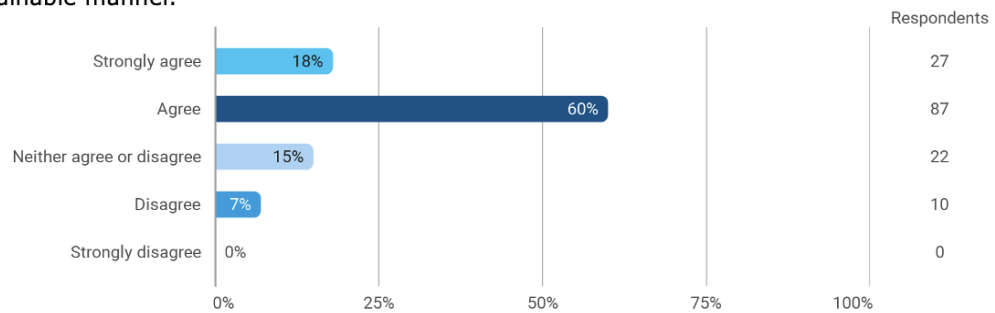
In this question, the results are profound, as 90 percent state that they would not buy products from companies that use child labor. Even though there are cases in the past with giant corporations such as GAP that have been accused of using child labor, they have not had any adverse effects on their revenue after those accusations. This question aims mainly to show that consumers, in general, would not buy products from such brands. However, they do, due to their lack of knowledge or "short memory". For example, as we saw in question nr. 6, 73 percent of the responders replied that they buy fast fashion brands, some of which, e.g., ZARA and GAP, have been accused of child labor in the past, at least every three months. (Gap admits possible child labor problem.2007; Girit Selin, 2017; Sørensen et al. 2022)



Survey question 12: "I would buy clothing that meets my "fashionable needs" (price, quality, style) over an item that is made in a sustainable manner"

This question aims to identify if sustainability is considered more important than other factors for garment industry's consumers. Based on the results, we can see that 78 percent claim either Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement. That means consumers value more things such as Price, Quality, and Style over sustainability. It should be mentioned here that besides the fact that 94 percent of the respondents are younger than 34 years old and consequently more informed regarding sustainability, they still value the other elements of a fashion product more. Based on Business Wire's article, we see that price is the primary factor influencing consumer purchase decisions. (Business Wire, 2014)

I would buy clothing that meets my "fashionable needs " (price, quality, style) over an item that is made in a sustainable manner.

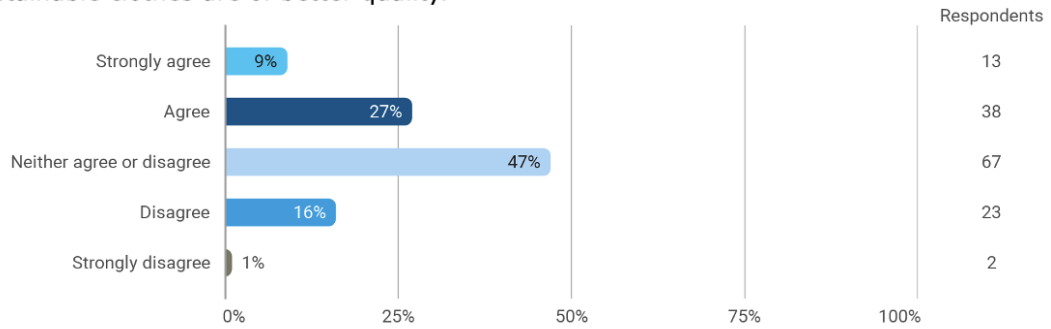


Having that said, we will proceed to the next question that aims to investigate the price effect on consumers towards sustainability in the garment industry.

Survey question 20: "I believe sustainable clothes are of better quality."

The following question is trying to investigate whether people believe that sustainable clothes have better quality than unsustainable ones. Dodds et al. (1991) stated that there is a positive connection between perceived value and consumers willingness to buy certain products therefore better quality might play a significant role in purchasing decisions of the consumer. Moreover, these findings were supported by Sener et al. (2019) who also found positive linkage between perceived value and purchase intention in the context of sustainable fashion. From the results it can be observed a wide spectrum of answers which proves that individuals have different opinions about the quality of sustainable clothes. However, one answer was more frequent than the others. The results showed that 47 percent of respondents neither agree or disagree with the statement that sustainable clothes are of better quality therefore they couldn't confirm or deny the statement. 16 percent of the respondents expressed that they do not believe that sustainable clothes have better quality than unsustainable ones. On the other hand 27 percent of the respondents agreed and 9 percent strongly agreed that sustainable clothes have better quality. From the results it is difficult to conclude whether the statement is true or not but a higher percentage of individuals agreed with the statement than disagreed.

I believe sustainable clothes are of better quality.

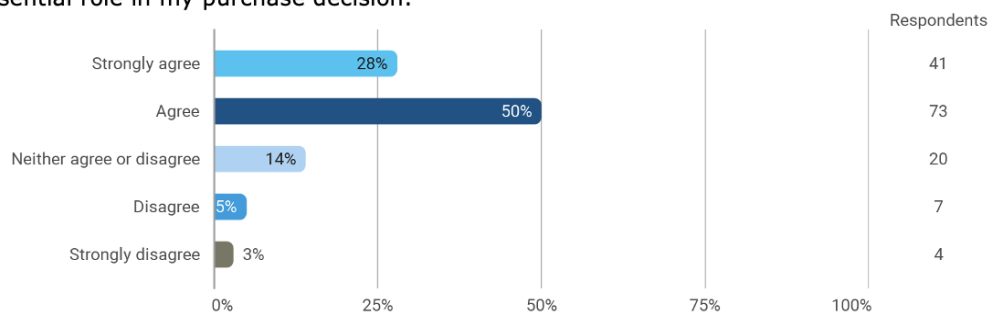


## Research Question 2

Survey question 13: "Price has an essential role in my purchase decision."

Question thirteen, has the purpose of investigating the importance of price for the consumers of the garment industry. While 78 percent either agree or strongly agree, only 8 percent Disagree or Strongly disagree with the statement.

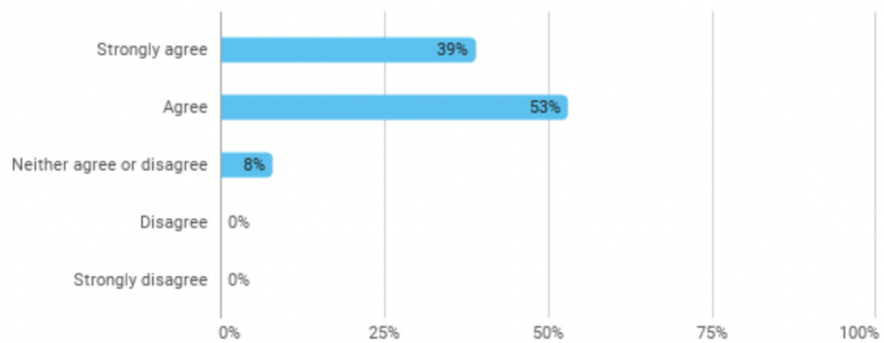
Price has an essential role in my purchase decision.



That means that price is significant for the consumers. An important factor affecting that could also be age, as the majority of the respondents are younger. In addition to that, with a deeper look at the insights, we see that there are no negative answers, and 92 percent have a positive attitude towards the statement.

Price has an essential role in my purchase decision.

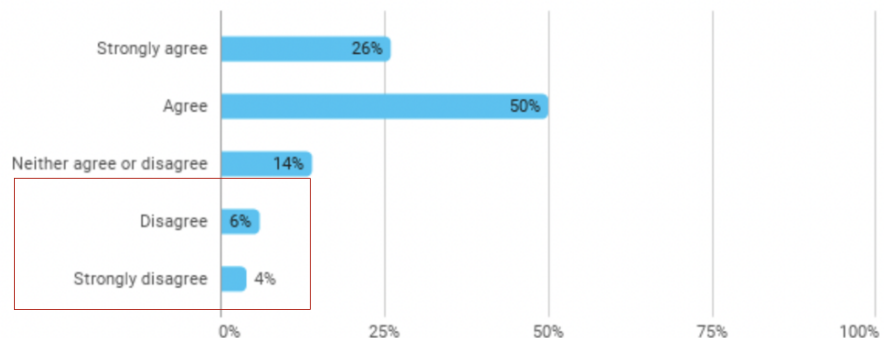
**Age: 18-24**



In contrast, when we look at the next age group, there are few negative answers and a considerable increase in the neutral response. Additionally, the positive toward the statement answers have a lower percentage.

Price has an essential role in my purchase decision.

**Age: 24-35**



Henceforth, based on the survey's responses, there is a trend for the younger generations to be more price-sensitive, which should be taken into consideration for the project's next steps.

It is important to note that this survey question not only helps the research group to better understand research question one, but it can also be implicated to get us a better understanding of research question three. In that direction this survey question contributes to RQ3 since it highlights how price sensitive the consumers are.

Survey question 14: "Which one of the below do you believe is more expensive?"

Survey question 15: "Which one would you buy?"

Survey question 16: "Which one would you buy?"

The three following questions present three visuals and try to figure out consumer behavior toward sustainability and whether they consider sustainable clothes more expensive. Henceforth, question 14 aims to determine consumer perception of sustainable clothes cost.

*ULTRABOOST MADE TO BE REMADE SHOES*



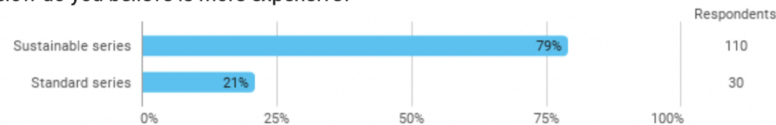
Sustainable Series

*ULTRABOOST 22 SHOES*



Standard Series

Which one of the below do you believe is more expensive?



While few individuals replied that they believe the Standard series will be more expensive, there is a significant difference with those who believe the Sustainable series is more expensive, with 79 percent selecting this option. Hence, the respondents expect that sustainable fashion products will be more expensive than the standard ones. In that context, in an article in CBS news, it was mentioned that sustainable products have higher prices, and in many cases, consumers cannot purchase such products due to their economic situation. The fact that sustainable products are more expensive is related to many factors, for example, the manufacturing process and the higher wages. In contrast to that, the well-known fashion magazine Vogue in an article from 2021, highlights that people believe sustainable fashion products are more expensive because they compare them to fast fashion brands that have products with meager prices. The critical indicator here is whether consumers consider the sustainable factors and if they are willing to pay more for them. This will be investigated with the following questions. (HASINA KHATIB, 2021; Ivanova Irina, 2019; Y.O.U, 2021)

The two following questions focus on the same objective but in two different cases.



Therefore, two images with identical fashion products are presented to the responder in those questions. The only difference is that one is sustainable and more expensive than the other one. In that context, the purpose is to examine if consumers are willing to pay more for the sustainable one and if that is affected by the product's cost.

Hence, the first question refers to a pair of shoes at the price of 110\$ for the sustainable series and 100\$ for the regular one.

In that case the percentages are close as the 48 percent would go for the sustainable series while the 52 percent for the regular one. In contrast to the next question, which refers to a T-shirt, with 15\$ for the regular one and 18\$ for the sustainable one, the case is different as the majority; 81 percent of the respondents would select the sustainable one. It is essential to interrelate those two questions. In the case of the more expensive shoes, fewer people would be willing to pay the extra premium price for the sustainable ones, whereas, in the case of the cheap T-shirt, the majority does not mind paying the extra 3\$. In terms of percentage, the example of sustainable shoes is 10 percent more expensive while the T-shirt is 20 percent more expensive. Even though the price in the first case has increased more, the consumers are still willing to pay for it more than the case of the more expensive shoes. That means that the cost of the product has an important role and affects consumers' willingness to pay more for a sustainable product.



**110\$ Sustainable Series with  
Vegan Leather**



**100\$ Standard Series with  
Real Leather**

Which one would you buy?



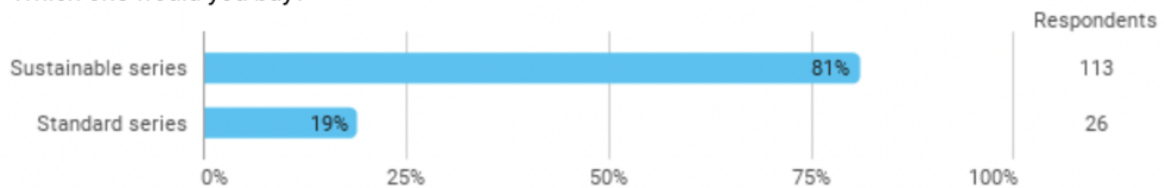


15\$ Standard Series



18\$ Sustainable Series

Which one would you buy?

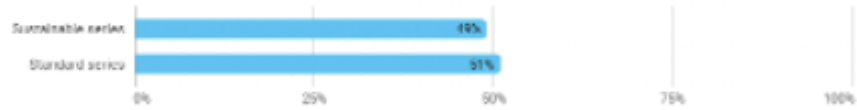


Additionally, another critical point, in that case, is that even respondents who do not consider themselves sustainable still are willing to pay different prices for the sustainable products if they are not expensive. More precisely, 71 percent of them are still willing to pay that extra 3\$ even though they are not so keen to behave sustainably.

Finally, if we look in the answers of the respondents who believe that sustainable series is more expensive in the case of question nr. 15, we observe that the 49 percent would still be willing to pay for it besides the fact that it is more expensive. However the difference is not big as it is only 3 percentage points higher than the amount of respondents who would be buying the standard one.

Which one of the below do you believe is more expensive? = Sustainable series

Which one would you buy?



While there is no significant difference in the case of question nr. 15 (sneakers example), when we look into question nr. 16 (T-shirt example), we observe that the majority is still willing to pay for the sustainable one.

Which one of the below do you believe is more expensive? = Sustainable series



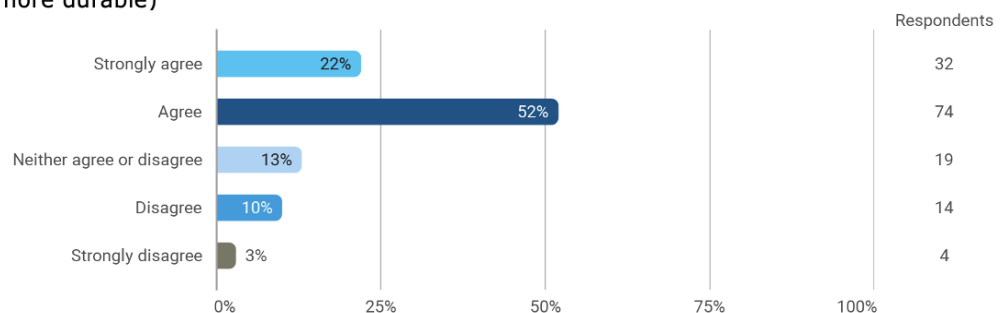
This most likely is related to the fact that the 3\$ is not considered a significant amount, and the consumers would readily be willing to pay it despite their relationship and knowledge about sustainability.

Survey question 22: "I would be willing to pay a higher price for clothes that are of higher quality ( in this regard higher quality means more durable)."

The next question of the survey is follow up to the previous question however this question is focused towards durability of fashion apparel. From the graph it can be observed that 52 percent agree and 22 percent strongly agree with the statement . It has to be mentioned that there is a 20 percent increase in positive answers compared to the previous question. Therefore, when it comes to the quality of the clothes with the meaning of durability, consumers seem to express more interest towards sustainable and durable clothing. Hence, longer durability of the clothes and lower frequency of buying new ones due to damage can be perceived as an important factor for consumers which might increase positive intention of

buying sustainable apparel. Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) stated that younger people (with the meaning of generation Y) are showing high consumption patterns and tendency to enjoy purchasing from fast fashion brands with low price even if they are interested in sustainability. Durability of sustainable clothes appears to be one of the ways to convince younger generations to start purchasing more sustainable products rather than clothes from fast fashion brands such as H&M or Zara. It is also important to mention that based on the survey 13 percent neither agree or disagree with the statement which shows not a positive but neither negative attitude towards the statement. Even though from the results of the survey it was confirmed that durability of the clothes can be perceived as an important factor for consumers 10 percent disagreed and 3 percent strongly disagreed with the statement.

I would be willing to pay a higher price for clothes that are of higher quality (in this regard, higher quality means more durable)



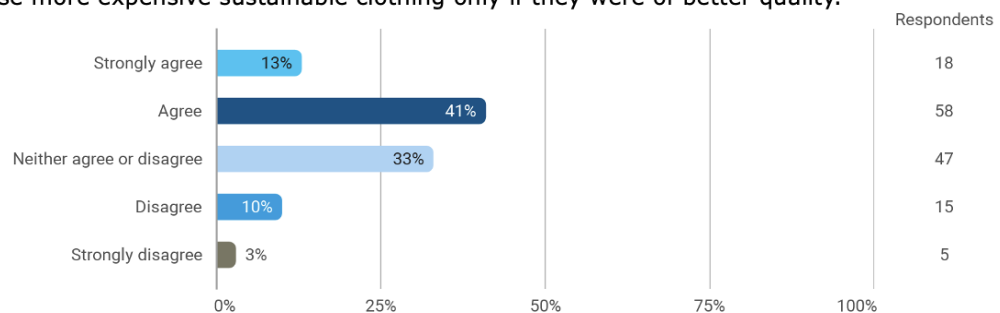
It is important to note that this survey question not only helps the research group to better understand research question one, but it can also be implicated to get us a better understanding of research question one. In that context this survey question contributes to RQ1 as quality is one of the key elements affecting consumers behavior and therefore can give the research group a better insight to answering research question 1. The same applies also for the next

Survey question 21: "I would purchase more expensive sustainable clothing only if they were of better quality."

The next question was focusing more on purchasing decisions considering higher price in connection with better quality. Through this question, researchers are trying to investigate if

people would be willing to purchase more expensive sustainable clothes if they would be sure that they are of better quality. Joergens (2006) states that most of the customers choose the price, quality and style of the clothing over environmental, social and ethical concerns. In addition to this, Lee and Kim (2013) proved that even in unsustainable fashion, higher prices are negatively affecting consumer purchasing behavior. Therefore it can be concluded that price is one of the key elements that has an impact on purchasing behavior of an individual. As it can be seen on the graph, 41 percent agree and 13 percent strongly agree with the statement. Hence, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents would be willing to pay higher price for sustainable clothes only if the clothing was of better quality than unsustainable one. That indicates the importance of perceived value since most of the individuals would be willing to spend more only if there was an added value, which in this case is the better quality of the clothing. The outcome of the survey is supported by a study of Dean et al. (2012) where it was proved that consumers are willing to pay higher prices when the value of the fashion apparel exceeds the perceived value. Moreover, the results are in correlation with a study by Niinimäki (2010) where he claims that some of the consumers would be willing to pay higher prices if the sustainable fashion items were of better quality. The rest of the results of the survey shows that 33 percent neither agree or disagree with the statement and only 13 percent of respondents are not supporting the statement where 10 percent disagree and 3 percent strongly disagree. Thus from the results it can be concluded that added value has the potential to convince consumers to pay a higher price for sustainable fashion items.

I would purchase more expensive sustainable clothing only if they were of better quality.

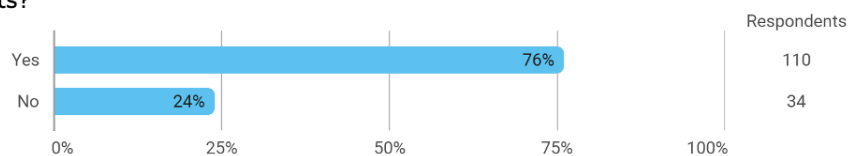


### Research Question 3

Survey question 17: "Would you be willing to pay extra if you knew a product has been developed with respect to the environment and human rights?"

In the next question the data gathered indicates that 76 percent of all the participants answered yes, they would be willing to pay extra for products that were produced with respect towards the environment and human rights. Although the research group believes that it is one thing to say that consumers would be willing to pay more for their clothes for the sake of the environment and human rights, and another thing entirely to act upon the statement as well as be specific as to how much more they would be willing to pay. This is why the next question, question 18 will ask the participants how much more they would be willing to pay for their beliefs and support for the environment and human rights.

Would you be willing to pay extra if you knew a product has been developed with respect to the environment and human rights?

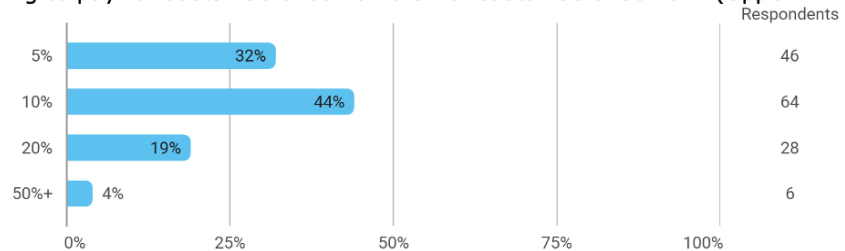


Survey question 18: "How much more are you willing to pay for sustainable fashion than unsustainable fashion upper limit?"

Question eighteenth is a direct follow up to the previous question, now that we know what percentage of the participants are willing to pay more for products that were produced with respect to the environment. This question will provide data as to how much the participants are willing to pay for sustainable fashion compared to unsustainable fashion. As the picture below shows, 32 percent of all participants are willing to pay an increase of 5 percent for clothes that are made in a sustainable manner. The majority 44 percent of the participants are willing to pay 10 percent more for sustainable clothes. A surprising 19 percent of the participants were willing to go up to 20 percent, and 4 percent were willing to pay more than 50 percent for more sustainable clothes. As the data show 44 percent of the participants are

only willing to pay 10 percent more for a sustainable product. This could prove troublesome since research and development in sustainability is quite expensive.

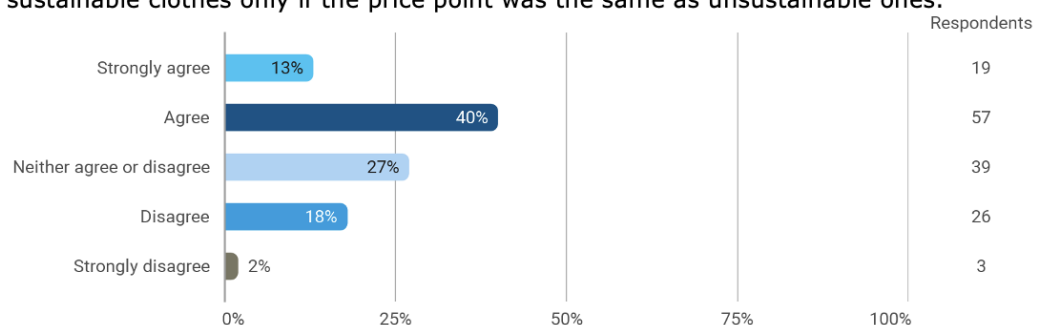
How much more are you willing to pay for sustainable fashion than unsustainable fashion? (Upper limit)



Survey question 19: "I would buy sustainable clothes only if the price point was the same as unsustainable ones"

Question nineteen asks the participants of the survey the above question, with the options of answering strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree and strongly disagree. As it is illustrated by the picture below, the data shows that 53 percent of the participants are not willing to buy sustainable products from fast fashion stores unless it is at the same price point as the unsustainable products. This statistic is troubling since it contradicts the previous question as to how much more the participants are willing to pay for the sustainable product. In the discussion section of the project, the research group will look into and discuss why the data is contradicting, and what that could mean for the answer of this question.

I would buy sustainable clothes only if the price point was the same as unsustainable ones.



It is important to note that this survey question not only helps the research group to better understand research question two, but it can also be implicated to get us a better

understanding of research question two. In that context this survey question contributes to RQ2 as it presents that in this particular case, the number of participants that are not willing to pay a price premium for sustainability.

## Cross-examination of Primary Data

At this section of the paper the research group will look into how the different data points within the survey, either contradict each other or support each other's claims. The researchers decided to look into the survey and select multiple questions thereafter analyzing their interrelation. The responses' interrelation will help them collect relevant and more in-depth insights regarding the research questions.

### The price-sensitive consumer

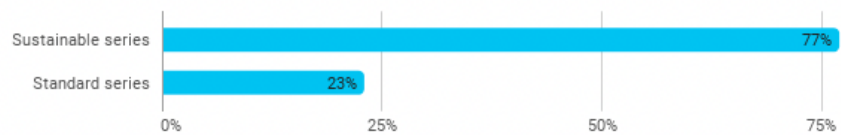
For the below observations, it should be mentioned that the respondents are described as consumers as they replied to the survey in that context. Additionally, the researchers define as price-sensitive consumers those who either Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement of the question: *"Price has an essential role in my purchase decision"*.

In that case the researchers build on that question *"Price has an essential role in my purchase decision."*

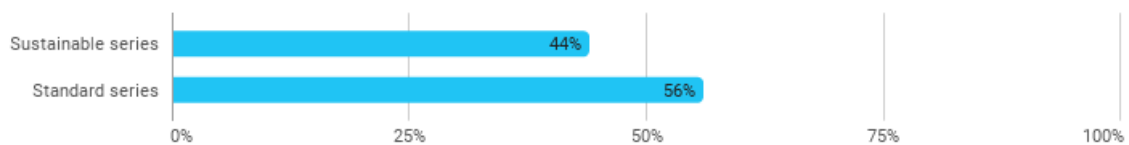
In the first example, we examine whether the more price-sensitive consumers believe sustainable products are more expensive. In that case, the added variant is related to question nr.14, where the respondents select the product they believe is more expensive (sustainable or standard one). As we can see from the below visuals, the more price-sensitive individuals believe the sustainable series are more expensive than the standard ones.



Which one of the below do you believe is more expensive?



Additionally, by looking into the two examples of the sustainable and standard-series we can see that the respondents who Agree or Strongly agree with the statement prefer the Standard Series in the first example (Question nr. 15). However, the difference is not significant as only 12 percent more would select the standard product with the lower cost.



In the same context on the second example (Question nr. 16), we observe a different situation as the significant majority would select the Sustainable T-shirt, it should be mentioned that the price difference in that case, is higher in terms of percentage. However it refers only to 3\$, in terms of paying out.

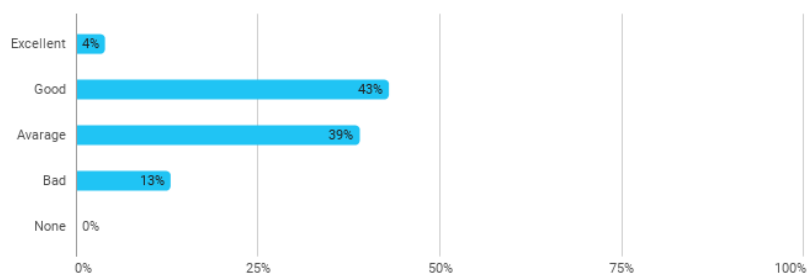


Henceforth, in that case, it is visible that the more price-sensitive consumers tend to believe that sustainable products are more expensive than the traditional ones. However, at the same time, they have the willingness to pay more if the price point is fair. This is also aligned with a previously conducted Deloitte's research, where they found out that the second most important reason for consumers' non-sustainable behavior is the higher cost, as the 16 percent stated that "*sustainable products are expensive*". (Deloitte, 2021)

Moving forward, the second way this question should be evaluated refers to consumers' knowledge towards sustainability. In that scenario, the questions reflecting consumers' knowledge on sustainability will be utilized. In consequence, the first examination will be based on the question nr. 5 *“How would you rate your knowledge of sustainability in the fashion industry”?*

In that situation the higher percentage presented on the reply “Good”, however the majority states that has either an Average or Bad knowledge of the concept.

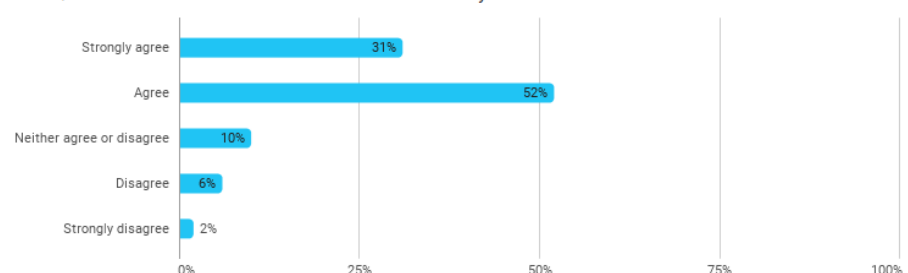
How would you rate your knowledge on sustainability in fashion industry.



In the second example, the results are slightly different as the 83 percent states that are well aware of social and environmental issues in the fashion industry. While those issues are part of the overall concept of sustainability, sustainability is a multidimensional concept for which one cannot easily state that has a good knowledge.

In regards to the second question, firstly the well known scandals for famous clothing brands, and the negative impact of the fashion brands could be reasons why respondents stated that they are aware of such issues.

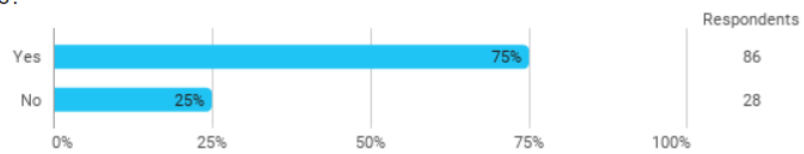
I am well aware of environmental, social and ethical issues in the fashion industry.



Having that said, we observe that consumers know the industry's social, environmental, and ethical issues, but there is also a need for improvement in their overall knowledge of sustainability. The knowledge of the concept could also help the consumers identify the issues and how to contribute in a proper way to their solution. Concerning consumers' knowledge of sustainability is essential to look into other articles and reports, however this comparison will be done later on, in the discussion part of the project.

Moving forward, the researchers will focus on those consumers' willingness to pay more to have sustainable products.

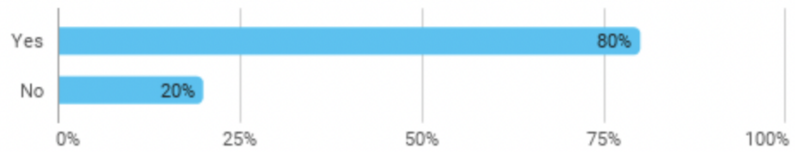
Would you be willing to pay extra if you knew a product has been developed with respect to the environment and human rights?



It is visible that most of them are willing to pay that extra premium price, as 75 percent replied yes. However, it is essential to examine if that is related to other elements of the clothing besides its sustainable nature.

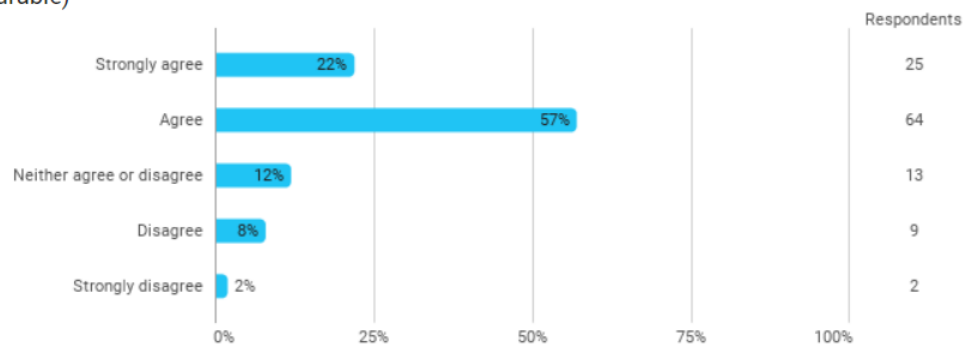
Moving forward with this section, the research group focuses on the same consumer segment and analyzes its intention to pay extra for sustainable products concerning their knowledge around sustainability. In that case the results showcase that 80 percent of the more knowledgeable consumers are willing to pay extra to purchase something that developed in a sustainable way. In that case we observe a slight increase in the willingness to pay more, which most likely is related to the fact that the knowledge around the concept of sustainability creates additional motivation for the consumers to pay higher prices for such products.

Would you be willing to pay extra if you knew a product has been developed with respect to the environment and human rights?



By focusing on the next variable, we see that 79 percent of the same individuals are willing to pay higher prices for sustainable clothes which are of higher quality. In that direction, it is not only the sustainable nature that will positively impact their purchase intention but also the quality. Hence, by reversing the results of the question we can assume that clothes of lower quality will not be attractive to those consumers, without that necessarily means that they value quality over sustainability, as this needs to be examined on different terms.

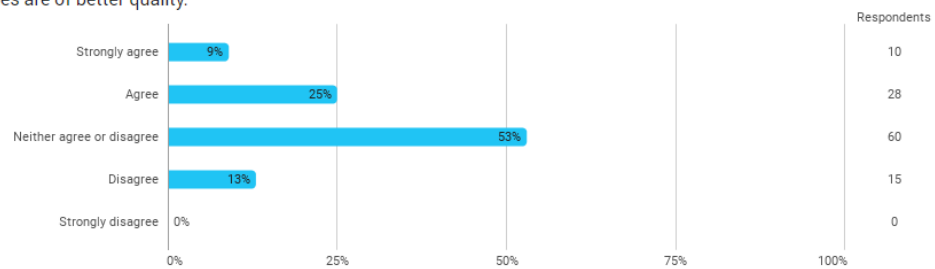
I would be willing to pay a higher price for clothes that are of higher quality (in this regard, higher quality means more durable)



Finally, besides the fact that those consumers are willing to pay higher prices for sustainable clothes of higher quality, they are not convinced that sustainable clothes are of better quality. Looking into question nr. 20 we observe that 66 percent Disagree or have a neutral position towards the statement *"I believe sustainable clothes are of better quality"*, while only the 34 percent either Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement. Although fast-fashion brands due to their mass-production are more harmful for the environment, we should bear in mind that this is not enough to consider all the non-fast fashion brands as sustainable and ethical, as sustainability consists of many other elements.

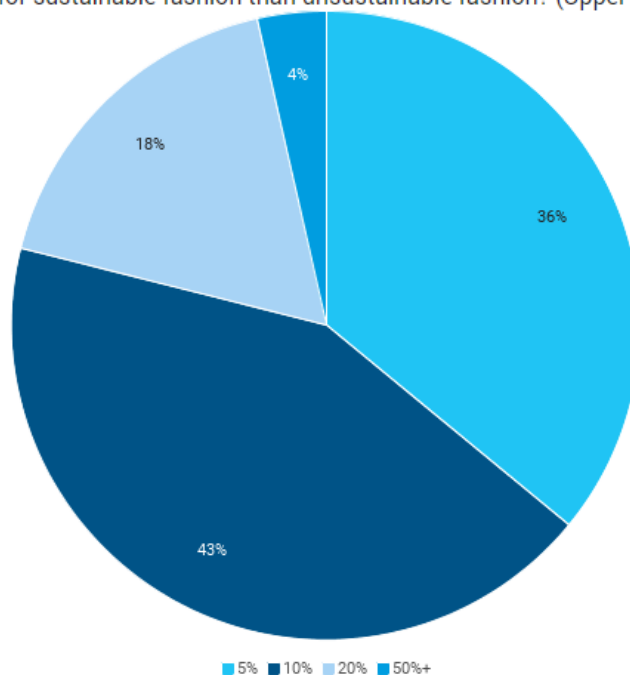
In the context of that question the research focuses on durability, an element that in some cases could be related to sustainable garment products.

I believe sustainable clothes are of better quality.



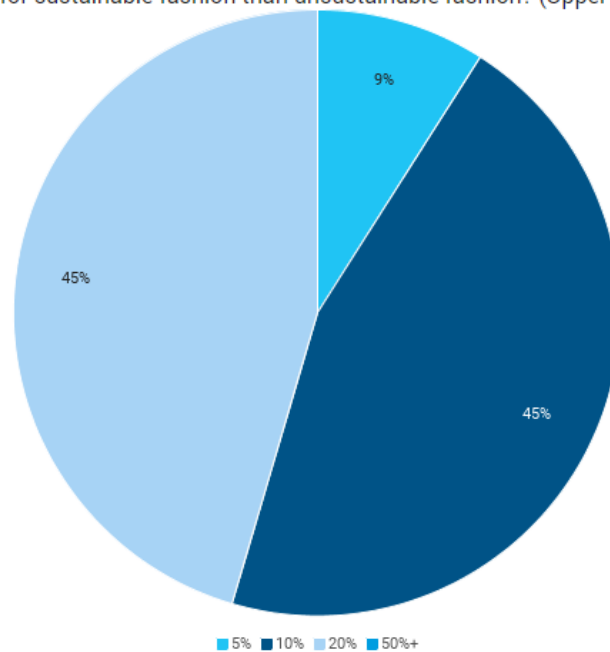
Moving forward with the deeper analysis of price sensitivity the researchers focus on one more variable. This variable is the extra percentage that consumers are willing to pay for sustainable products. Based on the below visual the majority willing to pay an extra 10 percent, and secondly the 36 percent willing to pay an extra 5 percent. In contrast to that only the 22 percent in total are eager to pay more than 10 percent extra. However, as it has been proven from the previous questions the cost of the product will affect the intention, as for products with lower cost consumers willing to pay higher prices in terms of percentage as the “out of pocket” is not significant.

How much more are you willing to pay for sustainable fashion than unsustainable fashion? (Upper limit)



On the other hand, the less price sensitive the consumer is, the higher prices he/she is willing to pay. Based on the below visual, the 90 percent willing to pay equal or more than 10 percent and up to 20 percent. Based on those visuals there is an increase of the premium prices consumers are willing to pay which are affected by their price sensitivity. However, considering that only a minority of the respondents belongs to this non-price sensitive segment those results may vary in cases where the sample is different.

How much more are you willing to pay for sustainable fashion than unsustainable fashion? (Upper limit)



To summarize this section, the researchers highlight its relation to the research questions and the conceptual framework of the project. While its importance and contribution to the project is reflected in this section, the discussion of the research question will be in the upcoming chapter. Considering the research questions of the project we can see that price has an essential role in the investigation of that topic. Additionally, price is highlighted from the research group as part of the conceptual framework and more precisely the “ Perceived behavioral control” segment. Having that said, it is crucial to look into price and its effect on consumers. For that reason in this section the focus lays on the price sensitive responders/consumers. Firstly, the majority of the responders belong to that segment, hence it is more insightful to examine their responses among different questions/variables.

The following part of cross-examination will focus on self-identity in connection to other variables.

### Self-identity, knowledge, and awareness; how are they being interrelated?

#### Self-identity in connection to other variables

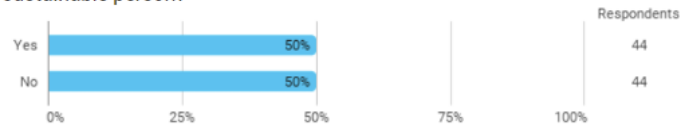
Self-identity has been defined by researchers as one of the important independent variables that might affect other independent variables and influence an individual's intention towards specific consumer's behavior. As it was mentioned by many scholars, self-identity and product suitability have been proved to be a significant variable when it comes to sustainable consumption behavior and attitude towards such a behavior (Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Ozaki, 2010; Kang, Liu and Kim, 2013). Moreover, Ries et al. (2012) stated that self-identity is a useful variable when using Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior since it reduces sometimes low connection of subjective norm towards intention.

For that reason, researchers focus on question number 9 which asks respondents the following question: *"Do you perceive yourself as a sustainable person?"*

In the first example, researchers examine whether the individuals who perceive themselves as a sustainable person (Question nr.9) are considering whether the clothes they buy have been developed in a sustainable way (Question nr. 7). The combination of the two questions can be translated as a link between self-identity and intention from conceptual framework. It shows whether self-identity of an individual has a positive effect on an intention of buying sustainable products. Hence, the graph below shows the percentage of people that consider themselves as sustainable people and consider whether the clothes they buy have been developed in sustainable ways every time or most of the time. The positive correlation between those answers can be seen as a positive (yes) column. The negative correlation can be seen on the negative (no) column.

### How often do you consider whether the clothes you buy have been developed in sustainable ways

Do you perceive yourself as a sustainable person?



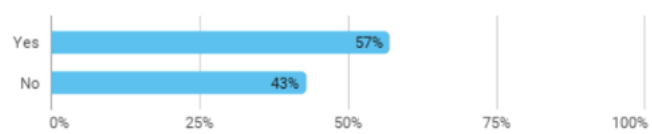
As it can be seen, the results are inconclusive. 50 percent of the respondents claim to be sustainable individuals and when buying, are considering whether the clothes have been made in a sustainable way. On the other hand, there are 50 percent of individuals that perceive themselves as a sustainable people, however, are never or not so often considering whether the clothes they are buying were made in sustainable ways. Negative percentage of 50 percent can be seen as a contradiction since even the individuals consider themselves as sustainable persons, they have low or no intention of buying clothes made in a sustainable way. Therefore positive correlation of question number seven and question number nine cannot be confirmed nor denied in this case.

In the second example of cross-examination of this category researchers will look into correlation between self-identity and knowledge about sustainability (Question nr. 5). In question number 5 respondents were asked to rate their knowledge about sustainability in five different categories which are excellent, good, average, bad and none. The chosen combination of questions is linkage between self-identity and independent variable attitude towards sustainability. More specifically between self-identity and knowledge. Connel (2010) noted that there is a lack of knowledge about sustainable practices which has a negative effect on sustainability in general. Additionally, Vicente-Molina et al., (2013) claims that the higher level of knowledge about environmental impacts, the higher likelihood that the individual will adopt pro-environmental behavior. The graph below presents the percentage of people who claim to be sustainable and have good or excellent knowledge about sustainability. The percentage of those individuals can be seen in the "yes" column. On the other hand the individuals that claim to be sustainable and have average, bad or no knowledge can be seen in the "no" column.



### How would you rate your knowledge on sustainability in the fashion industry?

Do you perceive yourself as a sustainable person?

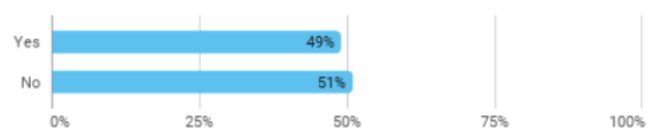


From the results it can be observed that 57 percent of the respondents claim to be sustainable and have actual good or excellent knowledge about sustainability. Opposite to that 43 percent of the individuals perceive themselves as sustainable but possess average, bad or no knowledge about sustainability. Hence, it can be stated that there is a positive correlation between knowledge about sustainability and sustainable personality but the difference is only 14 percent. However, what is important to mention is that 43 percent of the respondents claim to be sustainable but have only an average level of knowledge or even less. Since those respondents do not have good or excellent level of knowledge there is a possibility that even if they consider themselves sustainable, they can fail in actual performance in real life where the intention does not need to transform in actual behavior. This can lead to an attitude-behavior gap. That is supported by Bray et al. (2011) who noted that lack of information can be one of the barriers between sustainable intentions and sustainable behavior of the consumer. Despite that from the results it can be concluded that there is positive correlation between self-identity and knowledge about sustainable practices.

As it was mentioned in a previous example, the attitude-behavior gap can play a significant role in consumer behavior. That is why the third case of cross-examination in this category will examine sustainable self-identity and actual behavior of the consumer. In question number 6 respondents were asked how often they are buying clothes from fast fashion brands such as for instance H&M or Zara where the options were as follows: every month, every three months, every six months, once per year or never. In this case will researchers consider sustainable personality and purchase every six months or less often as positive correlation which can be seen on graph as "yes" column and negative correlation which can be seen in "no" column in case they are making purchases from fast fashion brands every month or every three months. This combination of the questions is focusing on correlation between intention and actual behavior.

How often are you buying clothes from fast fashion brads, such as H&M, Zara and other?

Do you perceive yourself as a sustainable person?

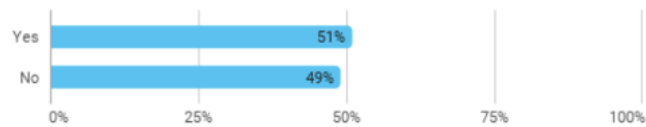


From the graph above, it can be read that 49 percent of the respondents that claim to be sustainable personalities are making purchases from fast fashion brands every half year or even less. However, it is worth highlighting the negative correlation with a percentage of 51 percent which means that even if the person perceives himself or herself sustainable, the individual is making purchases from fast fashion brands every 3 months or more often. Hence, in this case it can be observed the attitude-behavior gap which was previously mentioned as one of the problems when implementing sustainable behavior. The results are not supported by Das (2015) who claimed that the consumer is more likely to make a purchase if the specific purchase will strengthen the individual's identity. In this case even the percentage is inconclusive, the results of negative correlation shows that 51 percent of people who claimed to be sustainable are buying clothes from fast fashion brands such as H&M or Zara every three months or often which is contradicting their claim to be sustainable.

In the last combination in this cross-examination category researchers will examine the statement *"I would buy clothing that meets my fashionable needs (price, quality, style) over an item that is made in a sustainable manner."* In this case will researchers consider a sustainable personality to be the person who neither agrees or disagrees, disagrees or strongly disagrees with the statement. On the other hand, individuals will be seen as unsustainable if they agree or strongly agree with the statement. The individuals that perceive themselves sustainable and despite that would prefer to buy unsustainable clothes that meet their fashionable needs are presented in the "yes" column and the individuals that see themselves as sustainable people but would not buy unsustainable clothes are presented in the "no" column. This cross-examination is focused on self-identity and actual behavior which is very similar to previous comparisons. However, there is a need for the examination in order to find whether there is any contradiction.

I would buy clothing that meets my fashionable needs (price, quality, style)  
over an item that is made in a sustainable manner

Do you perceive yourself as a sustainable person?



As we can see, the results are exactly the same as in previous examples focused on regularity of purchasing from H&M or Zara. However they are displayed in opposite ways since there is opposite logic in answering questions and statements. Therefore it can be concluded that results from question and statement focusing on self-identity and actual behavior are not contradicting each other but it is worth to mention that in roughly half of the respondents we can observe intention-behavior gap where positive intention is not reflecting into actual behavior.

Moving forward the last cross-examination reflects the connection of the gender with the sustainable behavior.

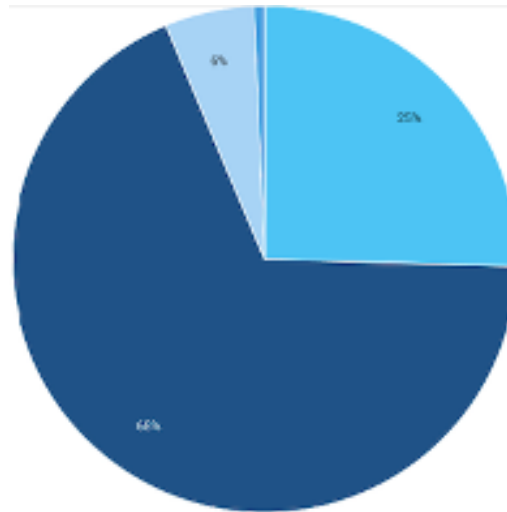
### Cross-gender analysis; how gender affects sustainable behavior?

Cross-gender analysis; how does gender affect sustainable behavior?

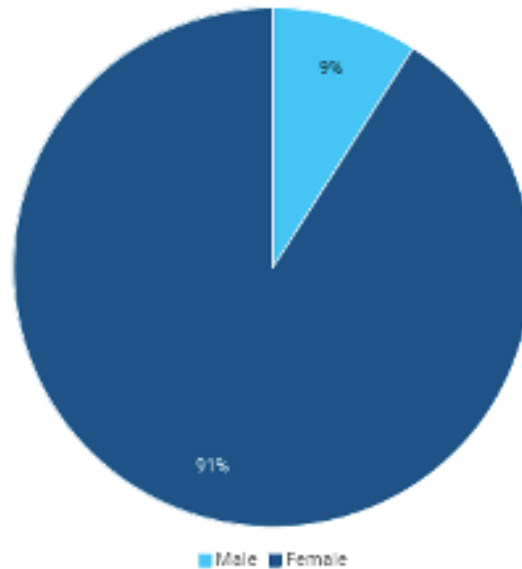
In this section of the paper, the research group will investigate four particular questions extracted from the survey. Those questions are, what is your gender, what is your age range, How often are you buying clothes from fast-fashion brands such as H&M, Zara or others and the last question being if people in my social environment would wear sustainable fashion products it would positively affect my intention towards buying them as well.

With those combinations, the research group can determine whether or not gender has an influence on the perception of sustainability. It is important to note that in the examples below the research group has decided to look into the age group of 18 – 24, for two reasons. The first reason is that since they represent a younger generation, and if they were to either keep to their current trends or change them, it will be that age group that will have the greatest effect on the environment since looking at the issues from a long term perspective.

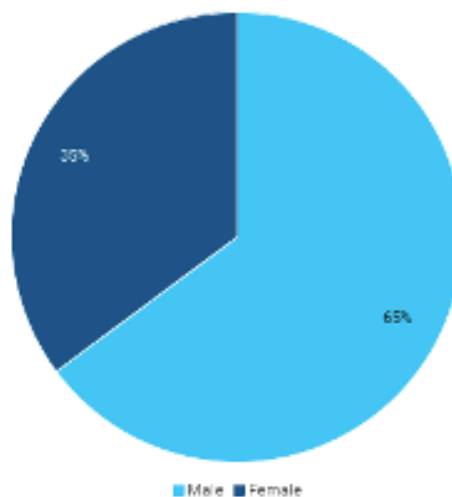
The second reason is that as the graph below showcases, 68 percent of all the participants were in that age range, which would indicate that the data is more reliable since it looks into a broader audience.



The first question combination that will be looked into is the survey sample's gender and how often do they buy clothes from fast-fashion brands such as H&M and Zara. It has to be noted that when it comes to the question of *"How often are you buying clothes from fast-fashion brands such as H&M, Zara or others"* the survey participants had the ability to choose from five different options, those being: Every month, every three months, every six months, once a year and never. When we look into different answers between men and women for this question, the graph below showcases the differentiation between the genders for all of those that answered that they purchase clothes from fast fashion brands at least once a month. Of all the participants that answered that they are buying clothes from fast fashion brands, 91 percent of all the participants were women, leaving the remaining 9 percent to be men. This data indication is interesting because it could potentially suggest that if clothing companies wanted to increase their effort in making sustainable clothes then they should focus on the female section of the garment industry, the data could also indicate that when concerning the sustainability within the garment industry, women could have a much larger impact on the environment by being more conscious of what kind of brands they buy instead of men.



However, it is important to notice that when the research group compares the genders by looking into what the differentiation is when the participants of the survey answered that they are purchasing clothes from fast-fashion brands once every three months we can see that the male to female ratio changes to the extent that 65 percent of the those that answered were male and 35 percent were female.



The data does become interesting when looking into those participants that answered that they only buy clothes from fast fashion brands every 6 months, as the graph showcases it is evident that the male to female ratio is divided 50/50 between the two genders. The project group believes that this data is interesting since the small sample of our survey participants

contradict a new survey made by Electrolux. The survey by Electrolux, conducted among 14,000 young people in the world, has just seen the light of day. The study was made as part of Electrolux's 2030 goal of creating opportunities for a better and more sustainable lifestyle. The study has focused on young people's views on sustainable fashion as well as sustainable lifestyles now and in the future.

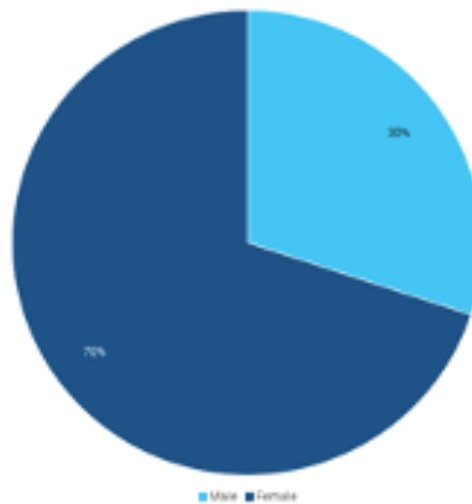
The study goes into how It is not easy for young people to give up buying new clothes. But young people know that it is necessary to stop shopping for new things all the time - which is why they also judge 'fast fashion' death in the future. 40 percent believe that fast fashion will be dead by 2030, and 31 percent believe that new clothing purchases are not in line with a sustainable approach to fashion. (CSR, 2022) In contrast, 67 percent believe that buying sustainable clothing is a better approach to fashion. Buying used clothing (58 percent) and inheriting other people's clothing (61 percent) is also a sustainable approach to fashion. (CSR, 2022)

"Fashion is something that is very close to our identity, and therefore it is very difficult to give up. At the same time, there are many solutions for a more sustainable approach to fashion, including how to take care of your clothes to make it last longer. This is an important focus for us, and as the research shows, it can have a great positive effect to take better care of your clothes," says Thomas Brinch-Møller, Market Activation Lead at Electrolux Denmark. (CSR, 2022)

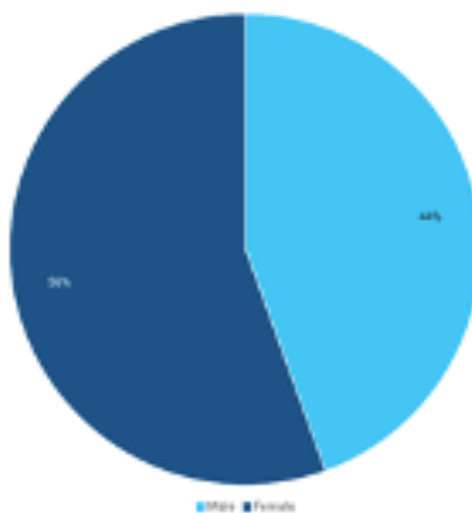
Creating real change requires more knowledge. Many young people point to a lack of knowledge as one of the most important barriers to creating more sustainable clothing habits. Among other things, because you do not know how to wash sustainably (38 percent). (CSR, 2022)

The next question sample the group will focus on is, gender and: if people in my social environment would wear sustainable fashion products it would positively affect my intention towards buying them as well. When the survey participants had to answer the question of "*if people in my social environment would wear sustainable fashion products it would positively affect my intention towards buying them as well*" the research group decided that the survey participants should have five different options to choose from. The five different options are as follows: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree.

The graph below showcases the gender variation of all the participants that answered strongly agree.



As the graph visualizes, it can be seen that 70 percent of all the participants that answered strongly agree are women, leaving the remaining 30 percent to be men. This further strengthens the argument that if clothing companies want to become more sustainable then they should try to focus on the female section of the fashion industry since they will have the greatest effect on sustainability. Especially considering that upon a closer inspection of the data we can see that among all of those participants that answered agree, the majority of those were still women, 56 percent in fact.



A final point that the research group wants to point out, is that when looking into the survey participants segment that answered strongly disagree, we can see that the gender differentiation is split evenly between the two groups.

## Discussion

### Findings of Research Question 1

In the following chapter of the project, secondary data from the literature review section and primary data gathered by the survey will be discussed in connection to research questions: "What are the key elements which positively affect consumer intention towards sustainable behavior?"

For the investigation of consumer's behavior and factors influencing consumer behavior, the researchers have chosen Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior as a conceptual framework. This theory is widely used by academics in social research therefore it is a very suitable and helpful tool in order to answer research questions (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Originally, Ajzen's Theory of Planned behavior consists of three independent variables that are influencing an individual's intention to perform specific behavior. More specifically, attitude towards behavior, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. In this case, the researchers have decided to add one more independent variable which is self-identity for better understanding of the phenomenon. It has been proved by many scholars that self-identity is a significant variable when it comes to sustainable consumption behavior and attitude towards such a behavior (Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Ozaki, 2010; Kang, Liu and Kim, 2013). People have a tendency to express their personality through the clothes they are buying (Pan et al., 2015). Hence, an extended version of Ajzen's Theory of planned behavior has been used.

Firstly, 'attitude towards the behavior' is focusing on a person's knowledge, beliefs and attitudes towards specific behavior. It was suggested by Jägel et al. (2012) that people who are concerned about environmental and ethical issues are more likely to purchase sustainable clothes. However, Connell (2010) stated that there is little knowledge and awareness about



sustainable practices and harmful effects of unsustainable production. Connell's implications were not confirmed by the results of the survey since 83 percent of respondents claimed to be well aware of environmental, social and ethical issues in the fashion industry. In addition to this, 74 percent of the people stated that they have good or excellent knowledge regarding sustainability and sustainable practices. Vicente-Molina et al., (2013) stated that higher levels of knowledge about environmental impacts increase the likelihood that the individual will adopt pro-environmental sustainable behavior. From the above mentioned results of the survey it can be assumed that a high percentage of awareness and good or excellent level of knowledge about sustainability are boosting positive intentions towards sustainable purchase. However, it is crucial to mention that increased positive intention does not need to convert into actual future behavior (Ajzen, 2012). When asked about how often are individuals considering whether the clothes they are buying are developed in sustainable ways, 52 percent commented not so often and 8 percent claimed to never consider whether clothes are developed in sustainable ways. It can be stated that even despite a higher level of knowledge and awareness, 60 percent of the respondents have a low level of intention when it comes to actual sustainable purchase.

Additionally, 36 percent of respondents are buying clothes from fast fashion brands such as Zara or H&M every month and 36 percent every three months. Findings align with academic implication by Harris et al. (2016) who stated that the majority of the consumers are trying to get the most value for the money therefore choosing cheaper options of fast fashion brands. Moreover, Joergens (2006) noted that most consumers choose the price, quality and style of the clothing over environmental, social and ethical concerns. The academic implications are being reinforced by results of the survey where 78 percent of the individuals would prefer to buy clothes that meet their fashionable needs as for example price, quality or style over clothes made in a sustainable manner. Therefore it can be stated that price which is part of 'perceived behavioral control' determinant plays a significant role for respondents and can be perceived as one of the key barriers towards sustainable behavior. High level of knowledge and awareness about sustainable practices does not need to turn into actual behavior since the price factor has a crucial effect in the decision making process. As Chan and Wong (2012) mentioned, even if the consumers have a high-level of knowledge about the environmental, social and ethical issues in the garment industry and have positive attitudes towards sustainability, they are not willing to make sacrifices so they are not willing to pay more for sustainable fashion.

Another determinant influencing a person's intention towards performing certain behavior is connected to the social environment. Lee (2008) stated that social influence has an important effect on adolescent buying behavior. Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) noted that especially young people, with the meaning of generation Y, are the ones that showed high consumption of fast fashion and low level of the awareness of the impact of such a behavior. That was partially reinforced by survey results where despite a high level of knowledge and awareness respondents proved to have high consumption habits from fast fashion brands. In that matter, social influence might play a role in increasing or decreasing positive intention towards sustainable behavior. Question number eight asked respondents if their social environment is affecting their purchasing habits. More specifically, the statement was formulated as follows: "If people in my social environment would wear sustainable fashion products, it would positively affect my intention towards buying them as well." 55 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement which confirms academic implication from Lee (2008) about positive correlation between social influence and adolescent buying behavior. Hence, it can be stated that social influence is one of the important factors influencing sustainable behavior.

Last but not least, the self-identity aspect was also considered. As Damon and Hart (1992) mentioned: *"People whose self-concept is organized around their moral beliefs are highly likely to translate those beliefs into action consistently throughout their lives"* (p.445). Survey showed that 53 percent of individuals consider themselves as sustainable people. However, from those 53 percent it was 51 percent who claimed that they would buy clothes that meet their fashionable needs such as price, quality or style over any clothing made in a sustainable manner. In addition to this, 49 percent from previously mentioned 53 percent are buying clothes from fast fashion brands every three months or every month which is slightly contradicting their statement of being a sustainable individual. Das (2015) claimed that the consumer is more likely to make a purchase if the specific purchase will strengthen the individual's identity. Even though the likelihood of making such a purchase increases when an individual perceives himself or herself as sustainable there are important factors such as price that can be key barriers between positive intention and actual behavior. Therefore it can be concluded that self-identity has the ability to positively influence one's intention towards specific behavior but importance of price can cause the failure of actual performance of such a behavior.

## Findings of Research Question 2

Regarding the second research question: *"To what extent does pricing affect consumer behavior regarding sustainability,"* the research team, through the survey, collected data that were analyzed and compared to secondary data sources to provide insights into the research question. Throughout the research, the research group found out that the respondents believe that sustainable clothes are more expensive than the traditional ones. However, they are still willing to pay more to have sustainable products. Those findings align with other research, such as Deloitte's report of 2021, which investigated consumers' relationship with sustainability. In that report, the three most important reasons for consumers' non-sustainable behavior were identified and namely: *1) I am not interested 22 percent, 2) It is too expensive, 16 percent 3) I do not have enough information 15 percent.*

Through that data, we can see that consumers' lack of knowledge of the concept affects their intention to act according to their values and beliefs. In addition to that, an article focuses on the Spanish fashion industry, highlighting that consumers need to be further educated about sustainability. Additionally, the same article mentions that companies need to communicate their sustainability understandably and honestly to help consumers make the right choices. Finally, in the same article, it is stated that ethical issues affect consumers' intentions more than the environmental ones. Besides the fact that this focuses only on Spanish consumers and the fashion industry, it would be essential to bear this in mind, as it could be related to the lack of knowledge around environmental issues in the fashion industry and, more precisely, the impact of fast fashion products. (Blazquez, Henninger, Alexander, & Franquesa, 2020), (Deloitte, 2021)

In that context, the fact that consumers' behavior toward sustainability is affected by the fact that sustainable clothes are considered more expensive. The effect that price has on consumer behavior gets higher when we focus on more price-sensitive consumers, as defined in the paper's analysis part. Additionally, through the survey, the research team found out that the majority of the respondents are more price sensitive (79 percent). This is a valuable insight

concerning the statistical importance of that question. Additionally, it is more important to investigate the more price-sensitive consumers and the price effect on their behavior towards sustainability, as those are the ones who are going to be affected more. In addition to that, through the data, the research team observed an increased intention to pay more in the cases where the actual amount was smaller, but the percentage increase was higher. So, it could be an insight that the price affects consumers less when the price point is fair. While this difference could be related to other factors such as the components of each product (sneaker made of leather, T-shirt made of cotton), respondents' knowledge of the concept of sustainability (based on their replies) indicates that there is a possibility that consumers are not so well aware of the impact that each product and component has on the environment. One additional comment in the context of pricing is that while consumers generally have a positive attitude towards sustainability and they are willing to pay more, this changes when the amount is being quantified, both in terms of percentage and on pay-off. This indicates a potential social desirability effect connected with respondents' replies to general questions connected to their behavior and sustainability.

However, besides the fact that price is one of the critical elements affecting consumer behavior towards sustainability, it is essential to observe how price concerning other variables as they are depicted in the conceptual framework affects the behavior. For that reason, the research group examined the correlation of price with knowledge and awareness regarding the concept of sustainability and consumers' attitude. Therefore through the collected data, the below assumptions were made. Firstly, there is a contradiction in the results as the majority of the consumers state that they are well aware of social and environmental issues (83 percent), however, there is a possibility of lack of knowledge concerning the general concept of sustainability as the 52 percent states that has either good or excellent knowledge for the concept. Thus, this could be related to the fact that sustainability is a multidimensional and complex concept. Moving forward to the context of the interrelation of knowledge, and awareness with pricing, the research showcased that the knowledge of the concept of sustainability increases consumer willingness to pay for more sustainable products.

Consequently, the price affects the more knowledgeable consumers less. The following variable that affects price impact on consumer behavior is quality. The researchers found that consumers are willing to pay more when sustainability is combined with better quality.

However, the consumers are not totally convinced that sustainable products are of better quality. While slow fashion and more premium brands can be characterized as more durable than brands such as H&M and Zara, the price is also much higher. The price difference compared to quality difference may vary from one case to another. After that, more precise data connected to quality and how much more would consumers be willing to pay for sustainable products of better quality, and whether sustainability is more important than the added value of quality could be collected, yet those questions are not part of this paper's topic. To conclude the discussion part of this research question, the research team highlights that price is one of the more critical indicators affecting consumers' behavior towards sustainability, although consumers' price sensitivity is being reduced when it is being combined with other factors such as the knowledge of the concept and the quality of the product.

### Findings of Research Question 3

Continuing on to the last section of the discussion of this research paper, the project group will now discuss the third and final research question which is: *What additional prices are consumers willing to pay for more sustainable fashion products?* As previously mentioned in the paper, the third research question is related to the price premium that consumers are willing to pay for more sustainable products. Building on the claim that sustainable products and more precise sustainable fashion products tend to be more expensive, the researchers focus on the premium prices that consumers are willing to pay to have more sustainable products and to contribute to the minimization of social and environmental issues. It is important to note that the research group is basing their discussion and answer to this question largely on the survey conducted by the research group. As the survey conducted had a limited number of participants, it is important to note that the data gathered should be taken with a hint of salt.

By analyzing the data gathered from the survey conducted, the research group can see that as already mentioned previously on the research paper, that 76 percent of the survey participants answered that they would, in fact, be willing to pay more for sustainable clothing that has been developed with respect towards the environment. When those 76 percent of participants

were then asked how much more they were willing to pay for sustainable clothing, we can see that the data shows that 32 percent were willing to pay a 5 percent premium for sustainable clothing. The largest group of 44 percent were willing to pay a 10 percent premium for sustainable clothing, 19 percent of the participants were willing to go up to 20 percent premium for sustainable clothing, and 4 percent of our survey participants were willing to pay up to 50+ percent premium for sustainable clothing.

The research group has discovered however, that a larger amount of the population is willing to pay a higher premium for their clothes, this information was discovered when looking into other studies that researched the same question, one of those studies comes from the company Deloitte.

A new study from Deloitte shows that 43 percent of Danish consumers want to pay more for sustainable clothing - 37 percent are even willing to pay up to 20 percent more for sustainability. The Danish fashion industry has long faced a dilemma. Despite the fashion industry's increased focus on sustainability, many fashion companies have not been able to feel the interest of their customers around sustainable clothing. (Kristensen, 2015) The latest study from Deloitte shows a shift where more and more Danish consumers are now demanding sustainable clothing and are actually willing to pay an extra price for this. As many as 6 percent answer that they are willing to pay double the price for sustainable clothing.

*“In recent years, we have seen a development in the supply of sustainable clothing - especially in connection with children's clothing - but with the latest figures we can see a trend breakthrough and the trend is here to stay. With the survey results, the fashion industry will now have an even stronger incentive to work with sustainability, to be able to meet consumer expectations,”* says Bahare Haghshenas, senior manager at Deloitte Sustainability. (Kristensen, 2015)

*“When so many consumers today are willing to pay an extra price, it is up to the fashion industry to grab the ball and promote the sustainable choice, so that we reach the goal of creating a sustainable fashion industry that creates sustainable solutions both today, tomorrow and in the future,”* says Bahare Haghshenas. (Kristensen, 2015)

# Limitations

The research group faced particular limitations when writing this research paper; the first area of limitations the research group met was regarding their data gathering process, the research process in general, and our interpretation of the results. As already stated throughout the research paper, the limited number of participants that the research group was able to gather to answer their survey has most certainly impacted the research and the results, in turn on the analysis and, consequently, the conclusion. It is no secret that if the research group had managed to gather a far larger sample size of answers to their survey, they would have been much more certain of the outcome of their analysis and, consequently, their conclusion. Another potential limitation the research group might have been facing is the issue of social desirability. Many problems are associated with subjective responses (often referred to as social desirability bias).

An example might be when respondents answer surveys concerning what is socially acceptable. Especially when it comes to personal attitudes, prejudices, breaking the law, abuse, and the like, there is good reason to focus on the problem. In certain cases, respondents tend to reconcile their answers with what is socially acceptable rather than what they mean. This can manifest itself in both overreporting good behavior or underreporting of bad behavior and can lead to false results. Respondents' tendency to answer questions based on what is socially acceptable can be problematic in both interviews and surveys, as respondents in such situations may feel pressured by the interviewer and the questionnaire. However, the problem is less frequent in surveys, as an anonymous form of answer puts less pressure on the respondent. This may increase the chance that the respondent responds honestly rather than according to what is socially acceptable. This is one of the main reasons the research group did not conduct any one-to-one interviews with participants. The third and final limitation the research group faced was the lack of input from a company that is part of the clothing industry. At the beginning of the conducting of this research paper, it was briefly considered if it would be advantageous for the outcome of this paper if the research group had cooperation with a company that has experience within the field of sustainability and the fashion industry. The research group quickly decided that the cons outweigh the pros and decided to proceed without a third-party clothing company.

## Future Research

Considering findings of this research, there are few interesting ways to explore the topic further. From the study it was proved that consumer knowledge and awareness has a positive impact on an individual's intention to purchase sustainable products. However, one significant barrier to perform such a behavior has been identified. Namely, that barrier is the price factor. Majority of the respondents who have a positive attitude about sustainable consumption and are well aware of environmental, social and ethical issues of non-sustainable consumption expressed themselves that they would purchase clothes that meet their fashionable needs like price or style over the clothes made in a sustainable manner.

Therefore it can be suggested that future researchers should investigate more into depth the gap between positive intention and actual behavior. Investigation of the relationship between positive intention and actual behavior could bring more interesting insights to the topic and provide better understanding of consumers that despite positive intention towards sustainable products fail to perform such a behavior. Moreover, the collection of primary data in this research has been made through surveys with a random sample of population. The study did not include cultural factors which might be an interesting variable for understanding somebody's behavior.

Therefore, future research could focus on how culture affects an individual's behavior in regards to sustainability and sustainable practices. The cross-cultural analysis could be a perplexing field to understand with many different viewpoints, aims, and concepts. This concept can be seen as a human construct rather than a product of nature. However, it could add interesting insights to social factors and norms connected to sustainable behavior.



# Conclusion

In this section of the project the research group will delve into the conclusion of the Problem formulation as well as the three accompanying research questions. As previously stated in the research paper, the purpose of this particular research paper is the overall purpose of this paper, is to get a better understanding of How does the perception of sustainability affect consumer behavior within the garment industry? The research group decided that the best way to find the answer to this question was to look at it by asking three additional research questions, the first being: what are the key elements that are positively affecting consumers' intentions towards sustainable behavior?

Analyzing the research question: The first research question gravitated towards the key elements that have an effect on the individual intentions towards sustainable behavior. Based on the secondary data gathered, the research group came up with the four different independent variables that have been examined through the use of Ajzen's theory of planned behavior. This theory was a large part of our foundation for the survey questions that were asked. through the data gathering process the research group was able to conclude that, the key elements that are affecting consumers intentions towards sustainable behavior are as follows: knowledge and awareness, we can see that the way knowledge and awareness has an positive effect on consumers intentions towards sustainable behavior is because as it turns out, knowledge as been proved to be a important factor that has a positive influence on the consumer attitude towards sustainable behavior. As showcased in the discussion section of the research paper and further confirmed by other sources such as Jägel et al. (2012) who stated that people who are concerned about environmental and ethical issues are more likely to purchase sustainable clothes.

Those academic implications were reinforced by Vicente-Molina et al. (2013) who stated that higher levels of knowledge about environmental impacts increase the likelihood that the individual will adopt pro-environmental sustainable behavior. As such the research group can conclude that knowledge and awareness has a positive effect on affecting consumers' intentions towards sustainable behavior. However, it is crucial to mention that positive intention towards sustainable behavior does not necessarily mean that such a behavior will be acted upon. The reason for this is that even intentions towards sustainable behavior can not

compete with the price-points of sustainable behavior, which will be looked at further with regards to the other research questions.

Another key element that can affect consumers' intentions towards sustainable behavior is the social surrounding of the individual consumers. As already analyzed and discussed previously in the research paper, we can see that the consumer's surroundings have an influence on the intentions towards sustainable behavior. Through the data gathered from the survey, the research team discovered that 55 percent of the respondents answered "If people in my social environment wear sustainable fashion products, it would positively affect my intention towards buying them as well." 55 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement which confirms academic implication from Lee (2008) about positive correlation between social influence and adolescent buying behavior. Hence, we can conclude that social influence is part of the key elements that are positively affecting consumers' intentions towards sustainable behavior.

Continuing on our conclusion, the research group will now look into the second research question for this project, which is: "To what extent does pricing affect consumer behavior regarding sustainability." Through the analysis and the discussion of this research question the research team came to insightful results. Firstly, as it is proven from other reports, price is one of the main factors affecting consumer behavior towards sustainability. That belief in relation to the fact that the majority of the respondents believe that sustainable garment products are more expensive could affect the whole concept of sustainability in general, as the sustainable nature of the product is not the one that necessarily increases the price of the final product. For example the price difference between a sustainable and a non-sustainable product could be related to factors such as, materials, quality and brand. In that direction it should be mentioned that when sustainability has other added values such as quality and durability the negative effect of the higher price is being decreased.

However, the consumers are not convinced that sustainable clothes are better in terms of quality. But the data could point towards the hypothesis that if the consumers knew that sustainable clothes were made with better quality then they would be willing to buy the sustainable versions. However, this is an assumption based on the collected data and should be further investigated in order to examine whether it is true or not. One more crucial point the research team found out through the research is that while people like the idea of

sustainability, when it comes to a price less individuals are actually willing to pay the premium price of sustainability. Finally, as previously mentioned in the above section, knowledge is highly tied to consumers' willingness to pay for sustainable clothes. Henceforth, knowledge could reduce the chance of occurring intention-behavior gap.

Moving on to the third and last research question which is: What additional prices are consumers willing to pay for more sustainable fashion products? The research group has already discovered through the data gathered, that consumers were willing to pay a price premium for sustainable clothes. More specifically 32 percent were willing to pay 5 percent more for a sustainable product while the largest percentage of the participants, 42 percent of them, answered that they were willing to pay up to a 10 percent price premium for sustainable fashion products.

With the three research questions concluded, the research group finally have the insights to proceed with the paper's overall problem formulation which is How does the perception of sustainability affect consumer behavior within the garment industry? All in all, it can be stated that there are several factors/elements influencing consumers' perception of behavior in regards to sustainability. The researchers have identified a few key factors that are essential in the relationship between sustainability and consumer behavior. One of the most significant factors appeared to be knowledge. Individuals that have good or excellent knowledge are more conscious about sustainable practices therefore the likelihood of making sustainable purchases is higher.

Moreover, consumers are able to recognize sustainable items from unsustainable one. Regarding the price factor, it was proved that individuals who possess knowledge about sustainability and sustainable practices are more likely to pay higher prices or price premium for sustainable fashion items. Considering that price factor appeared to be the biggest barrier between positive intention and actual behavior, knowledge about sustainability might have potential to overcome that barrier. Hence, partially eliminate the behavioral-intention gap. In addition to this, an individual's surroundings prove to be influential for the person. From the results of the survey, it can be noted that non-sustainable individuals in the social environment of sustainable people might adopt sustainable habits therefore they might change their behavior in the long term.

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