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# **Exploring Generation Z Consumers' Attitudes towards Sustainable Fashion and Marketing Activities regarding Sustainable Fashion**

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# **Bachelor Thesis in Business Administration**

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## **Abstract**

**Background:** Recently, the fashion industry has demonstrated a strong interest in sustainability and environmental issues. The sustainable fashion industry has enormous potential, and practical products are attracting Generation Z's environmentally conscious buyers. In the meantime, Gen Z customers have intrigued researchers' interest due to their enormous utilization potential.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to ascertain Gen Z consumers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion consumption and marketing activities in the global market.

**Method:** This study employed deductive qualitative research. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 Gen Z consumers who represented a range of cultural backgrounds. The qualitative data are analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis.

**Conclusion:** The findings indicate that Gen Z consumers prefer products designed by brands with a distinct brand identity and distinctive highlights that are both practical and sustainable. For sustainable fashion brands to reach Gen Z consumers, branded digital marketing and branded content advertising are pivotal.

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# 1. Introduction

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*The objective of this chapter is to provide background information on key terms and issues necessary for comprehending the study.*

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## 1.1 Background

In recent years, one of the primary key words in the fashion industry's development has been "sustainable development." According to Vogue Business's analysis of ten fashion industry behemoths' annual reports, the words "sustainable", "sustainable", "environment", and "environmental" appear on at least every four pages in the company's 2018 annual report. It is more than six times what it was twelve years ago (Nast, 2021).

From a corporate standpoint, sustainable consumption is still very beneficial for society and presents lucrative economic opportunities. According to current estimates, the fashion industry is worth around \$2.4 trillion. There is a prediction that the industry will see continued growth in the next years ("Home-The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion", 2021). The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion is a UN agency and a connected organization. One of its strategies designed to help reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals (or achieve sustainable development) that involves concerted action by the fashion industry. A data research business, Edited, evaluated the online e-commerce platform product lists of 52,000 different clothes businesses and found that the sales volume of garment products with environmental protection-related information in their product information has increased dramatically over the previous three years (Marci, 2021).

This demonstrates that the consumer market is prepared, and that market demand has

acknowledged the concept of sustainable development. Consumers are willing to pay a premium for environmentally conscious products. Consumer opinions have increasingly shifted, and more people now value fashion firms that prioritize sustainable production ("Pulse of the Industry — GLOBAL FASHION AGENDA," 2019).

The majority of consumer research on sustainable fashion brands shows that Generation Z is one of the most loyal customer groups (Grazzini, Acuti & Aiello, 2021). For the past few years, top fashion corporations and fashion brands that operate in many nations and regions have recently launched sustainable fashion consumption marketing campaigns. And along with that, the relevant academic research is also on the rise. There are numerous studies which investigate the gap between consumer attitudes and behaviors about sustainable fashion consumption; and, the motivation and value underpinning consumers' actual behavior when they engage in sustainable fashion consumption. However, the majority of studies are focused on a single market, with samples drawn from the general population (Lundblad & Davies, 2016).

On August 23, 2019, at the G7 Summit, 32 global fashion and textile giants, including Kering, Chanel, Hermès, H&M, and Zara, signed a historic "Fashion Pact" that would ensure that sustainable development is strongly supported in the chain's and firms' everyday operations ("The Fashion Pact-The Fashion Pact", 2021). As a result, sustainable fashion marketing has gained prominence. Additionally, the organization is continually exercising and updating its marketing actions in worldwide locations to promote sustainable fashion consumption. Numerous marketing tactics, on the other hand, are inefficient or even ineffective. That is, while consumers have a favorable attitude toward sustainable purchasing, they have yet to make sustainable fashion purchases. This is frequently the result of a combination of causes and these variables have been extensively studied in academic study (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Additionally, there are ethical concerns, such as Greenwashing, which occurs when customers perceive sustainable marketing methods to be deceptive. The primary

problem is that customers lack awareness of the fashion industry's environmental impact and hence are unable to make sustainable purchasing decisions (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Brands encounter difficulties in communicating with consumers about sustainable fashion while also establishing effective associated marketing efforts. When fashion brands promote, they frequently need to target a variety of distinct segments. Gen Z, as the consumer group with the greatest purchasing potential in the global market, presents both opportunities and challenges when it comes to marketing sustainable fashion to them.

To enhance consumer knowledge and consumption of sustainable fashion, it is critical to understand Generation Z, a consumer demographic that has a generally positive attitude toward sustainability (Dabija, 2018), and to adapt to their purchasing demands. Only by understanding consumption in terms of demand can we build precise marketing (Le,2014). Gen Z, as a global generation, is not constrained by the geographical limits of individual countries/regions. Therefore, study on the group's attitudes toward sustainable fashion firms' global marketing operations is critical, but academic study on the subject is still lacking. This area of research can assist firms in determining the best methods for communicating sustainable fashion to target consumer groups and establishing a mutual connection between sustainable consumption and fashion marketing (Le,2014).

## **1.2 Problem Discussion**

As previously discussed, more effective sustainable marketing strategies will help customers become more aware of the importance of sustainable fashion consumption and will resonate with them, so assisting firms in building loyalty (Shen, Zheng, Chow & Chow, 2014). Sustainable marketing may also serve as an educational tool, increasing customer understanding and appreciation for the value of sustainability (Shen, Zheng, Chow & Chow, 2014). For Gen Z consumers, the humanistic ideal of "ethical consumerism" has shaped their upbringing, particularly in the post-epidemic age. They

typically support the notion of environmental conservation and feel that each individual should carry their own responsibilities. Fashion is a critical form of self-expression for the Z world, and it also significantly depends on fashion to identify its identity and belonging in the social scene where others of similar ages congregate (Özkan, 2017). Additionally, being the first generation of consumers to completely mature in the digital age, generation Z customers' highly developed and disseminated network knowledge, their excitement and habits for online buying, and the information channels for fashion consumption choices are all largely influenced by social media (Özkan, 2017). This results in increased demand for and acceptance of foreign brands, as consumers will regularly contact and purchase the newest fashion and luxury goods available on the international market. This enables sustainable fashion firms to expand into foreign market areas.

However, scholarly study on how fashion businesses may convey sustainable fashion to customers remains limited. Additionally, sustainable fashion firms must be engaged in a variety of countries and cultures, and the worldwide market's customers must be analyzed. Numerous studies focus only on a specific market and customer segment in a specific country. There is no way to tell how Gen Z consumers feel about marketing efforts developed by sustainable fashion manufacturers based on the available literature. Therefore, two research questions are proposed to help fill the gap. The current study aims to determine the important factors that influence Gen Z consumers' decisions to purchase sustainable fashion and their opinions about marketing actions promoting sustainable fashion in the global market. This enables brands to communicate more effectively with their target set of consumers, enabling them to conduct brand marketing campaigns on a global scale while simultaneously targeting several customer cultures.

### **1.3 Purpose**

This study sought to ascertain Generation Z consumers' perspectives of sustainable fashion consumption and marketing activities in the global marketplace. The authors

investigated consumer purchasing behavior in its entirety in order to gain a better understanding of Gen Z consumers' depth of perspectives. Two research questions are thereby derived:

**RQ1.** What are Gen Z consumers' attitudes towards purchasing sustainable fashion?

**RQ2.** How are Generation Z consumers' attitudes towards marketing activities regarding sustainable fashion?

## **1.4 Delimitations**

As a consumer study, the sample population consists primarily of foreigners who have lived in several countries for an extended period of time. The sample population was chosen based on their embrace of cultural diversity and the diversification of information, as well as their observed behavior in daily dealings and living. However, participants have their own criteria for judging sustainability, they cannot accurately represent the public opinion in a particular country's market, and there may be individual differences in their attitudes toward sustainable fashion.

## **1.5 Definitions**

### **1.5.1 Generation Z**

Generation Z, according to "Generation Z - Affiliate Marketing Product Review Site" (2021), is a more educated, well-behaved, stressed, and depressed generation than prior generations. Generation Z, or Gen Z for short, is a generation of individuals born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s ("Generation Z - Affiliate Marketing Product Review Site", 2021).

## **1.5.2 Sustainable Fashion**

Sustainable fashion is referred to as a subset of the slow fashion movement. Sustainable fashion is not the opposite of fast fashion, as the slow fashion ideology is oriented on environmental concerns (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates, 2016). Sustainable fashion is frequently associated with ecology; the terms "green" and "ethical" fashion are frequently used interchangeably (Carey and Cervellon, 2014).

## **2. Literature Review**

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*This chapter summarizes previous studies and literature on sustainable fashion, Generation Z, and sustainable fashion marketing. Further discussion of concepts and theories will be conducted in order to establish a conceptual and theoretical context that will serve as a basis for analysis and discussion.*

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The researchers conducted a review of existing literature in related research domains in order to ascertain Generation Z's attitude toward sustainable fashion and marketing efforts linked to sustainable fashion. To begin, we'll discuss sustainable fashion and Generation Z customers' purchase behavior. Second, information about sustainable fashion marketing is offered, including the driving forces and obstacles it encounters. Then, the marketing strategies commonly used by sustainable fashion companies will be discussed, as well as marketing studies geared at generation Z consumer groups. Finally, a conceptual framework for the research is developed.

### **2.1 Literature Review Method**

To expand knowledge, we must first understand what is offered and where its frontiers are located. We will be able to comprehend the depth and breadth of existing knowledge and discover holes in it through literature studies (Xiao & Watson, 2017). Furthermore, by analyzing and synthesizing relevant material, we will be able to test hypotheses, generate new ideas, and critically evaluate the quality of current information (Albrecht, Davar, Eisenberg, Pare & Rice, 2006). Our research questions drive the entire process of literature review.

Firstly, the literature search and identification process was initiated by using the keywords "Gen Z" "Gen Z fashion consumers" "sustainable fashion" "sustainable fashion consumption" "fashion marketing" "sustainable fashion marketing" from the research question. Initial relevance was determined by the title and abstract, and if it matched the research topic, full information was obtained for further evaluation. Several databases such as Primo, JSTOR and EBSCO were used to search the literature to ensure that the search was comprehensive. Recent studies may be more pertinent to the current situation and hence provide more insightful information. Furthermore, we prioritized locating the most current literature, but did not disregard earlier material that had received widespread citations, as this supplied the required theoretical and conceptual underpinnings for the literature.

Reverse searches, such as those found at the end of journals' reference lists, were used to locate pertinent work cited in the article, and forward searches were performed to locate all papers that cite the article (Watson and Webster, 2002). Also, the articles of the primary writers who contributed to the research were reviewed. High-quality references include journal articles and books published by renowned publishers, as well as peer-reviewed academic journals and scholarly books.

The search process's validity and reliability were increased by using numerous papers provided by the tutor as references for the literature search criteria and then doing an independent search for journals. We would terminate the search if successive searches

returned the same references with no new results (Levy and Ellis, 2016).

41 articles were examined to determine their suitability for data extraction and analysis. On the basis of the study's design and methodology, inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined (Okoli and Schabram, 2010), taking into account factors such as geographical region, study population, industry, qualitative analysis, and sampling method. Studies that did not match the criteria for inclusion were removed. In turn, literature that satisfies the criteria will provide direction on data collection coding and the construction of semi-structured interview questions, among other things.

## **2.2 Sustainable Fashion**

In the 1960s, sustainable fashion made its first appearance. At that time, customers became aware of the clothes manufacturing industry's environmental impact and pressured the industry to improve its operations (Jung & Jin, 2014). After decades of growth, sustainable fashion is typically examined from three perspectives: the first consideration is environmental sustainability. For example, the raw materials used in manufacturing and packaging are renewable and environmentally friendly, and so are the concerns of transportation and carbon emissions; the second is social sustainability, which entails fair salaries and normal working conditions, as well as safety precautions and labor rights (Joergens, 2006). Finally, there is the ethical factor to be considered. The key to sustainable fashion development is a balanced approach to fashion manufacturing that encourages long-term relationships, supports local production, and places a premium on transparency (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2014).

Sustainability, according to (Kihl & Vähänen, 2018), can be defined as functioning in a way that minimizes environmental pressures and enhances ethical conduct. This interpretation will also be used to assess the marketing campaigns of sustainable fashion brands. Numerous obstacles remain in the way of the development of sustainable fashion. To begin, maintaining comprehensive transparency throughout the global

supply chain is challenging, as manufacturers may be compelled to reduce prices or even take corners (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates, 2016). Due to a lack of information and awareness, consumers may not necessarily follow their own behavior while purchasing sustainable fashion, which can create a mismatch between consumer attitudes and actions, inhibiting the further growth of sustainable fashion. While corporations commonly utilize the buzzwords "green" "environmental protection" and "ecology" in their marketing communications to convey the concept of sustainability, the phenomena of green cleaning is quite prevalent. As a result, this also leads to consumers' distrust of the brand, resulting in no purchase.

Another issue is that sustainable fashion brands are more expensive than fast fashion brands (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates, 2016). Environmentally friendly materials are the decisive criteria. Even if consumers have a favorable attitude toward sustainability, they may not accept the price premium connected with apparel. Consequently, the challenge is to interact with consumers and persuade them to increase their purchasing power (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates, 2016). A surprising phenomena is that buyers may be unaware that sustainable fashion can be more affordable than they originally believed (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates, 2016). After the industry's leading companies continue to raise the image of sustainable fashion, customers will view sustainability as a high-end fashion. However, fast fashion firms are pushing the concept of sustainability by demonstrating how fast fashion firms break the standards of sustainable fashion in terms of production cycles, causing customer confusion. This also demonstrates a brand's inability to communicate sustained value to consumers effectively (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates, 2016).

Furthermore, for sustainable brands, understanding the word sustainable fashion is critical, as it enables organizations and stakeholders to reach an agreement on how to proceed. Simultaneously, green cleaning can be avoided. Finally, it enables the company to alter its strategy and objectives in light of crucial term-related factors (Henninger, Alevizou, & Oates, 2016).

## **2.3 Sustainable fashion consumption**

Consumers' sustainable consumption is typically classified into three categories: first, purchasing ecologically and socially sustainable, and ethical products; second, consuming responsibly through the selection of fair trade products; and third, consuming less (Fernando & Wah, 2017). According to Gardetti & Girón (2013) consumers value quality over quantity in sustainable fashion consumption, seek for classic and timeless trends, and make fewer purchases. Following the purchase, care will be utilized to prolong the life of the apparel, so achieving the goal of minimizing purchases.

Additionally, the reasons for sustainable fashion purchases are used to express one's ideals and beliefs, as well as to satisfy one's self-demand, or aesthetic satisfaction. This is similar to other motives for fashion consumption, such as the need for uniqueness and personalization. Consumers of sustainable fashion are also motivated by ethical considerations while making purchasing choices (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Beliefs include decreasing waste and clothing consumption, promoting businesses that improve working conditions and treatment of factory workers, in order to mitigate risk to others in society, and seeking innocence. Avoid psychological guilt with conscience and personality (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Meanwhile, purchasing sustainable design is a means of expressing political opinions (Gardetti & Girón, 2013), including those concerning animal rights, the environment, and labor rights.

Nevertheless, consumers continue to place a priority on price and quality. If the product's quality and design do not fulfill customer psychological expectations, for example, if the raw materials utilized do not fulfill consumers' requirements for ecological materials, or if the design is not outstanding, consumers will not purchase the product solely because it is sustainable (Gardetti & Girón, 2013). Price is another critical element. Consumers sometimes forego purchases due to excessive prices,

particularly among younger consumer groups. Although college students believe that they should make an effort and remain active in the cause of sustainable fashion, they nevertheless hope that the pricing is within their price range before purchasing (Hill & Lee, 2012). Additionally, the issue of green washing has been discussed numerous times in the context of sustainable fashion consumption. Due to the frequent occurrence of this issue, consumers may be cautious and skeptical of such businesses, casting doubt on their legitimacy and sustainability. On the other hand, they may reconsider their purchases due to poor information gathering or a lack of clarity in the brand's marketing campaigns (Gardetti & Torres, 2013).

Because customers' belief in environmental and social responsibility is mostly determined by brand companies' reputations in the market and within consumer groups (Shen, Wang, Lo, & Shum, 2012). Consumer communication is critical, and communication can be accomplished through successful marketing and communication strategies. Since this is a method of communicating to consumers that a product is ethical and sustainable (Valor, Carrero & Redondo, 2013). Therefore, the following chapter will discuss significant customer groups, Generation Z, and the marketing components of sustainable fashion consumption.

## **2.4 Consumer Behaviour**

Fashion is one of the most dynamic industries in overall, owing to its dynamic products. (Jin Gam, 2011). Consumer behavior when it comes to purchasing sustainable apparel is likewise extremely complex. Furthermore, there are distinctions in the purchasing behaviors of various customer groups. Sustainable fashion is a broad concept that is rather subjective. Based on the fact that it can signify different things to various people (Ard, 1995), we need to understand consumers' specific attitudes. Accordingly, the fundamental purchasing behaviors of consumer groups, as well as the important consumer groups on which this research focuses, will be explained, as well as the purchasing behaviors of Generation Z.

According to Evans, Jamal, and Foxall (2009), consumer behavior encompasses all of the actions consumers take to acquire, use, and dispose of consumer products, as well as the decision-making process that precedes and determines these acts, and even a succession of complicated activities such as the acquisition of consumer income. Consumer behavior is viewed as fluid. Evans, Jamal, and Foxall (2009) state that it entails the interaction of perception, cognition, behavior, and environmental elements, as well as the transaction process. In order to identify the factors, we can consider the following three significant ones that have a significant impact on customer behavior: (1) variations in consumption propensity as a result of consumption expenditures and expenditure budgets; (2) consumer spending structure plans, changes in consumption structure, and the factors that influence them; and (3) the psychology and specific behavior associated with product purchase.

On the other side, it is critical to understand consumer behavior when it comes to purchasing sustainable products. As people gradually accept the concept of ecological ethics, human consumption must include not only adaptation to production and development, but also coordination with the ecological environment. As awareness of the influence of human consumption on the natural environment has grown, traditional consuming practices have increased pressure on nature (Foxall, 2015).

There is a distinction between when a consumer wishes to purchase a sustainable product and when the purchase is actually made, which represents the circumstances or changes that occur prior to and following the consumer's decision. Consumers will mostly be willing to purchase a sustainable product from a reasonable standpoint during the decision-making process (Bangsa & Schlegelmilch, 2020). Existing rational values have an effect on consumers' views and attitudes toward decision-making. One of the reasonable values is that Generation Z is more concerned with purchasing products or services that make them feel good and demonstrate ethical behavior. As a consequence, they will prioritize brandings that convey positive images or rights. This includes ideals

associated with green consumption, environmental views and consciousness, and personality characteristics (Bangsa & Schlegelmilch, 2020).

## **2.5 Generation Z as consumers**

Generation Z, or Gen Z for short, is defined by "Generation Z-Affiliate Marketing Product Review Site" (2021) as the generation of persons born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. In compared to past generations, Generation Z is defined as a better educated, well-behaved, stressed, and depressed generation.

Generation Z will soon overtake Millennials as the most influential generation in the retail industry's future. They are the first customers in the digital era to completely mature. They obviously have advantages in terms of purchasing power and access to digital information. By 2026, a significant number of people will have enormous consumption power ("Sustainability", 2021). Besides this, Gen Z is referred to as "Generation Green" due to their environmentally and socially responsible shopping behavior. When customers select products, the terms "organic" and "environmental protection" will be prominent. Putting a value on morality and environment is a status symbol and manifestation of their ambition ("Sustainability", 2021).

As heavy user of social media, Generation Z's buying intention is typically marketed through social media platforms, and the purchase intention is formed by associating themselves with brand personality and equity (Thilina, 2021). Hence, marketing strategies are advised to be developed and refined by concentrating on the most essential components affecting Gen Z's use of social media.

Companies can advertise and market their products on social media or via the use of influencers. However, the downside is that poor performance will have severe consequences, including a deterioration in the brand's reputation, and customers' trust

in environmental and social responsibility is largely determined by the brand's or company's reputation among consumers (Shen, Wang, Lo, & Shum, 2012). Gen Z also indicated favorable sentiments about the products of companies who practice CSR (Ariker, 2017).

The key distinction between Generation Z and other consumer generations is in the manner in which and why they make purchases. The generation Z's self-image is typically characterized by high self-esteem and complete trust in their own talents (Van den Bergh & Pallini, 2018). As a response, Gen Z is resistant to direct marketing from the market, exhibiting a higher level of negative attitude (Van den Bergh & Pallini, 2018.) Their primary source of knowledge for fashion purchases is frequently social media, and they prefer to connect with and be influenced by influential people, such as celebrities or KOLs. Their social group has the most influence on them. Generation Z heavily relies on fashion's "social value." Additionally, more "personalized" fashion manifestations such as celebrities, bloggers, and key opinion leaders (KOLs) use a large portion of their free time. Moreover, films and live broadcasts are the main source of fashion knowledge (Van den Bergh & Pallini, 2018).

Joshi and Rahman (2015) argue that purchasing secondhand clothing may be more appealing to Gen Z than purchasing sustainable clothing. Firstly, generation Z purchases to adapt to social trends, because environmental awareness and consumption reduction are current social trends, and the high-end brands sold in second-hand stores conform to this trend, are reasonably priced, and also fit the Z generation's increased personality. Additionally, there are prerequisites for self-image. The motivations for purchasing used items are frequently unrelated to fashion trends, but rather to environmental sustainability and cost savings (Machado, Almeida, Bollick & Bragagnolo, 2019). Because young generation Z buyers lack the financial means to purchase sustainable new products on the market. However, secondhand clothes lacks consumer appeal, as well as issues with worn-out appearance or hygiene (Machado, Almeida, Bollick & Bragagnolo, 2019).

This demonstrates that generation Z consumes sustainable fashion for a variety of reasons, which can be characterized as trends, economic benefits, and sustainability (Kihl & Vähänen, 2018). Different motives have varying degrees of importance, and the motives interact and balance one another, affecting the final buying choice. The general scenario is that the first type is that consumption can become fashionable while also providing economic benefits. The second is to meet the goal of sustainable consumption while maintaining an acceptable level of economic benefit. Sustainable consumption is frequently used to improve one's self-image or to adapt to one's own group of friends and peers (Kihl & Vähänen, 2018).

However, consumers who disregard excessive prices, surpass expectations, or product designs that do not suit their needs do exist for the purpose of sustainability, although this is not prevalent among Generation Z (Joshi & Rahman, 2015).

Sustainability behavior is typically subjective. According to Lundblad and Davies (2016), it can be defined as a lifestyle or culture, and everyone has an opinion based on their own subjective perspective, which may or may not be shared by somebody else.

Generation Z's primary priorities, such as pop culture, interest groups, and social hotspots, are inextricably linked to their fashion consumption and scene preferences. Fashion is a significant method of expression for Generation Z, and they also significantly rely on it to identify their identity and belonging in the social scene where their peers congregate. Identity and belonging (Özkan, 2017). Generation Z is more receptive to traveling to diverse interest groups in order to exchange experiences. Generation Z is no longer content with discovering fashion breakthroughs within established trends. Along with the upgrade in lifestyle and scene demand following the epidemic, Generation Z's strong desire for a high-quality of life puts a focus on fitness, camping, and home, among other scenes, and attempts to experiment with new forms of personality expression in these new normal (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

Generation Z is confronted with cognitive dissonance, as societal trends and improved information raise their awareness of the importance of sustainability as a lifestyle choice, yet this frequently contradicts with their desire to acquire newly manufactured products (Priporas, Stylos & Fotiadis, 2017). As a consequence, Generation Z chooses to avoid unsustainable clothes or to justify their purchase of fast fashion. While Gen Z see fast fashion as environmentally damaging and unsustainable, many Gen Z customers purchase it in fact. Instead, they pursue sustainability in other categories, such as transportation and food (Su & Chang, 2017).

Gen Z is unable to make sustainable buying decisions since they do not know how or where to access information about the fashion industry's carbon footprint. Generation Z lacks sufficient information on sustainable fashion consumption. On the contrary, they are motivated and psychologically affected. They are unaware of which fashion brands are sustainable or where to obtain pertinent information. This generation assumes that higher-priced premium products will be better made, but they lack knowledge to back up this claim (Wood, 2013).

As Çora (2019) states, generation Z customers have a stronger appetite for and acceptance of global brands. They constantly come into touch with the latest fashion and luxury brands on the worldwide market as a result of the popularity of international travel and the development and diffusion of Internet information. Clothing discussion is a typical occurrence among friends and classmates, and they are adamant about expressing their individuality and distinctiveness. They are extremely brand-conscious and materialistic in their mindset. Additionally, they spend more on fashion since they can use their parents' credit cards and receive financial assistance and presents from their parents (Çora, 2019).

## 2.6 Sustainable Fashion Marketing

Fashion marketing is a very new practice with only a few decades of history. It manifests itself in a variety of ways. It is intrinsically linked to the fashion system (Jackson & Shaw, 2010).

The fashion system is defined as the fashion system offers a "structure, organisation and processes employed to conceive, create, produce, distribute, communicate, retail and consume fashion. [It] embodies the full supply chain of fashion and includes not only the individual components, (what the action is) but also the methods adopted to enable and realise each activity (how it is being done)" (Vecchi & Buckley, 2016). And, where applicable, by effective promotion, to take the product and make it available to existing and future consumers, who constitute the "market." Additionally, fashion marketing is inextricably tied to the marketing mix (Vecchi & Buckley, 2016). This model is used to describe all areas of fashion marketing throughout the book 《Master Fashion Marketing》 and 《Fashion Marketing and Communication》 .

Large organizations, particularly stores on streets and lanes, play a critical role in conveying the essential message of sustainable fashion (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates, 2016). The purpose of sustainable fashion marketing is to educate consumers and increase their awareness of the industry's sustainability challenges (Jackson & Shaw, 2010). Furthermore, it aids in the stimulation of customer purchasing behavior. According to research, store-related factors such as display design and environment, as well as retail convenience and ethics, will influence consumer decision-making positively (Chan and Wong, 2012). Familiarity with the product, such as its design, pricing, and quality, can also have a beneficial effect (Kihl & Vähänen, 2018). Generation Z, in particular, values distinct and individual styles, which means that products must also be visually appealing. Accordingly, sustainable marketing is necessary. When creating a product, it is necessary to present both vital information

and comprehensive information about the product, while emphasizing the interpersonal relationship and mutual interests of the consumer (Kihl & Vähänen, 2018).

Sustainable marketing can also play a key part in communication, regardless of whether it is through online or offline channels (Henninger, Alevizou, & Oates, 2016). While research indicates that communication has become a priority, marketing and communication strategies must be carefully developed and implemented to ensure that consumer expectations are met. When marketing is done effectively, a business can achieve a competitive advantage (Shen, Wang, Lo, & Shum, 2012). Social media is a popular channel for sustainable marketing because it is viewed as an effective tool for promoting sustainability problems and as a source of sustainability communication (García Medina, Pereira Correia & Alberola Amores, 2019).

Traditional media is gradually losing influence, and Generation Z prefers rising trend information distribution platforms such as Vlogs and online live broadcasts. Commonly used marketing tactics include sustainability labels, which enable consumers to quickly get pertinent sustainability information (Rossi & Rivetti, 2020). In sustainable fashion marketing, the terms ecological, green, organic, sustainable, and natural are used interchangeably with other types of advertising or businesses (Yin, 2014). Although Yin believes that this has little specific relevance. It is preferable to present sustainability information directly related to manufacturing and products, rather than creating suspicion among consumers. Sustainable fashion marketing is also fraught with difficulties. Studies have demonstrated that the terms and terms used in sustainable fashion marketing and communication are too complex for customers to understand and can easily lead to misunderstandings (Evans & Peirson-Smith, 2018). Given the lack of information and expertise regarding sustainability, customers typically have a limited grasp of sustainable and ecologically friendly clothes.

When it comes to sharing information about the sustainability of brands and products, if the information is not complete and the transparency is lacking, consumers will easily begin to doubt and lose trust. Alternatively, the business may be unable to deliver on

actual promises due to the use of overly restricted sustainable procedures or even green cleaning, eroding consumer trust and diminishing reputation (Park & Lin, 2020). Additionally, this type of information must be swiftly and easily comprehended by customers, which means that marketing must be succinct and simple to apply.

Sustainable marketing encompasses not only environmental objectives, but also ethical issues, such as entry and exit from markets that pose an unacceptable level of social or ecological risk, as well as ethical grounds for firms to examine if it is worthwhile to abandon specific markets to avoid legal, reputational, or sociopolitical concerns (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019). Traditional marketing is profit-driven and revenue-driven. Sustainable marketing also emphasizes psychological factors, such as consumer satisfaction and consumers' desire to remain brand loyal (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019). Therefore, this again shows that understanding the specific attitudes of consumers is essential for sustainable marketing.

## **2.7 Black Box Theory**

The consumer black box model, which is used to describe the factors that impact a customer's purchase behavior, is used to illustrate the consumer's psychology when making a purchase decision and the reasons behind the purchase behavior (Lye, Shao, Rundle-Thiele, & Fausnaugh, 2005). According to the black box model, the factors influencing customers' buying decisions are both internal and external stimuli. The black box serves as a primary motivator and focal point for the buyer to make a purchase (Lye, Shao, Rundle-Thiele, & Fausnaugh, 2005).

External stimuli included in the black box include the marketing mix and other market considerations. The 4P marketing mix is the collection of stimuli that a company plans and develops (Keegan, Moriarty, Duncan, 1992). Environmental stimuli are generated by the economic, political, and cultural environments of society. Combined, these

factors contribute to the external environment that aids in consumer choice promotion (Keegan, Moriarty, Duncan, 1992).

On the other hand, internal factors allude to a consumer's unique characteristics. These personal qualities include economic status, group affiliation, occupation, social class, culture, and lifestyle beliefs and attitudes, which the consumer's brain considers when he or she becomes conscious of his or her requirements (Lye, Shao, Rundle-Thiele, & Fausnaugh, 2005). When a consumer perceives an issue that needs to be solved and begins considering which product to purchase to address it (Lye, Shao, Rundle-Thiele, & Fausnaugh, 2005).

In this situation, the customer begins to respond to external stimuli, and their 'black box' begins filtering and matching products based on internal characteristics, ultimately leading to the customer making a purchase decision. Additionally, the consumer is given the option of how and where to make the purchase (Varsha, Reshma, Khyati, 2014). The important component of the black box model is the decision-making process, during which the consumer becomes aware of the problem they're trying to solve and chooses the most appropriate solution to assist them in accomplishing their objective based on their scenario (Varsha, Reshma, Khyati, 2014).

The black box's decision-making process assists the consumer in collating all relevant and available information from internal and external sources. After doing a thorough analysis of the data, the black box matches the consumer's evolving wants with the product that best meets the idea's requirements. The black box model assumes that regardless of how the consumer's four vocalizations were made, their replies are the outcome of a rational decision-making process (Haq, Abbasi, 2016). However, when customers are presented with stimuli such as price incentives, promotional incentives, and so on, the black box process is largely influenced by external factors, such as environmental factors or marketing mix (particularly the 4p's). The black box in their head initiates an analysis process that is not always rational and swiftly makes a

judgment, upon which the trend consumer acts. Consumers' illogical and emotional character is one of the variables that contribute to their susceptibility to marketing stimuli and, consequently, to irrational and impulsive expenditure. (Cornwell, Weeks, Roy, 2005).

Consumer preferences for brands and businesses also factor heavily into the purchasing decision-making process. The black box processes various attitudes differently depending on whether they are favorable or negative and ranks them according to individual preferences. The black box is a collection of the consumer's own personal criteria that are used to meet a need and eventually make a purchase decision, and hence cannot avoid making decisions based on personal preferences and irrational impulsive purchases (Haq, Abbasi, 2016).

From the consumer's perspective, the black box model depicts the process from identifying a need to making a purchasing choice (Haq, Abbasi, 2016). Due to the study's objective of examining Generation Z consumers' opinions and purchasing behavior toward sustainable fashion products, it was inextricably linked to the black box concept on multiple levels. In determining Generation Z customers' attitudes toward sustainable fashion items, the black box model provides an overview of the complete decision-making process, elucidating the various internal and external aspects that might impact the final decision. External influences have a varying effect on different consumers when it comes to making a buying decision (Varsha, Reshma, Khyati, 2014).

The black box model depicts the consumer's cognitive process as an opaque box in which their emergent buying needs are combined with the decision-making process, allowing for a more intuitive understanding of how consumers make product purchase decisions.

Environmental Influences		The Buyer's Black Box		Buyer's response
Marketing Factors	Environmental Factors	Buyer Characteristics	The Decision Process	
Product Price Place Promotion	Economic	Attitudes	Problem recognition	Product choice
	Technological	Motivation	Information search	Brand choice
	Political	Perceptions	Alternative evaluation	Dealer choice
	Cultural	Personality	Purchase decision	Purchase timing
	Demographic	Lifestyle	Post-purchase behaviour	Purchase amount
	Natural	Knowledge		

**Figure 1:** The Black Box Model of Consumer Behaviour. Adapted from “Marketing” by W. Keegan, S. Moriarty, T. Duncan, 1992, p. 193. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

## 2.8 The New Marketing Mix: 4Ds

The marketing mix was first conceived by Neil Borden in 1940 and was introduced by E. Jerome McCarthy in 1960 as part of the process of building contemporary marketing (Sood, 1995). After being subdivided, it became an integral part of contemporary marketing theory and is frequently employed. It enables businesses to assess and match target consumers' requirements and behaviors via products, prices, locations, and methods, as well as to influence consumers' demands and purchase intentions (Jackson & Shaw 2010).

Due to worldwide market shifts, this theory is ineffective in the face of e-commerce and online marketing, as it concentrates exclusively on the seller's perspective and ignores customer requirements (Kihl & Vähänen, 2018). The new manufacturing mix: 4Ds is a new marketing mix for fashion marketing proposed by Olga Mitterfellner. It is more appropriate for all forms of fashion businesses in the twenty-first century (Mitterfellner, 2019).

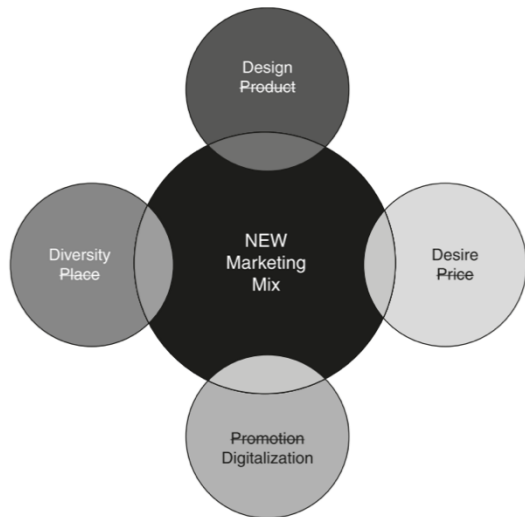


Figure 2: The New Marketing Mix: 4Ds (Mitterfellner, 2019)

#### Design (replacing product)

The advancement of 3D and 4D printing technology has altered the way products are designed. Chanel and Uniqlo's smart Airism materials are also popular on the global market (Mitterfellner, 2019). Consumer groups' younger generations place a higher premium on product design. Generation Z, for example, is no longer content with identifying fashion breakthroughs inside existing popular trends. They place a higher premium on the uniqueness of things in order to demonstrate their originality (Mitterfellner, 2019).

#### Desire (replacing price)

Traditional marketing focuses on profits and gains. Sustainable marketing also emphasizes psychological factors, such as consumer satisfaction and consumers' desire to remain brand loyal (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019). While pricing is still critical, if a company can establish its own exceptional brand story and develop its own distinctive values and logos, it will be able to shake consumers and instill wants in their hearts, and consumers will also agree on the price. Millennials and Generation Z consumers

are more concerned with the brand's image (Jackson & Shaw 2010).

### Diversity (replacing place)

As the fashion industry is international and global, and as the global market matures and the Asian and Indian markets rapidly develop, this is the only method to expand into new countries and advance toward internationalization. The importance of diversity must be stressed and expressed. For instance, many companies in the fashion industry may prioritize recruiting international personnel in order to increase diversity (Mitterfellner, 2019).

### Digitalization (replacing promotion)

Businesses are increasingly focusing on digital transformation. Digital transformation is not a multiple-choice exercise; it is a matter of existence. Apparel has always been on the cutting edge of internet marketing. Burberry was the first brand to embrace 3D technology to stage fashion displays in 2011 (Straker & Wrigley, 2016). Brand promotion has increasingly grown its reliance on digital means, particularly in the post-epidemic age. For consumers, it may result in more tailored communication. Fashion brands can thus communicate with consumers via a variety of devices and platforms that are tailored to the preferred communication channels of various age groups and geographic regions (Vecchi & Buckley, 2016). Through the use of digital technologies, the upgrade will be completed, resulting in a more scientific, rational, and fulfilling experience system (Vecchi & Buckley, 2016).

## **2.9 Conceptual Framework**

Two primary considerations motivated the development of the conceptual framework. Firstly, it distills the essential points discussed in the literature review and the primary

components of the research into a more intuitive format (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2020). Secondly, by combining two existing models: the black box model, which provides guidance on influencing consumer purchasing behavior based on external environmental stimuli and internal consumer characteristics; and the new marketing mix: 4Ds, with its innovative focus on fashion marketing and emphasis on international markets, which are deemed more suitable than traditional markets.

As a consequence, it assists in identifying the data that should be collected and analyzed next in the study, as well as in analyzing the empirical findings (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2020).

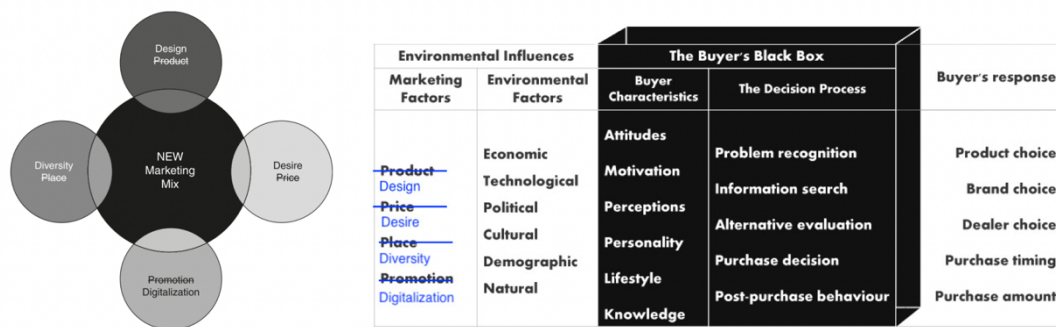


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework

### 3. Research Methodology and Method

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*This paragraph describes the research strategy, research methodologies, research designs, and types of data that were employed in the study. The feasibility of the interview approach chosen is discussed, as is the analysis of the data collected and the study's quality.*

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### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

The research design of the research is determined by the research philosophy, which is concerned with the origin, development, and incorporation of the knowledge used into a system. The way in which relevant data should be collected and analyzed is determined by research philosophy (Dudovskiy, 2018). The idea of research will guide the author's choice of using a certain research philosophy. There are four major categories of research philosophy such as Pragmatism, Positivism, Realism, and Interpretivism. Among them, positivism and interpretivism are used more subjectively in the values of positivism and interpretivism (Dudovskiy, 2018).

Among them, interpretivism pays more attention to the interaction with the research objects. In order to formulate the most reasonable method of research data collection according to the characteristics of the research object and facilitate in-depth analysis, interpretivism is used according to the needs of specific cases and different methods to collect data. For example, in different cases, the interview method in the study of interpretivism is used to obtain in-depth information in order to enable the author to further analyze the key issues of the case.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

As the aim of this study is to examine the consumer attitudes of Generation Z consumers, it is based on the theoretical foundations of consumer habits known within the field of fashion business research, as well as research related to the typical sustainable consumption characteristics of Generation Z consumers, and uses accepted perspectives such as consumer motivation. This means that this study starts with a frame of reference such as a defined theory or hypothesis, which is observed and tested against reality (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Therefore, a deductive approach was used in this study and

the hypotheses in this study were constructed as research questions (Pearse, 2019). Furthermore, given that this study will examine the attitudes and behaviors of Generation Z consumers toward sustainable consumption, as well as the need of elucidating the meaning and contextual implications of consumers' views and behaviors in a particular context (in this study, this refers to the fashion marketing context).

Qualitative research strategies can be critical in explaining and comprehending complex phenomena and the primary causes (Yauch and Steudel, 2003). Qualitative methodologies are also deemed appropriate for examining Generation Z customers' consumer attitudes and their attitudes toward consumption in a marketing context. Additionally, qualitative research can contribute to the development of a more complete understanding of the underlying motives and drivers of customers through a more descriptive approach, resulting in an interpretative knowledge (Yauch and Steudel, 2003). This enables researchers to approach the analysis through the lens of the sustainable consumption phenomenon as experienced by Generation Z consumers, and to explain reasons for doing so.

As Pearse (2019) indicated, the majority of qualitative business research use an inductive methodology, which begins with an investigation of a particular case and concludes with the extraction of themes. However, the inductive methodology is not appropriate for this study because the framework for answering the research questions has already been developed, and previous frameworks and theories will be employed to attempt to comprehend and verify their applicability to the specific situation (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Furthermore, the inductive approach has limitations, such as the fact that the body of information regarding behavioral and social processes in organizations has not been produced in a systematic manner (Pearse, 2019). Additionally, since marketing research has traditionally prioritized deductive procedures, the methodologies demonstrating how marketing science has verifiably progressed are ones that are conducive to confirming rather than discovering theories (Hyde, 2000). Also, deductive qualitative research is distinguished by the fact that the study's

hypotheses and research questions are developed from the theoretical framework and literature evaluation, and that the data collecting and analysis processes will be directed by theory (Hyde, 2000). The relationship between various concepts in the literature is also qualitative, which helps the researcher in determining what to focus on in the study and later serves as the foundation for the interpretive analysis (Yin, 2014). However, the method has certain disadvantages in that when collecting and analyzing qualitative data, the researcher frequently incorporates subjective feelings. To further mitigate bias, the conceptual framework and literature evaluation will be used to guide the data collection and analysis objectively (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

### **3.3 Research Design**

The research design section will follow the purpose of the study and the strategy of deductive qualitative research, and explain the specific way in which the research methods were implemented.

#### **3.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews**

In this project, the researchers chose to use semi-structured interviews for data collection to obtain in-depth information about the attitudes of Gen Z consumers towards sustainable fashion and sustainable fashion marketing campaigns. When collecting data for the study, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews with a total of 12 participants.

Semi-structured interviews focus on the concerns of researchers and are more open and objective, which can help researchers gain a more comprehensive understanding of what respondents think and what is behind them (Carruthers, 1990). The aim is to maintain the flexibility of the interview and to communicate with the interviewees in large numbers to make it easier to obtain reliable qualitative data (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, et al. 2008). The disadvantage is that different questions are discussed with

the interviewees in each interview, and it is difficult to compare them (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, et al. 2008).

Interviews can be conducted in a variety of methods, including face-to-face, over the phone, by email, or online via social media platforms such as Facebook. Face-to-face interviews are frequently regarded as the highest priority (Wilson, 2012). As respondents can be identified by their facial expressions or bodily movements in response to a question, it is necessary to comprehend their responses in order to provide better assistance (Wilson, 2012). The advancement of science and technology has led to a widespread adoption of the interview method of online video conferencing. The researchers used video conferencing to conduct semi-structured video interviews on the WeChat platform for the interview. The responses of respondents were recorded in audio and electronic documents records for follow-up study. Online communication at any time allows for greater flexibility in terms of interview time and location, and respondents are more likely to relax in a familiar atmosphere and express their true feelings about the question (Tuttas, 2015). Using online video conferencing during a coronavirus pandemic can help respondents maintain their anonymity and save researchers money on unnecessary travel costs.

As the research develops, we may need to connect some existing literature in order to explain our findings by demonstrating that the conclusions drawn from the raw data are consistent with what is occurring. Secondary data sources include peer-reviewed academic publications and scholarly publications issued by reputable publishers. To ensure that the interview questions were exhaustive and to avoid a data shortage that would later preclude replies to the research questions, an interview guide was established in advance (See Appendix 1).

### **3.3.2 Sampling**

In terms of research, the authors defined the sample characteristics and used a purposive

sampling strategy to avoid random sampling, ensuring that the samples used in the study were compliant and the conclusions were more reliable (Denieffe, 2020).

The respondents who were chosen matched the following three characteristics: 1. The population of Generation Z (born between mid 1990s and early 2010s); 2. At least one year of study and living abroad experience; 3. Have an understanding of the term "sustainable products" or have purchased sustainable products.

The reason sampling was chosen, due to the fact that their experience studying abroad gives them a culturally diversified character, as that they are relatively typical of the target group of sustainable fashion customers in the international market. This is because Generation Z customers are frequently exposed to and purchase the latest fashion and luxury brands on the worldwide market as a result of their strong demand and acceptance of foreign brands (Özkan, 2017). Respondents who studied abroad have a broader understanding of multinational companies and are more vocal about sustainable fashion firms operating in a variety of countries and cultures.

All questions were categorized according to the conceptual framework and, once categorized, were re-matched to the conceptual framework to guarantee full coverage. As this was an interpretive study, the 'Why' and 'How' questions were designed to elicit further information (Yin, 2014).

For the current project, at least 10 samples are needed for qualitative research (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe & Young, 2018). The authors collected 12 valid samples. Interviews were conducted with adults over the age of 18, with the possibility of parental influence on the purchase of fashion products by minors. There were slightly more women than men among the respondents.

### **Table 1. Respondents' Information**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Birth Year</b>	<b>Countries of Study</b>
1	Male	1997	UK
2	Female	2001	South Korea
3	Female	1995	USA
4	Female	1995	Canada
5	Male	1998	Australia
6	Male	1996	Canada
7	Female	1999	Sweden
8	Female	1998	UK
9	Female	2000	Sweden
10	Female	1998	France
11	Male	2001	USA
12	Female	2000	Italy

Participants are anonymous during the interview. Consequently, participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 will be referred to as participants (see Table 1). The appendix will contain complete participant's interview questions (See Appendix 1). There were eight females and four males present.

### **3.3.3 Data Analysis and Coding Structure**

The qualitative data are analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Braun, Clarke, Terry, and Hayfield (2019) assert that the method helps in the resolution of research problems by discovering patterns in the data. The pattern identification process is rigorous, as it incorporates familiarisation with the data, data coding, theme creation and revision. The advantage is that it is theoretically flexible and can be applied to a variety of contexts and types of research questions (inductive, deductive, etc.).

It is especially appropriate to the study of issues involving people's perceptions and experiences, which corresponds to the study's research questions. The study employs a deductive approach to reflective thematic analysis, with coding and theme generation guided by pre-existing concepts or ideas (Braun, Clarke, Terry & Hayfield, 2019).

#### Phases in doing reflexive thematic analysis

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The approach to TA that we developed involves a six-phase process for *doing* analysis.

Although these phases are sequential, and each builds on the previous, analysis is typically a *recursive process*, with movement back and forth between different phases. These are not *rules* to follow rigidly, but rather a series of conceptual and practice oriented 'tools' that guides the analysis to facilitate a rigorous process of data interrogation and engagement. With more experience (and smaller datasets), the analytic process can blur some of these phases together.

1. **Familiarisation with the data** | This phase involves reading and re-reading the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content.
2. **Coding** | This phase involves generating succinct labels (codes!) that identify important features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question. It involves coding the entire dataset, and after that, collating all the codes and all relevant data extracts, together for later stages of analysis.
3. **Generating initial themes** | This phase involves examining the codes and collated data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning (potential themes). It then involves collating data relevant to each candidate theme, so that you can work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme.
4. **Reviewing themes** | This phase involves checking the candidate themes against the dataset, to determine that they tell a convincing story of the data, and one that answers the research question. In this phase, themes are typically refined, which sometimes involves them being split, combined, or discarded. In our TA approach, themes are defined as pattern of shared meaning underpinned by a central concept or idea.
5. **Defining and naming themes** | This phase involves developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the 'story' of each. It also involves deciding on an informative name for each theme.
6. **Writing up** | This final phase involves weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts, and contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature.

Figure 4: Phases in doing reflexive thematic analysis (Braun, Clarke, Terry & Hayfield, 2019)

The six stages of the analysis process were utilized as a guide to help in the study's data analysis (See Figure 4). The first stage involved reading and re-reading the original interview data in order to become familiar with its content. To preserve the integrity and detail of the data, the interviews were audio recorded, and to eliminate language bias, they were conducted in English.

Then came the step of coding. As this was a deductive thematic analysis, the codes were not derived from the data, but rather from the literature (Pearse, 2019). That is, this phase will establish labels for the codes and data in order to categorize them in order to facilitate the extraction and organization of data relevant to the research question. Besides, assisting in the creation of themes. Coding was done manually in Excel, by

establishing tables for the transcriptions of the audio. Following that, keywords were highlighted to generate labels.

The following stage was theme generation. The data would be compared to the research questions (essentially the themes) to evaluate if they validated or disproved them (Boyatzis, 1998). The conceptual framework developed previously for this study will be utilized to cross-reference and review the initial themes (See Figure 3), with the goal of matching the data to the research questions and determining if they do so properly.

Academic literature that matched the researcher's inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study's design and methods would be used as a secondary resource to assist with data analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). Eventually, the final themes are determined. The analysis part that follows will go into detail about the study in conjunction with the current literature.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

Due to the large amount of personal information that needs to be collected from participants, several ethical issues were considered for a privacy feasible study. The conversations in this study were voluntary. The names of the interviewees were not part of the data to be collected and the authors committed to anonymity in the use of the data (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). It was not the authors' responsibility to inform each interviewee of the purpose of the interview and to explain to the interviewees that their responses would be recorded and transcribed. Interviewees have the right to terminate the interview and withdraw from the interview at any time. The authors' interviewees do not include minors under the age of 18.

Personal information of respondents to this study will be kept in strict confidence and stored in a manner that requires authorization to access. The information collected from

the interview will be used for the purpose of this study only, and if it needs to be reused in subsequent studies, this will be done with the permission of the interviewee. If the interviewees wish to see what conclusions the authors have drawn from their own answers, the authors are obliged to send the articles to them.

## 4. Empirical Findings

The following four themes were identified based upon the result of data analysis: Consumer Perception of Design; Consumer Perception of Diversity; Consumer Perception of Desire; Consumer Perception of Digitalization. Each theme corresponds to closely related subthemes, which will be elaborated within each of the following themes.

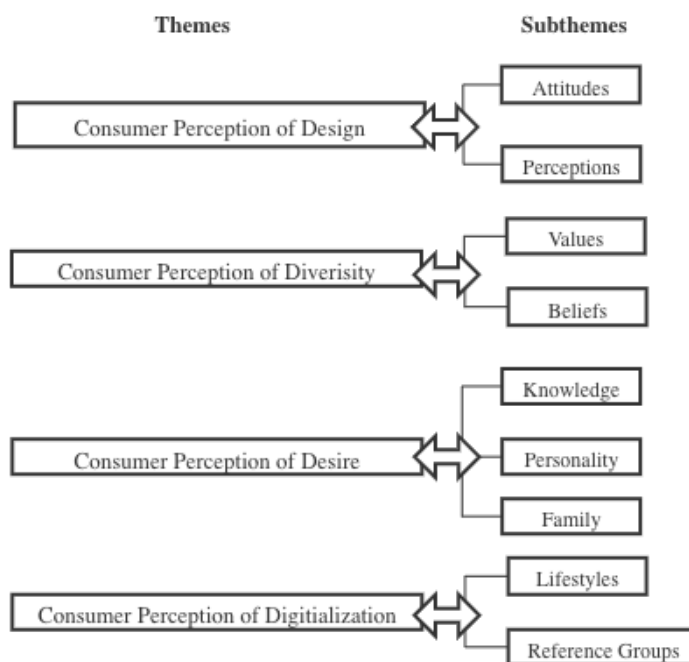


Figure 5: Themes Structure

### 4.1 Consumer Perception of Design

This theme demonstrates Generation Z's perspective on design when exposed to external marketing environment stimuli. Along with the data gathered through the conceptual framework, attitudes and perceptions are strongly tied to the inherent characteristics of customers.

Consumers in Generation Z have demonstrated a favorable attitude and attitudes toward sustainable products. From the interview data, the majority of respondents were found that tend to favored by new technologies and designs sounded exciting and enticing, but it was extremely difficult to verify that the products they were purchasing actually utilised the technology that the sustainable brand promised to employ.

Individuality and distinct styles are extremely enticing to Gen Z consumers who desire to express themselves uniquely through their attire. They are also eager to experiment with new sustainable fabric technologies, but will not pay a premium for a single fashion design. Respondent 11 said:

"I know of a sustainable brand that offers clothing made with new fabrics or technologies, but they have a limited selection of styles to choose from. Although I was interested, there was no style that suited me, so I did not purchase it."

Respondent 7 expressed interest in smart textile 3D and 4D printing technology for some sustainable brands:

"This technology allows for products to be produced with fewer workers, and less labour should keep the cost of the garments down. And when I go out with my friends, I can tell them about this garment of mine, made with 3d and 4d printing technology, which sounds unique! But when I found out the price of that product, I was reluctant to buy it. For that kind of price I could buy a fashionable product with normal production techniques but with a more innovative style."

Respondent 3 said:

"I am more attracted by the fact that some brands offer clothes made from old materials rather than new technology, which is also very unique and designed in such a way that I can see that the materials used are sustainable. I would a be willing to buy one."

## **4.2 Consumer Perception of Diversity**

This theme explores the varied effects of external marketing environment stimuli on Gen Z regarding diversity. Values and beliefs are strongly tied to the inherent characteristics of customers .

Gen Z maintains its tolerance and acceptance for belief differentiation. Respondents to interviews lauded sustainable brands' diversity efforts. Sustainable firms invest much in communication and utilize a range of methods to advertise their latest products. LED screens on the street, advertisements on a variety of mobile applications. Respondents generally agreed that advertising effectively communicates the diversity of sustainable brands. Additionally, they note that from particular sustainable fashion brands, and they inform authors that they observe varying levels of content in their home and host countries.

One interviewee discussed the range of sustainable brand products, describing how she previously had a fashion item she adored but it wasn't available in the place she studied (Italy), so she requested a friend in that country to purchase it for her.

Gen Z customers was identified that they have distinct values, and the brands they purchase can help them stand out and be consistent with those beliefs. When marketers can't deliver on their promises, they drastically diminish the chances that Gen Z consumers would purchase the product. And brands that breach the ideals represented

by Gen Z consumers risk losing this segment of the generation. Diversification is critical for sustainable companies. They must not only vary their products, but also their marketing to entice consumers in target countries to acquire products with a cultural and aesthetic connection to the local market. However, such marketing does not always succeed due to cultural differences.

The authors were provided a failing example of corporations responding to local culture during a more in-depth, more detailed conversations with respondent 6. While he supports efforts to diversify sustainable companies, he identifies gags that corporations employ in the absence of a thorough awareness of the target market's culture. He demonstrated a well-known brand's wares to the author, including a clothing with Chinese characters with the expectation that it would be cool and appealing to Chinese consumers. However, the product does not appear to be cool in Chinese. Because the Chinese characters on the clothing are unattractive, it is clear that the designer did not intend to use them; the birth of this product was not motivated by a desire to learn about the target market's local culture, but by a desire to maximize profits in the target market. Interviewee 3 commented on this:

"I can see that many well-known sustainable brands are trying to integrate into the local cultures of different markets."

Respondent 12 said:

"Brands do a good job of diversifying their products in terms of culture. I have seen in some of the big brands' online shops that the selection of clothing and accessories recommended for display on the home page can vary depending on the country or region."

Interviewee 7, who told the author that her undergraduate degree was in brand management, said:

"I know that many international brands expect regional directors to have a local background. For example, an Asian regional director is Asian or someone who is familiar with Asian culture and has lived in Asia."

Interviewee 6 said:

"You can see a lot of brands trying to appeal to local consumers and using graphic design with local elements. But sometimes they look really bad and can screw up new products."

When discussing value with respondent 8, she said:

"There are sustainable brands that do a good job of self-promotion, and they have a lot of interesting, want-to-buy products. But the brand doesn't put its promises into practice or does something that goes against what it claims to be sustainable. For a brand like this, it's already on my blacklist."

Interviewee number 9 expressed his opinion on the matter of H&M burning clothes:

"It goes against their propaganda and is a deception to us consumers. And I will no longer pay for their false propaganda."

### **4.3 Consumer Perception of Desire**

This theme emerged from Generation Z's perceptions of desire in response to external marketing stimuli. According to the conceptual framework and data analysis, the

primary characteristics that are strongly connected with intrinsic consumer attributes are knowledge, personality, and family.

Generation Z customers' knowledge and personality were recognized as critical characteristics that promote the transformation of external stimuli. The majority of respondents responded that they have personal favorites when it comes to apparel. Firstly, due to their intense interest in fashion and trends. Since clothes is the most effective visual means of expressing one's individuality. Eight were female and two were male. When they buy for fashion, they choose pieces that complement their personality and aesthetic, which is typically not a large uniform; rather, they want their style to stand out from the crowd; they want it to be unique. Female participants stated a rejection of gender-consolidated categories and an embrace of aesthetic heterogeneity in the intention of reconfiguring their self-image. Respondent 3 stated:

"I like to buy oversized as well as unisex clothes and I often buy menswear, so why not?"

Numerous subcultural fashions, such as street culture, second generation, and transgender attire, are also popular with them. Male responders, on the other hand, prefer to purchase street-trendy, branded luxury items. Respondent 6 stated:

"I don't spend a lot of time on selection, so I would just buy those luxury brands, first of all because I can be assured of quality and comfort, but also because a lot of celebrities are wearing them, which is cool. It makes me look in good taste."

When asked further about the celebrities, the interviewee stated that he was referring to a favorite e-sports player. And, more precisely, they could not be named; they were simply impressed by the fact that they had seen them dressed often on social media. This category is frequently seen as a popular opinion leader among young people.

Additionally, respondents were highly receptive to new apparel brands. They are eager to discover and acquire unique brands. This is because it is a new brand with unique attributes that often attracts them.

On the other side, female responders are more likely to actively explore the expertise behind fashion, the emergence of cutting-edge trends, and refining their grasp of fashion in order to translate it into their own particular aesthetic. Respondent 4 stated:

"Before I make a purchase, I do some browsing on social media, such as Instagram pages or posts from my favorite KOLs. If it's a brand I don't know, I will search for that brand separately."

Throughout the interviews, the term 'premium' was frequently mentioned. Simply appearing "premium" and "luxurious" is not considered premium by them. They admire the new concept of wearability, versatility, and quality in a low-profile manner. They're searching for modest, inconspicuous materials and sparsely thought-out designs. The majority of respondents indicated that they would chose what was most cost effective and sought high utilization, adaptability, and sustainability.

The influence of families on the consumption characteristics of Generation Z was particularly prominent in the interview data. It was also identified as indirect effects on external stimuli. Price was not discussed as often as expected. When respondents answered the question about price, most of them said that the money their parents give them and the money they save is not too much of a constraint when it comes to buying clothes, as they can wear them frequently. Respondent 5 explained:

"Since it is clothing that you wish to get, you will set aside that amount of money. Unless it is too expensive, I would choose to ask my parents for advice or express my wish for it to be a gift. Or they would choose to pay for it in instalments themselves."

Respondent 8 also stated:

"I would give myself a cooling off period and if after a while, I still want it badly, then I would do everything I could to purchase it. Conversely, I would not choose to make the purchase anymore."

Consumption related to sustainable fashion, irrational purchase decisions were made by external marketing stimuli recurred throughout the dataset. When participants were asked if they had ever purchased sustainable fashion, most of them said that they had, but not very often, and that they did not purchase products primarily for sustainability reasons, but for other reasons as well. One respondent 4 who had studied in Canada for five years stated:

"I buy local Canadian sustainable brands in order to buy them as gifts for my family."

Another respondent 11 who had studied in the United States for three years stated:

"It just so happened that the brand was on sale, plus there was a desire to buy it, so I purchased it."

Of course, there were also participants who bought out of love for the product itself or loyalty to the brand, but only three respondents. They said they bought the products because they agreed with the packaging and the aesthetics of the minimalist packaging and that they wanted their wardrobe and even their other daily necessities to be made up of these products in minimalist packaging and with green features. But when asked if they had researched or were 100% sure about the sustainability of their products, they hesitated and replied.

"That's what the brand advertises anyway."

But when all participants were asked, "Would you buy a sustainable brand if you found out that it was not sustainable? Even though the product is very appealing to you." They all said no unanimously.

Certainly, there were many who were skeptical about sustainable fashion and had never purchased it before. They stated that they were skeptical of fashion manufacturers' sustainability, but it was too time consuming to determine whether the sustainability was true, so they simply chose not to buy. Participant 11 stated:

"But if you can easily prove to me that you're sustainable and it's appealing enough to me, I think I'll buy it."

#### **4.4 Consumer Perception of Digitalization**

This section summarizes the perceptions of Generation Z consumers in relation to the stimulus of digitalization in the external marketing environment, based on a conceptual framework and dataset showing that the closely related consumer characteristics are lifestyles and reference Groups.

Lifestyles of Gen Z consumers was identified as the key features to guide their purchase behavior. Online shopping is the main way in which the interviewees shop, but offline shopping is also a part of shopping that the interviewees said they would not part with. Online shopping channels are abundant, with cross-border e-commerce sites being very popular due to the variety of brands, the greater choice of designer brands, the price advantage of major international brands compared to brick-and-mortar shops in their home country, and the sophistication of features such as delivery, shipping and communication. Most of the interviewees buy sustainable brands not locally, but through the internet for international brands with a better brand image and higher

visibility in the industry. The convenience of digital channels such as online virtual fittings, electronic payments and online fashion shows were also aspects that interviewees recognised. The influence of offline boutiques and flash shops is on the rise, and the interviewees concluded that their strengths lie in the furnishings, the caring service, what you see is what you get, and the pleasure of shopping online, all of which cannot be replaced by online shopping. One respondent who studied in Sweden for four years 9 stated:

"The first time I bought sustainable fashion was in a mall in Sweden and the shop displays and billboards caught my eye, as Swedish clothing is known for its sustainability and I was keen to try and buy and experience it once. Plus I visited their website and the designs and pictures on the site appealed to me. Even if the price was a bit more expensive, I could live with that, after all it is not often that I need to buy."

Respondent 4 stated:

"I have been working out recently and was looking to buy a sportswear brand. But didn't want to buy brands like Nike and Adidas which are everywhere on the street. So I found a brand that claims to use special technological fabrics and to be environmentally friendly, plus its design is particularly futuristic, but as the price is a bit beyond expectations, I'm still on the fence to see if there are any reviews of it on social media before deciding whether to buy it. Of course if the product is on sale I will definitely purchase it to try it out."

The influence of reference groups on the purchasing decisions made by the Generation Z group of consumers is enormous in the interview data. When respondents answered questions about brand marketing, more than half of them had more or less negative attitudes towards marketing, focusing mainly on visual fatigue of the marketing messages flooding the internet and doubts about their authenticity. Interviewer 3 had this to say:

"Recently there has been a steady stream of international brands caught up in public opinion and the heat on social media has been so intense that I have browsed the news on several occasions. So, I probably won't be purchasing this brand in the near future, although I don't know if the news is 100% accurate, but the best option is to avoid it."

However, the descriptions of previous buying experiences reflect that interviewees, especially female interviewees, often seek information sources to help them make purchasing decisions, mostly for the purpose of researching background information on brands, borrowing outfits, browsing the latest fashion trends and pieces, etc. Social media, such as Instagram, is the most frequently used channel. During the interviews, opinion leaders, fashion bloggers and celebrities who are active on social media were mentioned several times. This was followed by short video platforms and peer interest circles. The opinions of peers were surprisingly valued by the interviewees. Peers are mainly real-life friends or opinion leaders or celebrities of the same age. Peers are keen to discuss trends or fashion topics online, and it is not uncommon for brands favoured by opinion leaders and celebrities of the same age to be competitively purchased. Impressive statements from respondent 12:

"I buy sustainable fashion pieces that are often worn by my favourite singer who looks great in them and recommends them on social media. It was a bit more expensive, but I chose to buy it anyway. And practising sustainable consumption is a worthwhile thing to do."

## **5. Analysis**

Consumer purchasing behavior is frequently influenced by characteristics inherent to individual and psychological traits. Simultaneously, the external environment influences purchasing behavior, mostly through the marketing environment and other

environmental factors such as cultural and social variables. External stimuli normally perform on the consumer's brain, but since each consumer's qualities vary, these varied perceptions and responses to external stimuli result in varied purchasing decisions.

Cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors cannot be controlled or adjusted from a fashion marketing perspective. Therefore, by observing and analyzing customers' perceptions and reactions to the external marketing environment, marketers can develop predictions and assessments that can be described as key stimuli, thereby improving global branding strategies for marketing to the prime customer groups.

## **5.1 Consumer Response to External Stimuli: Design**

The interviewees agreed that design is critical for fashion products, not just in terms of appearance pattern and color, but also in terms of Gen Z customers' interest and tolerance for new materials and manufacturing technologies. They view experimenting with new technology as an essential step toward a brand's sustainability.

Piñatex (Hijosa, 2015), cited as a revolutionary material to produce pineapple leaf fiber from recycled waste, is a material that not only helps the environment at a raw material level, but also brings social benefits such as increased employment and education in pineapple growing areas. Many sustainable brands have adopted piñatex and consumers have praised the fabric's performance.

Rothy's brand creates shoes entirely out of eco-friendly materials, with the uppers constructed entirely out of recycled plastic. Burberry has also produced an eco-friendly material called ECONYL, which is a high-quality textile created from nylon sourced primarily from ocean debris and some other recycled material from waste (Ciambella, 2020). While the brand prioritizes eco-friendly materials, it also guarantees that each product has a distinct design aesthetic. For young Gen Z consumers who are prepared

to experiment, fashion products manufactured from plants and recyclable materials provide an unexpected twist. Consumer testing and purchasing establishes a predictable future for innovative fabrics (Blackburn, 2015).

## **5.2 Consumer Response to External Stimuli: Diversity**

Generation Z consumers respect diversity, but they also have their own set of values and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. With the assistance of current communication technologies, brands are attempting to increase their impact through advertising, which provides Gen Z customers with a plethora of channels for understanding the brand and determining whether the brand's conduct aligns with their own beliefs prior to purchasing or not.

Dolce&Gabbana's advertisement sparked outrage in China in 2018. The three advertising blockbusters depicts a female model with an Asian face attempting to eat three Italian dishes with exaggerated difficulty using chopsticks (D'Arco, Marino, & Resciniti, 2019). Following the debut of this advertisement, numerous social media users expressed grave dissatisfaction with D&G's advertisement, and these videos were accused of stereotyping and disrespect for Asian women, as well as racism. D&G later removed the three films that sparked controversy, but Stefano Gabbana, the brand's Italian designer, used his own social media account to make disrespectful and offensive remarks about China and Chinese culture. Stefano&Gabbana's remarks rapidly went viral, inciting outrage among Chinese buyers and ultimately resulting in the cancellation of Dolce & Gabbana's show (D'Arco, Marino, & Resciniti, 2019).

The media and social media sites in China have been dominated by consumers (many of whom are Gen Z consumers) and celebrities who have boycotted D&G and their products, with "no more D&G" and "please apologise seriously" dominating the internet platforms were dominated by "will not buy D&G anymore" and "please

apologise". Before the start of the D&G show, several spokespeople had already announced that they were canceling their contracts with D&G and the Shanghai government had announced that the show was canceled. On the day of the event, D&G products also disappeared from various shopping platforms, causing a significant negative impact on the D&G market in China (China Crisis, 2021). Not only in China, but the D&G advertising video also caused protests in Italy, looking at the disrespect and sexism towards women.

This case shows that Gen Z consumers are indeed very conscious of what brands say and do and that brands that make racist and sexist statements are going against their values. Sustainable brands in the international marketplace should refrain from racist, geo- and sexist advertising, which can not only cost the brand its reputation and profitability in the target market but can also cause psychological distress, negative health effects, and even political problems for those who are treated unfairly (Kwate, 2014).

Our findings suggest that Gen Z consumers have strong values and this is evidenced in the case study, so we can conclude that values and beliefs are the criteria for Gen Z consumers to accept brand diversity.

### **5.3 Consumer Response to External Stimuli: Desire**

The respondents' expressions of their own aspirations for fashion consumption and sustainable fashion consumption demonstrate that Generation Z consumers are committed to their own uniqueness, have a strong desire to express themselves, and are continually exploring new modes of expression (Priporas, Stylos & Fotiadis, 2017). This is consistent with the interview findings, which indicate a desire for individualized, niche brands, a high level of devotion to companies that reflect their personality, and a preference for products that are both affordable and of excellent quality. Consumption of sustainable clothes also meets their needs. When it comes to sustainable fashion

consumption, they look for product features and self-worth that align with the group's profile of individualism and distinctive labels (Straker & Wrigley, 2016). It is apparent that for Gen Z customers, personality is a very personal trait that plays a significant part in driving them to purchase when external brand images and products arouse them.

Along with price, which is not the primary consideration for Gen Z consumers, the family has a significant influence on their purchase behavior, as indicated by their parents' general financial support for their children and their acceptance of their spending habits, i.e. it is understood and justified that Gen Z spend a bigger percentage of their money on fashion. Generation Z, likewise, have a major influence on family purchasing behavior (Özkan, 2017), and because Generation Z parents are also highly enlightened, their spending potential is regarded to be spurred by their children's buying attitudes.

Additionally, the interviews indicate that Gen Z consumers are generally willing to alter their purchase behaviors in order to mitigate their negative environmental impact. When it comes to sustainable fashion consumption, they typically prioritize quality, select classic and timeless trends, and make fewer purchases (Priporas, Stylos & Fotiadis, 2017). However, for Gen Z, pricing is not the primary consideration, and a small number of consumers will purchase a product merely because it is sustainable or because of eco-friendly packaging and green ideas. And, because they are more concerned with quality and have a broader price range, this behavior frequently contributes to consumption reduction. This is partly indicative of the family's effect on buying behavior.

Generally, women are more conscious of sustainable consumerism than men (Fromm, 2018). This is consistent with previous research on other consumer groups, with consumers aged 20 and under expressing the greatest interest in sustainable consumption. According to Park & Lin (2020), the majority of consumers have purchased sustainable items on a proactive basis. At 81.5 percent, the category of home

building and decoration is the most significant to sustainable consumption, followed by food, automobiles and accessories, clothing and apparel, household items, and technology (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates, 2016). Clothing and apparel are substantially more popular among Gen Z, as consumer apparel is the sector that demands the greatest attention to Gen Z's evolving culture and aesthetics (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates, 2016).

Numerous academic studies, however, have repeatedly indicated that a large gap exists between consumers' buying decisions and awareness (Park & Lin, 2020). This is reflected in the empirical findings, which indicate that while sustainable habits are gradually forming among Generation Z, they continue to experience challenges when shopping for sustainable products, including a lack of effective sustainable product identification and a restricted selection of sustainable products, both of which have a substantial impact on Generation Z's consumption. This, however, is notably different from the problems affecting other consumers, such as excessive pricing and a lack of knowledge about where to purchase (Thilina, 2021). In addition, Gen Z consumers have more access to information about sustainable fashion than expected, and are more active in researching information than previous research has shown. Female consumers, in particular, seek information sources to obtain information about products and brands before making a purchase decision. This is also due to the increasing diversity of information channels for fashion consumption decisions, not only social media, but also interest circles, opinion leaders among young people and the popularity of short video platforms, all of which can influence Generation Z's consumption decisions (Fromm, 2018).

Consumer knowledge is another critical aspect in Generation Z's approach to sustainable consumption awareness and purchasing decisions. Consumers have the capacity to learn from the behaviors of sustainable fashion designers and from their own purchase experiences (Su & Chang, 2017). The study's findings indicate that Generation Z is already generally mindful of sustainable consumption, and if customers'

purchasing experiences in sustainable fashion are positive, this will improve their sensitivity to external stimuli that influence their purchasing behavior. Therefore, the efforts of sustainable fashion brands to develop and enhance their brand image, the appropriate selection of sustainable communication channels, the uniqueness of their sustainable products, and personality compatibility with the Gen Z consumer group all contribute significantly to their willingness to purchase (Jackson & Shaw, 2010).

#### **5.4 Consumer Response to External Stimuli: Digitalization**

The buying habits and tastes of respondents indicate that Generation Z's reliance on internet resources and their desire for digitalisation are growing. The importance they place on information and decision-making channels is remarkable, given Gen Z consumers have grown resistive to traditional marketing and promotional techniques (Jackson & Shaw, 2010). Additionally, Kaur (2014) notes that because social media is a natural way for Gen Z consumers to consume information, a focus on online marketing and the launch of effective campaigns can play a critical role in fostering communication and trust between brands and consumers. The significance of opinion leaders cannot be disregarded, as reference groups have a significant influence on purchasing behavior, particularly for Generation Z consumer group (Fromm, 2018).

Secondly, the interviewees' reports of their sustainable fashion purchasing experiences demonstrate that consumers' purchasing behavior is inextricably related to their lifestyles, and that their lifestyles and the values that underpin them are utilized to drive product purchases. Marketers should be aware that when they market sustainable products, they are also promoting a sustainable lifestyle and values, and that consumers who share these values and lifestyles are the ideal target demographic (Vecchi & Buckley, 2016). Effective communication can be accomplished via both online and offline channels, with an emphasis on digital experiences and channels of

communication with consumers and an offline emphasis on the consumer purchasing experience.

## **6. Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of Generation Z consumers towards sustainable fashion and sustainable marketing campaigns around the world.

Two research questions were derived:

**RQ1.** What are Gen Z consumers' attitudes towards purchasing sustainable fashion?

**RQ2.** How are Generation Z consumers' attitudes towards marketing activities regarding sustainable fashion?

Twelve interviews with international students who have studied and lived in various countries for an extended period of time were conducted to answer the research questions. The study drew on existing literature on consumer attitudes and their internal characteristics, as well as external marketing stimuli that influence customer attitudes. While Generation Z consumers are initially conscious of sustainable fashion, the single characteristic 'sustainability' of a product is not a key driver of their purchases, but only when combined with effective external marketing stimuli, and at the same time, the internal characteristics of the consumer come into play and respond positively to the marketing stimuli. The positive response is manifested in the creation of a purchase behaviour.

Gen Z consumers are characterized by the following distinctive features: they value the lifestyles and values associated with products; they value diversity in fashion and expect their uniqueness to be respected; they prioritize desire over pricing and brand image; and they have a preference for digital channels and digital technology.

And the interpretation in the marketing environment is represented as follows: products' design becomes significant for Gen Z customers, as only fashion designs will currently have no appeal to this generation, maintainable design should be developed so that the design stays trendy and intriguing while also providing practical and sustainable benefits.

The significance and impression of the brand on globalization and regard for multiculturalism.

The establishment of a unique brand image is pivotal, which includes creating desire in the minds of customers and making Gen Z consumers willing to pay for it. Sustainable fashion brands need to consider how to appropriately promote themselves and fabricate an autonomous brand image that will entice Gen Z customers willing to pay for the premium of reasonable products.

One crucial step is the further improvement of digital channels. For sustainable fashion brands, digital campaigns are an extraordinary way to reach out global consumers and build up powerful correspondence channels with the digitally-oriented population of Gen Z consumers.

## **7. Discussion**

### **7.1 Contributions**

Two models were employed creatively in this research to develop the conceptual framework (theoretical framework) for evaluating Generation Z consumer performance in foreign marketplaces and contextualizing it within a marketing context. In other words, this study examines the views of Generation Z customers in the context of

international marketing. The study integrates multiple relationships in order to conduct this test, thereby filling the gap in academic research in this field. In the business study, it serves as a guide for sustainable fashion businesses as they develop marketing campaign plans aimed at the global market's crucial consumer group, Generation Z.

## **7.2 Limitations**

There are a number of limitations to the current study that may have an impact on the conclusions drawn. First, the scope of this study does not include Gen Z sustainable fashion buyers from all cultures and countries, and the sample size within each culture and country is small. The inadequate sample size may have affected the validity and reliability of the study results. Second, the interview methodology may have asked respondents subjectively biased questions due to the relatively low level of reality marketing awareness of the researchers, resulting in less objective results.

## **7.3 Future Research**

Despite the best efforts of the researchers to obtain the most valuable and trustworthy results, as discussed previously, this study has some limitations. Therefore, the authors should eliminate these constraints in future studies. First, the researchers should expand the sample size to include additional countries and regions, as well as expand the sample population to include consumers in the local market, which will contribute to the study's validity and reliability. Second, the sample population should also include Generation Z consumers from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and with different economic ranges. This aims to determine whether the results of this study are also applicable to Gen Z consumers who exhibit less noticeable consumption characteristics.

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# **Appendices**

## **Appendix 1. Interview Guide**

### **Introduction**

We are two bachelor students from Jönköping University program International Management.

Thank you very much for taking the time to do this interview. The conversation in this interview will only be used for our thesis research, which is exploring Generation Z Consumers' Attitudes towards Sustainable Fashion Consumption and Marketing activities regarding sustainable fashion?

All the information will be kept anonymous.

We will start with general questions related to clothing and fashion products and gradually move to our topic - your attitudes towards sustainable fashion. You are welcome to ask questions and make suggestions at any time during the interview, and to discuss with us on the issues that interest you.

Your active participation will help us to improve the interview and get a better understanding of your views on sustainable fashion.

### **Personal Information about the respondents**

What years were you born?

What country did you study in? How long have you been studying abroad?

### **Interview Questions**

1. How often do you buy fashion products? How much do you spend on fashion purchases each month? (You may not answer if you feel uncomfortable disclosing)

2. What kind of fashion brands do you tend to be attracted to? (Reference directions: brand

reputation, brand spokesperson, brand story, international brand, brand from a specific country, brand active on social media, or others.)

**3.** Since you are still in college or have just started working, we are curious about where you usually get your money for fashion products. (You may not answer if you feel uncomfortable disclosing)

**a.** When you buy expensive products, do you make your own decisions and purchase them?

**b.** Have you ever been in a situation where you gave up on a purchase because the price was too high? Why?

**c.** Have you ever been in a situation where you insisted on buying because the price was too high? How did you resolve the conflict?

**4.** What are your main reasons for buying fashion products? (Reference directions: values, personal style, etc.)

**a.** Do you recognize the social aspect of fashion products?

**b.** Do you believe that wearing fashion products can reflect your personality and attitude to a certain extent? Can you explain how that works in your opinion?

**5.** Do you usually buy online or offline?

**a.** Where do you usually buy online? (official website, domestic e-commerce website, cross-border e-commerce website, social networking software, or other)

**b.** Where are the offline purchase channels? (brand boutiques, department stores, buying stores, or others)

**6.** Do you value the brands of fashion products? Do you have a favorite fashion brand? Can you explain why you like it?

**7.** Have you ever had an impulse purchase?

**a.** Do you regret your purchase afterwards? If you do, what do you do with the products you have purchased?

**8.** What comes up in your mind when you hear about the term “Sustainable Fashion”? Do you usually pay attention to this concept?

**9.** How do you think about sustainable fashion products?

**a.** Do you have any purchase experience? If yes, can you describe your purchase experience?

**b.** After purchasing, do you regret it? If so, what do you do with the product you purchased?

**10.** How did you first learn about the sustainable fashion brands you regularly buy? (Advertisements, social media, recommendations from friends and family, or other.)

**11.** Would you buy a product from a fashion brand you regularly buy if it was labeled with sustainable/recyclable features, but the price was higher than the average price of the brand's individual products? (The design of the sustainable product is not very different from the normal product.)

**12.** If the fashion brand you regularly buy chooses more sustainable raw materials, or suppliers, resulting in higher prices, will you still insist on buying them?

**13.** If you buy sustainable products, what factors do you value most? (use of raw materials, product design or materials, style, price, endorsers, favorite brands, ease of purchase, or other reasons.

**14.** When buying sustainable fashion products, do you consider the authenticity of the sustainable attributes of the product?

**15.** How do you think about brand marketing?

**a.** Are there any advertisements or marketing campaigns for fashion products that have made a lasting impression on you? (It can be the ad itself, the spokesperson, the novelty of the marketing approach, or others.)

**b.** In recent years, there are many campaigns about sustainable fashion marketing, have you ever paid attention to them? What is your attitude towards this? (Don't care; question; cause concern, disgust.)

**c.** Have you ever had the urge to buy something because of sustainable marketing? If so, can you describe your experience?

**16.** Would you continue to buy sustainable fashion brands that you regularly buy if they were exposed to scandal or controversy? What would you do about it?

**17.** Do you know of any sustainable fashion brands in the countries you have studied in? Have you ever bought them?

**a.** Are these brands famous in China?

**b.** Did you find any sustainable fashion brands that you liked during your study abroad? Can you briefly introduce it? Would you recommend it to others?

**c.** Did your study abroad experience have an impact on your fashion purchases?

**d.** Did your study abroad experience give you a different perspective on sustainable fashion products?

## Appendix 2 Consent Form



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY  
Jönköping International  
Business School

### GDPR Thesis Study Consent Form

#### GDPR Consent for Exploring Generation Z Consumers' Attitudes towards Sustainable Fashion and Marketing Activities regarding Sustainable Fashion

**By signing this form, you accept the following terms:**

*(Please tick the appropriate boxes)*

**Yes No**

I consent to JIBS processing my personal data in accordance with current data protection legislation and the data delivered.

I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.

I consent the whole interview process will be recorded (sound).

I consent the information provided in Participant Information Sheet.

My signature below indicates that I choose to take part in the thesis study and consent to JIBS treating my personal data in accordance with current data protection legislation and the data delivered.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant [IN CAPITALS]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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