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A Generation Z Perspective

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Abstract

Background: Increased awareness of the climate crisis leads to sustainability becoming more important to many people as the actions made today will have a large impact on future generations. Generation Z is soon to be the largest consumer group globally, where most people are interested in implementing sustainable lifestyles. Gen Z will soon hold a powerful position as fashion consumers and has the ability to drive positive changes for societies globally.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to study consumer attitudes and behaviour towards purchasing sustainable fashion products on the Swedish market. The group aimed to be studied includes people over the age of 18 in Sweden that belong to generational cohort Z.

Method: The method used for this research is exploratory, taking on an inductive approach and collecting qualitative data through 10 semi-structured interviews with people between the ages of 18-27 in Sweden. The findings from the data emerged from thematic analysis.

Conclusion: The results show that there is a genuine concern for the climate and the future of the planet among the cohort, which also has an impact on the attitude. Despite the positive attitude towards purchasing sustainable fashion products, there is an existing gap between the positive attitude and consumer behaviour. The accumulated value from factors such as price, style, and availability is often higher than the sole value of an item's sustainability factor.

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Fanny Berthem



Madeleine Mahrs

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1. Introduction

The first chapter introduces the background and problem of the study, introducing generation Z and the significance of fashion and sustainability to the cohort. This is followed by the research purpose and the two research questions aimed to be answered in the study. The chapter ends with a list of definitions.

1.1. Background

In a constantly and rapidly evolving society, digitalisation enables globalisation in many contexts and aspects of people's daily lives. Scientists along with climate activists have been increasingly successful in raising global awareness of the current human-made climate crisis that negatively affects the world; a crisis that partly is caused by overconsumption and unsustainable lifestyles (Hess, 2021). The increased awareness of the climate crisis leads to sustainability becoming more important to many people (Parzonko et al., 2021), and the societal challenge that has emerged from the climate crisis today will have a large impact on future generations.

Generations are often grouped and characterised by various factors and based on different societal challenges they are facing (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Generation Z (Gen Z) can be defined as the first global generation that was born digital and that is technology-dependent (Johnston, 2018). The cohort consists of people born between 1995 and 2010 (Ismail et al., 2021) and is soon to be the largest consumer group globally, where most people are interested in implementing sustainable lifestyles (Dabija & Bejan, 2017).

The generation, which is characterised by technology dependence and technology confidence (Johnston, 2018), has a large presence on social media platforms, where people are presenting their social identities, styles, and personalities through visual content, as well as being influenced by other people's visual content (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

Fashion is often seen as an important part of defining a person's personality, creating a social image, helping the person identify with a specific social group, as well as working as a means of self-expression (Khare, 2014). Fashion, and especially fast fashion, is a ground for debate in regard to the ongoing climate crisis. The fast-fashion apparel industry produces garments of low quality made from unsustainable materials, in low-wage countries with potentially unethical practices; the fast fashion is then offered to the mass market at a low cost

to consumers (Abrahamson, 2011; Magnuson et al., 2017). The business model, which is based on a high consumption and short product life cycle, works as a great source of revenue and profit for brands due to the idea of frequently replenishing inventory and introducing various new styles to encourage customers to buy new garments often, but it has a negative impact on the climate and environment (Long & Nasiry, 2022).

1.2. Problem

The negative impact that fast fashion has on the environment has become widely recognised among Gen Z, as the generational cohort shows strong values regarding environmental issues and a concern for the challenges that future generations and the planet will have to endure due to the consequences of their own and older generations' consumption (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). Gen Z represents the largest generation of today (Spitznagel, 2020) and the people of the cohort will soon hold a powerful position as fashion consumers and thus have the ability to drive positive changes for societies globally (Hess, 2021); therefore, it is relevant to study this generational cohort. Furthermore, the global awareness and recognition of the need for sustainable fashion among Gen Z has a large impact on decision-making and consumer behaviour (Parzonko et al., 2021). Hence, this study aims at exploring the group's attitudes and consumer behaviour in regard to sustainable fashion in the Swedish market, through the lens of planned behaviour.

Sweden as a market is relevant to study as it is often depicted as one of the world's most sustainable countries (Robeco, 2021). For example, non-profit organisation Håll Sverige Rent (n.d.) collaborates with schools, companies, and municipalities in Sweden to raise awareness about littering and fight the problem in society. In addition, Swedish children are taught about sustainability and sustainable development in school from a young age (Skolverket, 2022). Sustainability is also an important factor for higher level education in Sweden. Jönköping University (n.d.) offers the bachelor's program Sustainable Enterprise Development, which focuses on environmental and social sustainability. In addition, the university actively works with sustainability through its sustainability network (Jönköping University, 2021). According to the United Nation's Development Program (UNDP, 2021) "Agenda 2030", Sweden is one of the top countries in reaching the global objectives for sustainable development.

Naturally, there are more studies on older generations' attitudes and consumer behaviour toward sustainable fashion, for example, Gen Z's predecessor - generation Y, also known as millennials (e.g., Ivanova et al., 2019; Cesarina Mason et al., 2022; Johnstone &

Lindh, 2018). Nonetheless, existing research on the attitudes and behaviours of Gen Z is scarce and needs to be developed (Lundblad & Davies, 2016), hence a research gap of Gen Z consumers in Sweden was identified. There are no known studies on Sweden as a consumer group in this context, and the country's prominent consciousness regarding sustainability creates the possibility for an empirical study to provide valuable contributions to the field by presenting implications for marketing managers and creating opportunities for future research.

The upcoming parts will present the research purpose and research question, followed by the literature review and methodology. Next, the findings of the research will be displayed, thereafter the analysis and conclusion. Finally, the theoretical implications, managerial implications, limitations to the study, and suggestions for future research will be explained.

1.3. Research Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this research is to study consumer attitudes and behaviour towards purchasing sustainable fashion products on the Swedish market. The group aimed to be studied includes people over the age of 18 in Sweden that belong to generational cohort Z. The authors aim to explore this topic through two research questions:

RQ1: What is the attitude of generation Z towards purchasing sustainable fashion products on the Swedish market?

RQ2: How does generation Z behave towards purchasing sustainable fashion products on the Swedish market?

1.4. Definitions

This list presents definitions that are central to the research.

DEFINITIONS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ATTITUDE
“The way you feel about something or someone, or a particular feeling or opinion.”
(Cambridge University Press, n.d.a) | <input type="checkbox"/> GENERATION Z (GEN Z)
People born between years 1995 and 2010
(Ismail et al., 2021) (see p.10) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SUSTAINABLE ATTITUDE
“[...] feelings towards the issues related to environment, society, or economy.”
(Kalsoom, 2018) | <input type="checkbox"/> FASHION
“A style that is popular at a particular time, especially in clothes, hair, make-up, etc.”
(Cambridge University Press, n.d.c.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BEHAVIOUR
“The way that a person behaves in a particular situation or under particular conditions.” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.b) | <input type="checkbox"/> SUSTAINABLE FASHION
Products causing, or made in a way that causes, little or no damage to the environment and therefore are able to continue for a long time. (Cambridge University Press, n.d.d.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR
“[...] The set of actions aimed at protecting the socio-physical environment.”
(Jakubowicz et al., 2021) | <input type="checkbox"/> FAST FASHION
Short-life-cycled products with affordable prices that are based on seasonal trends
(Bruce & Daly, 2006) (see p.13) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GENERATIONAL COHORT
Categorising people into age groups, based on formative experiences like technology and socioeconomic trends (Dimock, 2019; Ismail et al., 2021) (see p.10) | <input type="checkbox"/> BRAND LOYALTY
Customers' cognitive processes of favouring a brand over another (Berkowitz et al., 1978) (see p.13) |

2. Literature Review

The second chapter establishes the background that has led to an understanding of the existing literature in the investigated subject, forming the base for the in-depth review, critique, and synthesis. Consequently, the research gap identified as generation Z on the Swedish market is presented.

2.1. Method of Constructing the Literature Review

The literature review which is the base for this research was conducted through an integrative review approach, where the authors reviewed, critiqued, and synthesised relevant literature in an integrated manner, with the purpose of creating new perspectives and frameworks for the topic (Torraco, 2016). To ensure high quality and trustworthiness in the literature review, the main body of it consists of peer-reviewed articles and academic books. The literature was obtained through the databases Jönköping University Primo, Scopus, and Web of Science. The keywords which were first used for the search of relevant literature were: “sustainable fashion”, “gen Z OR generation Z”, and “theory of planned behaviour”. When these keywords were applied alone, the search was extensive, with more than 100 000 articles found. Thus, to narrow down the number of articles in the search, additional keywords were used in combination with the previously presented ones: “consumer attitudes OR customer attitudes”, “consumer behaviour OR customer behaviour”, “Sweden OR Sverige”. Very little previous research has been made in the context of the theory of planned behaviour for Gen Z in regard to sustainable fashion products, and hence, to facilitate the creation of an integrative literature review, additional, relevant literature was obtained through peer-reviewed articles’ reference lists. This method of finding relevant articles was appropriate as the databases alone did not provide sufficient literature for the review.

As the study had an inductive, explorative approach, the literature review was developed further during the data collection process, as new concepts arose from the interview participants that were relevant to the development of theory, namely brand loyalty and second-hand apparel as a sustainable option for purchasing fashion (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

2.2. Definition of Gen Z

When speaking of Gen Z, it is not always clear who should be included in the generational cohort and who should not, as existing research is not in unison regarding which age range Gen Z belongs to. According to Priporas et al. (2020), Gen Z are defined as people born between 1995 and 2009. However, Tulgan (2013) argues that Gen Z are people born from 1990 or after, and Ismail et al. (2021) define the generational cohort as people born between 1995 and 2010. When creating a definition of the years for a generational cohort, formative experiences like technology and socioeconomic trends are considered (Dimock, 2019; Ismail et al., 2021). Segmentation by generational cohorts is helpful as it enables marketers to address relevant communication to people with homogenous values, conceptions of the world, and life experiences (Chillakuri, 2020; Riley & Klein, 2021). When defining the cohort as people born between 1996 and 2010, Gen Z accounts for 32% of the world's population and is thus the largest generation today (Spitznagel, 2020). Due to the formative experiences and digital nature of Gen Z, this research was performed by the definition of Gen Z as people born between 1995 and 2010 (Ismail et al., 2021).

Gen Z can be considered the first global generation, as they were born digital; the generation has not experienced a life without the internet and the people are technology dependent in their daily lives (Johnston, 2018). Williams (2015) characterises Gen Z as diligent, unsettled, and conscious about the future. Hess (2021) describes Gen Z as the generation that has the ability to shape politics and cultures; the generation that will make positive changes for societies globally. Parzonko et al. (2021) argue that the internet lays the foundation for Gen Z's consumer behaviour and social values, and Tulgan (2013) claims that Gen Z has high expectations and is likely to openly oppose when in disagreement. It is also considered to be the generation that will take a lead role in fighting future environmental challenges (Parzonko et al, 2021).

Gen Z is the cohort where most people are concerned with living sustainable lifestyles (Dabija & Bejan, 2017). Hess (2021) regards climate activist Greta Thunberg, born in 2003, as a prominent figure and example of the generation that to a higher degree than earlier generations is concerned about showing pro-environmental behaviour (Parzonko et al., 2021). Gen Z is the generation that in a few years will have the overall highest degree of education, compared to older cohorts (Fry & Parker, 2018). This degree of education is an enabler of the cohort's strong values regarding environmental issues that result in a prominent concern for the consequences of their own consumption, regarding the state of the planet for future

generations to come (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). The people of Gen Z have access to global knowledge due to their technical confidence and large online presence. It is the generation that is often looking for change and challenge, and the generation that can be driven by impulses (Bencsik et al., 2016; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Hess, 2021). According to Seemiller and Grace (2019), Gen Z is the generation that is driven by the will to create sustainable future societal changes and develop viable solutions to global warming; inventions that do not compromise the quality of life.

Attributes that characterise gen Z are speed and impulse, which are important aspects of their activities. According to Djafarova and Bowes (2021), 41% of consumers in the Gen Z group are impulse buyers, compared to antecedent generation Y, where 34% are impulse buyers. With their digital nature, Gen Z consumers are generally present on social media. Djafarova and Bowes (2021) claim that this generation's purchase behaviour is influenced by the content on social media platforms like Instagram, where celebrities or micro-influencers set trends and encourage impulse fashion purchases.

2.3. Fashion and Its Significance for Gen Z

Fashion is often important for young people as a tool to express themselves and their uniqueness (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Vajkai & Zsóka, 2020). Major drivers for people to consume fashion are to achieve a sense of belonging, increased self-esteem, and become accepted by peers (Belk, 1985; Richins, 1994), and hence how other people in their social surroundings perceive them becomes important (Autumn Fair, 2019, as cited in Djafarova & Fouts, 2022).

Gen Z is concerned about whether fashion is sustainable or positive from an environmental perspective. However, in the decision process, factors like price and quality are crucial and impact the purchase decision; price can even be considered the biggest barrier preventing consumers from purchasing sustainably (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). A sustainable product that has a high price is likely to be dismissed over a cheaper option by Gen Z (Guo et al., 2020). Schroth (2019) suggests that Gen Z has the intention and attitude to engage with fashion brands that are sustainable. However, while the generation shows a positive attitude towards sustainability, the behaviour is not in line with that attitude (Naderi & Van Steenburg, 2018). Sustainable products are most often more expensive, less accessible, and less appealing; thus, Gen Z is likely to perceive a higher value from low costs and accessibility compared to sustainability aspects of the product or service offered (Chen and Chai, 2010; Naderi and Van

Steenburg, 2018; Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). Djafarova and Foots (2022) argue that, in order to make sustainable fashion a top priority for Gen Z, governmental legislation needs to be implemented.

2.3.1. Sustainable Fashion

There is no industry standard for the concept of sustainable fashion, and hence the definition of it is not easily made (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). According to Heinze (2020), sustainable fashion can be described as the use of environmentally friendly materials in the process of manufacturing apparel, in combination with transparency in the supply chains. Cervellon et al. (2010) use the term eco-fashion to describe sustainable fashion. Furthermore, the authors present sustainable fashion as an umbrella term, including a number of definitions that are used interchangeably in the field of sustainable fashion, such as ethical-, organic-, green-, recycled, and re-used fashion. Clark (2008) presents sustainable fashion in terms of slow fashion, in which, in addition to producing garments in a slower manner than fast fashion, all aspects of the ecosystem are aware of the ecological impact production of garments has. In addition to incorporating the manufacturing and supply chain aspects into the term of sustainable fashion, other factors with regards to consumption should be accounted for, such as use, reuse, and disposal, as these can have a major impact on the sustainability of a fashion product (Cervellon et al., 2010).

In addition to purchasing new, sustainably produced fashion products, consumers can develop more sustainable consumption behaviours by choosing used, i.e., second-hand fashion clothes. By extending the average life of clothes by 3 months, the environmental impact from water and waste can be reduced by 10% (Wrap, 2012). According to Kim et al. (2021), consumers that choose to purchase second-hand garments do so because of the emotional value it creates, while the biggest risk consumers perceive that can refrain from purchasing second-hand items is the fear of the item being unsanitary. Furthermore, Norum and Norton (2017) claim that the younger generations are more likely to choose to purchase second-hand clothes but emphasise that purchasing used fashion is often associated with a stigma of inferiority, and can be related to having a low income. Moreover, second-hand fashion can be consumed to achieve personal economic benefits, for example by purchasing expensive, or luxury fashion for a cheaper price, as these purchases are viewed as investments (Ramkumar et al., 2021).

People purchasing fashion can experience a greater accumulated value from factors such as product features, perceived style or appearance, quality, and price, compared with the value gained solely from purchasing sustainable fashion products (Beard, 2008). Joergens

(2006) claims that consumers that perceive a sustainable clothing item's appearance or style as unappealing would withstand a purchase of sustainable fashion over an appealing fashion clothing item that is not considered sustainable. In addition, Joergens (2006) states that the price difference between sustainable fashion and not-sustainable fashion also influences the consumer's purchase decision.

2.3.2. Fast Fashion

The fast fashion industry contains short-life-cycled products with affordable prices and is based on seasonal trends. It satisfies consumers' demand for quality and style while keeping the price to a minimum and thus reduces the time from production to consumption. However, a high consumption demands a large production that will test companies' ability to use green solutions from the products' start point to the end destination, when being purchased by customers (Bruce & Daly, 2006). Consumers buying fast fashion usually have high impulse purchase decisions and are encouraged to keep garments for a short period of time (Weber et al., 2016).

Gen Z is known for believing companies should address these kinds of unsustainable issues, and companies who ignore these issues risk suffering consequences in the future (Amed et al., 2019). A Swedish study proved 21% of young adults dispose of clothing due to a lack of interest in the garments. One reason for this type of behaviour is the sensibility among Gen Z for fashion trends and symbolic consumption (Ekström & Salmonson, 2014). Piacentini and Mailer (2004) argue that consumption is devoted to creating your own self but also to expressing your social group. Younger consumers who usually are in search of these types of questions are trying to establish and find an identity or variety of identities through expressions of clothing.

The study by Vajkai and Zsóka (2020) shows that people of Gen Z use apparel to express their personality and can avoid a certain fast-fashion brand if that brand is perceived as unexceptional. Fast fashion brands are also avoided when the quality is perceived as low, although expectations decrease with the price (Vajkai & Zsóka, 2020). The biggest impact of Gen Z's fast fashion avoidance is moral reasons, which is in line with the sustainability consciousness claimed by Parzonko et al. (2021) and Dabija and Bejan (2017).

2.4. Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty, according to Berkowitz et al., (1978), is based on customers' cognitive processes of favouring a brand over another. Brand loyalty is a biased response, meaning that there must

be a systematic tendency to purchase a certain product from a group of brands. The choice is developed from the consumer's earlier experiences and past purchase decisions. Brand loyalty indicates high satisfaction levels among customers and can work as a tool for creating and maintaining sustainable competitive advantage (Rosenbaum-Elliott, et al., 2018). However, as the cost of switching from one brand to another is determined by the individual, loyalty can never be taken for granted by brands.

Strong brand loyalty may create a barrier for new brands to enter a product category on the market. To be a successful new brand, it is important to be the chosen alternative over your competitors (Rosenbaum-Elliott, et al., 2018), i.e., to offer something that can attract consumers that are loyal to other brands to consider switching, or create the urge for them to try something new. Aaker (1997) argues that, to make brand loyalty a barrier to new entry in a product category, the competitors must understand that high brand loyalty may exist not only attitudinally but also behaviourally.

(Rosenbaum-Elliott, et al., 2018) state that brand loyalty contributes to stable sales over a long period of time, and those customers that are loyal to a brand are not very price sensitive; a brand with high brand loyalty can usually change their prices, or charge higher prices, without the risk of decreasing their market share or revenue.

2.5. Theory of Planned Behaviour

Intentions are behaviours that a person plans on performing. Purchase behaviour defines the actions consumers take to buy a product or service. The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) model (Figure 1) uses earlier steps to predict and understand consumers' purchase behaviour before performing the purchasing act (Ajzen, 2002).

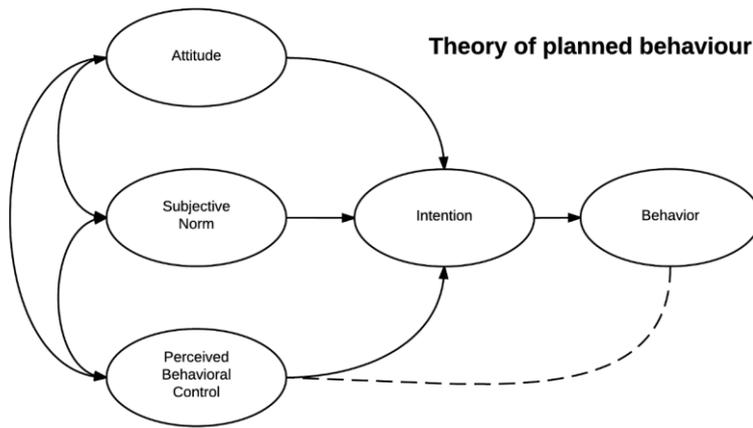


Figure 1: *Theory of Planned Behaviour*

TPB can be described as the cognitive accounting of beliefs and valuations (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB model can be divided into three components of beliefs that can control and explain future behavioural intentions. First, subjective norms are the beliefs of approval by others that are considered important to an individual or a social group. Second is attitude, which refers to positive or negative experiences of certain behaviour. Third is the perceived behavioural control, which is the impact of external factors like knowledge and ability (Ajzen, 1985). Thus, these types of valuations can influence differently towards beliefs of sustainability concepts (Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017). This model improves in explaining the concept of perceived behavioural control and when discussing sustainability and other green solutions, individuals may have strong attitudes and subjective norms towards purchasing sustainable fashion (Hwang & Ok, 2013).

The theory is favourable when analysing consumer's pro-environmental behaviours and sustainable consumption in general (Saricam & Okur, 2018). Additionally, Tikir and Lehmann (2011) underline facts such as beliefs together with certain information about specific objects. They claim that a consequence from a behaviour that is influenced by cultural and personal factors like the personality of the individual can be influential on the beliefs towards specific behaviour regarding sustainability concepts.

2.6. Synthesis of the Literature Review

Existing literature defines Gen Z as consumers driven by speed and impulse (Bencsik et al., 2016; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Hess, 2021), and the will to create societal changes for the

better, for a more sustainable future for tomorrow's generations (Seemiller and Grace, 2019). Gen Z is the largest generational cohort of today and has the power to make a difference for future generations with its global, digital nature (Spitznagel, 2020). However, despite the positive attitude towards sustainability and high morals represented by the cohort, identity and expressing individual uniqueness through apparel is an important aspect characterising the generation, through which the consumer behaviour of purchasing fast fashion is prominent (Ekström & Salmonson, 2014). Sustainable fashion is often more expensive and less accessible compared to fast fashion, and hence price and availability are factors considered crucial for the purchase decision leading to sustainable fashion consumer behaviour (Joergens, 2006). Moreover, consumers are often loyal to brands, hence the cost of switching to a sustainable brand in situations where a fast fashion brand - to which the consumer is loyal - does not offer sustainable options for apparel, can become high (Rosenbaum-Elliott, et al., 2018).

Research about consumers' attitudes and behaviour towards sustainable fashion has previously mainly been made from a quantitative perspective in relation to the theory of planned behaviour (Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017; Saricam & Okur, 2018), and hence it is relevant to also explore it through an interpretivist approach and qualitative method of data collection. Qualitative research within the field of ethical and sustainable fashion from a general perspective has been made by Lundblad and Davies (2016) and Wiederhold and Martinez (2018), but there is a gap in the research about Swedish Gen Z residents' attitudes and behaviour towards sustainable fashion that this research aims to fill.

3. Methodology

The third chapter describes the methodology used for conducting the research. In order to answer the research questions, a qualitative method with semi-structured interviews was used to obtain data. The research takes an inductive approach under the interpretative paradigm, and uses a convenience and snowball sampling method. The chapter ends with the section presenting ethical considerations taken into account for the data collection process.

3.1. Research Paradigm

The two main research paradigms used as a philosophical framework for scientific research are positivism and interpretivism (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Within a positivist paradigm, the belief is that reality is objective (Ryan, 2018), and the paradigm is often used for quantitative studies, where logical reasoning is applied, and a theory is developed through relationships between variables identified in the research (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

The research paradigm that is suitable for this study is Interpretivism. The humanist belief of interpretivism is that social reality is constructed by people's perceptions, and hence it becomes subjective instead of objective (Collis & Hussey, 2014). What is perceived as knowledge and reality for one person is highly individual, based on influences of past experiences, culture, norms, and history (Krauss, 2005; Ryan, 2018). Knowledge and understanding are subjective in the interpretivism approach, and the results of an interpretivism study will always, to some extent, be bias, as researchers inevitably affect the results through the methods of collecting, analysing, and interpreting data (Ryan, 2018). The interpretivism paradigm seeks to describe and translate, i.e., obtain an interpretive understanding through qualitative methods of analysing qualitative research data (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Due to the qualitative nature and the theoretical framework of this study, together with the aim to produce rich, subjective, qualitative data, the interpretivism paradigm allows for results with high validity (Collis & Hussey, 2014). According to Goldkuhl (2012), understanding and the appreciated interest perceived by the audience are what mainly characterise interpretive knowledge. This study aims at ensuring cognitive understanding of individual observations and the patterns found in them, and thus, a holistic, cognitive understanding can be developed that is appreciated as interesting by the audience.

3.2. Research Approach

This research is exploratory, with the purpose of gaining a subjective understanding by analysing patterns in the collected data. The study is classified as exploratory because there is little research previously conducted in the field, to which this study can refer (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

Given the exploratory, qualitative nature of the study, an inductive research approach is relevant. In the inductive research approach, researchers perform a systematic procedure including individual, qualitative observations that are analysed and translated into general patterns, i.e., a theory, model, or concept is developed from specific observations that are derived through interpretation of the qualitative data collected, and conclusions are made to the general population (Collis & Hussey, 2014; Thomas, 2006). An inductive research approach is thus relevant for this study as a framework was developed from the analysed data. Contrary to inductive research is deductive research, which involves the process of applying developed theories on the general population to draw conclusions to a specific case (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Performing a qualitative study with an inductive approach serves the possibility for replication and enables researchers to perform transparent and rigorous data analysis in future research; however, the competence and capacity of researchers to collect, analyse and interpret data will influence the data analysis (Azungah, 2018).

3.3. Research Design

3.3.1. Method of Data Collection

For this study, the qualitative, primary data was obtained through interviews, as it allowed the interviewees to describe phenomena, thoughts and feelings, which could later be interpreted and analysed (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Collis & Hussey, 2014).

Structured, unstructured, or semi-structured interviews are common methods of collecting research data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). While structured interviews are suitable for quantitative studies, unstructured and semi-structured interviews are suitable for qualitative studies under the interpretivist paradigm (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Semi-structured interviews with single individuals is the most common interview format for qualitative studies and this format was chosen for the research as it encouraged interviewee engagement that resulted in an in-depth understanding of the interviewee's attitudes and behaviour towards sustainable fashion (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The interview questions were designed based on the two research questions and the theory of planned behaviour. Most

questions asked were open-ended, which entitled the interviewees to describe their own behaviours, thoughts, and feelings, while also reducing the risk of the interviewers influencing the interviewees' responses. When closed questions were asked during the interviews, they were always followed by related, open questions, allowing the interviewee to respond with rich, in-depth answers. Furthermore, most of the questions were prepared prior to the interview, but the semi-structured format allowed for additional, unprepared questions, i.e., probes, which provided valuable information for the analysis, and made it possible to gain a deeper understanding of the issues presented by the interviewees (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Some probes used for this research were prepared in advance along with the interview guidelines, while some probes were developed during the interview, depending on the context and experienced depth of the answer previously given to the specific question. Furthermore, to ensure depth and richness in the data collected for this interpretivist study, the number of semi-structured interviews was few enough to limit the scope and provide clarity in the analysis, but many enough to allow for conclusions to be made from the findings (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The interview questions used for the data collection were formulated and structured to frame the literature and theory of planned behaviour and to provide subjective, credible data for the analysis; consequently, the questions followed the interview guide outlined by Djafarova and Fouts (2022).

In addition to the variety of terms and factors included in sustainable fashion (Cervellon et al., 2010), researchers sometimes divide the concept of sustainable fashion and ethical fashion, whereas ethical fashion goes beyond environmental sustainability and refers to apparel that are produced according to fair-trade- and human rights practices, to ensure the safety of the workers in the factories producing the clothes (Joergens, 2006). The focus for this study is on sustainable fashion as the opposite of fast fashion; however, given the exploratory and inductive nature of the research, the concept of sustainability as defined by the participants in the empirical study may vary.

3.3.2. Sample Procedure

The sample chosen to represent the population consisted of Swedish residents belonging to the generational cohort Z. The cohort includes people born between 1995-2010 (Ismail et al., 2021), but as people under the age of 18 would have required parental consent to participate in the study, the decision was made to use people born between 1995-2004, i.e., people aged 18-27, for the sample. Given the interpretivist approach where the primary data is not analysed

statistically, a non-random convenience sampling method was appropriate, where the researchers interviewed people within their own personal network (Collis & Hussey, 2014). In addition, snowball sampling was used, extending the sample to include the relevant people in the personal networks of the interviewees (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

The sample consisted of 10 interviews with the gender proportion of 6 females and 4 males (see Table 1). The criteria for the sample were people of all genders between the ages of 18 and 27 that are permanent Swedish residents and have bought apparel at one or more occasions.

Theoretical saturation was reached after the 10th interview, when no new insights were gained; as insights in the study are developed from the sample cases and not through generalisation to a population, it was not crucial to avoid bias by using a large sample (Collis and Hussey, 2014). The people included in the sample came from different educational backgrounds and had different occupations. 30% of the respondents were working full-time, 40% of the respondents were combining working with studying, and 30% of the respondents were full-time students (see Table 1).

Interviewee No.	Gender	Occupation	Place of interview	Date	Duration (minutes)
1	Male	Working	Zoom	2022-03-21	17
2	Female	Studying, working	Zoom	2022-03-21	20
3	Female	Working	Zoom	2022-03-22	18
4	Female	Studying, working	Zoom	2022-03-23	26
5	Male	Studying	Zoom	2022-03-30	18
6	Female	Studying, working	In-person	2022-03-30	26
7	Male	Studying	In-person	2022-03-30	23
8	Male	Working	Zoom	2022-04-07	18
9	Female	Studying	Zoom	2022-04-08	22
10	Female	Studying, working	In-person	2022-04-08	24

Table 1: *Sample*

3.3.3. Interviews

Prior to the first interview being conducted, a pilot interview was made, to test the relevance of the prepared questions, as well as to estimate the time needed for the interviews. After the pilot interview, changes were made to the questions based on the feedback received. The average length of the interviews was 21 minutes, and the formulation and sequence of the questions were flexible due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews. The interviews were divided into five parts: 1) Introduction, 2) About the interviewee, 3) Attitudes, 4) Behaviour, and 5) Closing of the interview.

The interview structure was designed to start with an introduction of the researchers, where the content and purpose of the study were presented together with information about privacy for the interviewee. In addition, permission was asked to record the interview. To avoid social desirability bias, which is the phenomenon of adapting private judgements depending on the most desired answer, the participants were encouraged to answer the questions based on their personal opinions and judgement, i.e., avoid giving answers that would sound morally correct but that are not true for that person, prior to asking the interview questions (Schwarz, 1999). Subsequently, classification questions, i.e., information about the characteristics of the interviewee were asked, such as age, occupation, and gender (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The following section included questions with the purpose of investigating attitudes. For example, the question “*How would you describe your attitude towards purchasing sustainable fashion products?*” was asked. This section was followed by questions aimed at exploring behaviours of the interviewees, for example, through the question “*Could you explain the importance of sustainability and how that impacts you when you are shopping for fashion?*”. The last and ending part of the interview was dedicated to thanking the interviewee for taking the time to participate, as well as opening up for any questions that the interviewee might have for the researchers. In addition, the interviewees were asked about whether there were any potential people in their network who would be suitable for the study, which would contribute to the snowball sampling (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

The majority of interviews were conducted via the online conference tool Zoom, due to the higher level of convenience experienced by the interviewers and interviewees. As there was still the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, digital meetings were considered a safe alternative to in-person meetings, as the digital interviews were conducted and recorded with video and sound. In addition, as Gen Z is a digital generation, the sample selected for the study generally feels comfortable using technology for communicating (Johnston, 2018). Eight of the

interviews were conducted in Swedish, as it is the mother tongue for those interviewees, while two interviews were conducted in English due to the interviewees originally being from other countries and preferred English over Swedish when communicating. Furthermore, a few of the interviews were conducted in person. These meetings were recorded using one of the interviewer's smartphone. Both researchers were present during all interviews; one was responsible for asking questions, and the other one took field notes and made sure that the answers given to the questions were rich and sufficiently in-depth, to allow for a proper analysis. Where needed, the person taking notes filled in with probes to further deepen the answers of the interviewee to gain a larger understanding of the matter. For example, the question *“If you wanted to purchase a sustainable fashion product, could you tell me what factors would make that difficult or easy for you?”* was followed by the probe *“are there any other barriers like accessibility, availability, product education, actual taste, etc., preventing you?”*, which was asked to the participants in cases where price was stated as a main factor hindering purchasing sustainable fashion. The interview guide containing all questions prepared for the semi-structured interviews is found in Appendix 1.

3.3.4. Method of Data Analysis

The method used for the data analysis was inductive, as the data collected were qualitative and the aim of the research was to translate the data into common patterns (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The complex, qualitative data consisted of recordings with video and sound, as well as the researchers' field notes from the 10 semi-structured interviews which were imperative to conduct the analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). The process of analysing the data was thematic, which allowed for the presentation of the data in a structured, organised matter by converting raw data into codes, themes, categories, and eventually aggregate dimensions, serving as a foundation for the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Throughout the analysis process, the raw- and processed data were revisited frequently to guarantee familiarisation (Nowell et al., 2017), as it helped determine what data was relevant and provided a deeper understanding of the data structure (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

The data analysis process started with the semi-structured interviews. During and after each interview, general and summarising field notes were taken about the interviewee and the overall feeling of the meeting, such as if the interviewee's body language and facial expression showed a genuine concern for sustainability or not, and if this was in line with - or contradictory to - what the interviewee had verbally communicated to the researchers during the interview.

For example, “*Expresses a big concern for the climate and the future of our planet*”, “*Is striving towards becoming even more aware of consumption choices.*”, and “*Tries to inspire others to make conscious, sustainable choices when shopping for fashion*”. These field notes provided an even deeper understanding of the individual data case and were helpful for the subsequent steps of the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Directly after conducting an interview, the recording was transcribed into written text, followed by the raw data being coded individually by both researchers. These codes were then compared for triangulation, to avoid researcher bias (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Codes were used for the raw data as they helped simplify it and provided a focus on important aspects of it (Nowell et al., 2017). The process of coding did not follow a pre-existing coding frame, due to the inductive, interpretivist approach, where the thematic process is signified by a data-driven analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, the transcribed text “*Most of the times it is price that prevents me from shopping sustainably because these products are usually more expensive*”, was coded into “*High price prevents sustainable behaviour*”. The transcribed text and codes were revisited frequently during the analysis process and codes were added, removed, or revised when necessary, in the process of identifying general patterns (Guest et al., 2012).

Next, after coding the transcribed text, themes were constructed by observing and comparing individual data and codes through which similarities and patterns were recognised. For example, codes that were used to construct the theme “*Lower prices and/or improved economic situation required to make sustainable fashion consumption top priority*” were “*Price determinant for prioritising sustainable fashion*”, “*sustainable fashion being the only option/ lower prices*”, and “*lower prices required*”.

Following the identification of themes from the coded transcribed interviews, categories were created by clustering the themes further, based on common characteristics (Collis & Hussey, 2014). For example, the two themes “*Lower prices and/or improved economic situation required to make sustainable fashion consumption top priority*” and “*High prices and lack of time and knowledge hindering sustainable attitudes from becoming sustainable purchases*” both displayed obstacles to performing sustainable behaviours in purchasing fashion; these two themes were narrowed down to the category “*Obstacles for sustainable purchasing decisions*”, as presented in Figure 2.

The categories were then further narrowed down and aggregated into dimensions. The data collected through the semi-structured interviews were coded, grouped into common themes and categories, and finally aggregated into dimensions to create a data structure for the

study (Nowell et al., 2017). For example, the two categories “*Unison climate concern*” and “*Obstacles for sustainable purchasing decisions*” were aggregated into the dimension “*Positive attitude but conflicting behaviour*”, as presented in Figure 2. The aggregate dimensions were used as the theoretical framework and were analysed to ensure that it was linked to both the literature review (Collis & Hussey, 2014) and the two research questions presented in section 1.3.

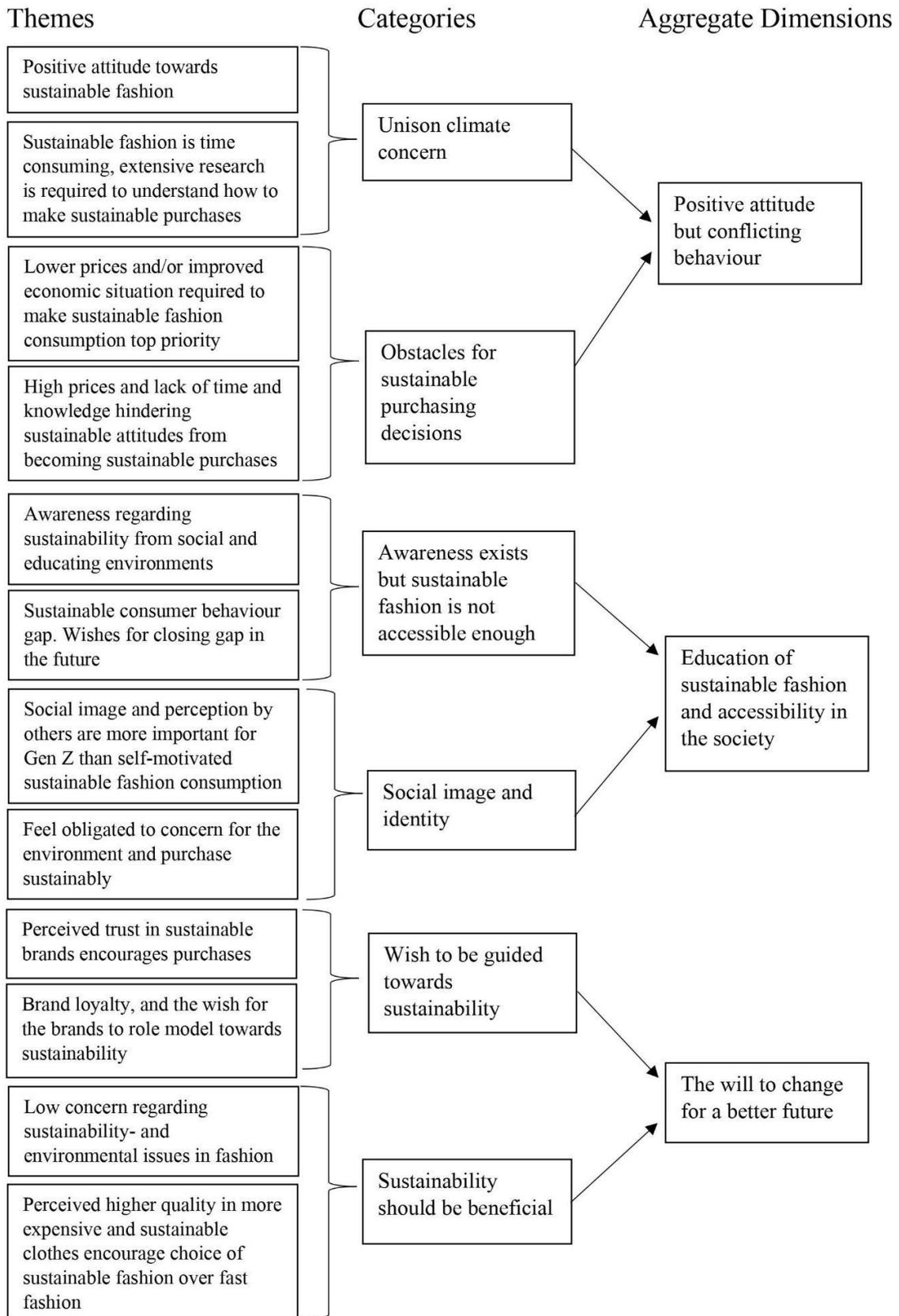


Figure 2: Themes, categories, and aggregate dimensions of data collection

3.3.4.1. Investigator Triangulation

When conducting research under an inductive approach and collecting qualitative empirical data, researchers unintentionally bring their own values into the research process. Thus, triangulation was applied in this study's data collection to minimise the risk of investigator biases (Azungah, 2018). This was done after the transcription process by the researchers, who individually analysed the gathered material and independently developed an understanding about it (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Later on, the individually analysed data was compared between the researchers, similarities and differences were discussed and the data was revisited, so similar conclusions could be made.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the interviews, all participants were informed about the confidentiality of the study and the possibility to withdraw at any time without the need to state a reason. This study assured total anonymity regarding names and statements made by the interviewees. In addition, before the first interview question was asked, permission to record was asked to the interviewee, for facilitation of the transcription process subsequent to the interviews.

3.4.1. Credibility

In order to establish trustworthiness, one of the key criteria is to ensure that the study measures or tests that the findings are true to reality. Credibility focuses on the research of the paper and how well the data is addressed (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative content analysis is often applied to verbal data such as interview transcripts, meaning that the researcher could use either descriptive or semi-structured questions (Schreier, 2012). To ensure credibility, twenty-five questions were formed and asked to ten different participants, generating approximately four hours of material. By taking both genders into the research, it gives the outcome a wider viewpoint and strengthens trustworthiness. In addition, several similar questions occurred during the interviews with the goal of strengthening the interviewees' responses (Collis & Hussey, 2014). For example: *“Could you explain the importance of sustainability and how that impacts you when you are shopping for fashion?”* and *“If you wanted to purchase a sustainable fashion product, could you tell me what factors would make that difficult or easy for you?”* Furthermore, all participants were selected within the age gap of Gen Z which also is the observation group of this thesis.

To avoid researcher bias, the interviews were carried out with carefulness to ensure that the researchers did not steer the interviewees' answers (Yin, 1994).

3.4.2. Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability focuses on the generalisation of the study and how it can be applied to similar contexts. The research needs to be structured and documented sufficiently, to allow for comparison. In order to succeed, the sample, data collection, and findings have to be explicitly described in a structured manner. This was achieved by, for example, explaining the context in which the study was conducted, creating a guideline for the interviews, and describing each step in the process from the collected raw data to the end-result material. The researchers have taken all steps into consideration when conducting all the data, making an effort to not dismiss any important information that may affect the study. To find out the level of transferability of this study, it is up to future researchers to transfer the findings into other contexts (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

3.4.3. Dependability

Dependability makes room for future studies that follow the same structure or overlook the data that will result in similar findings and conclusions. This means that the study should be explained in detail so future research can repeat it (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Here, the authors provide the research study with detailed information, so the chances of mistakes and flaws are minimal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, both authors analysed and categorised the data individually before comparing and discussing the outcome. The structure of the paper was ensured by precise, detailed documents and notes throughout the entire work.

3.4.4. Conformability

Conformability refers to the objectivity of the research during the collection and the analysing of the collected data. Therefore, conformability proves that the findings and analysis are based on, and shaped by, the data collected from the participants during the semi-structured interviews and not influenced by the researchers (Collis & Hussey, 2014). To ensure reliability and trustworthiness in this research, the authors have used audit trails to facilitate the transcription process and analysed the collected data by addressing them with codes that later have emerged to themes, categories and finally aggregate dimensions. Furthermore, the

research process has been described thoroughly and relevant findings have been presented to allow the reader to assess that they are derived from the primary data (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

4. Findings

The fourth chapter describes the findings from the data collected and presents insights from the identified categories and aggregated dimensions, which are displayed through interview quotes to further enhance credibility. The aggregated dimensions are 'Positive attitude but conflicting behaviour', 'Education of sustainable fashion and accessibility in the society', and 'The will to change for a better future'.

4.1. Positive Attitude but Conflicting Behaviour

When discussing sustainability choices and purchasing behaviours among Gen Z, it is clear that there exists a *positive attitude but conflicting behaviour*. The interviewees state that sustainability is an important subject and especially what we leave behind for future generations and for the sake of the planet. Moreover, a common positive attitude towards sustainable fashion was presented, but effort, time, and price were a few of multiple factors that limited suitable purchase behaviour to become frequent. Therefore, the dimension was identified from the two categories: *Unison climate concern* and *Obstacles for sustainable purchasing decisions*. (Figure 3).

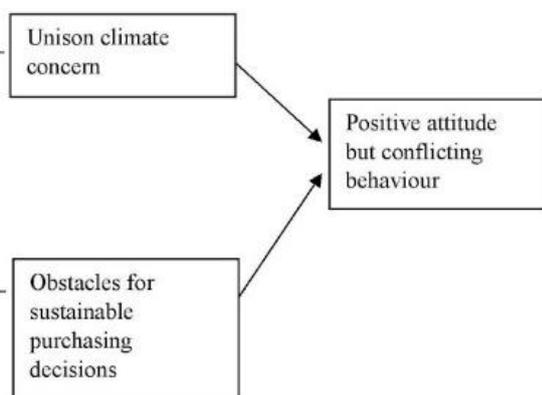


Figure 3: Positive attitude but conflicting behaviour

4.1.1. Unison Climate Concern

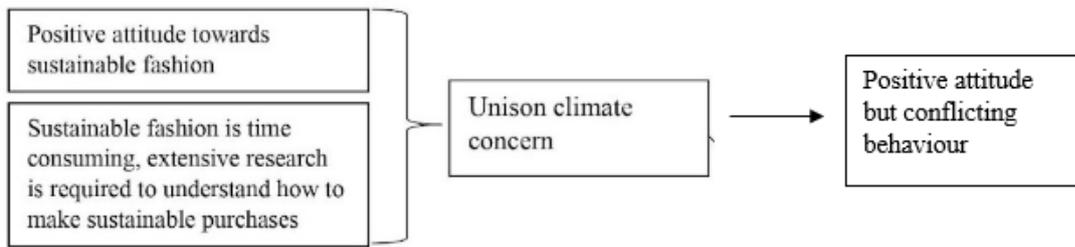


Figure 4: *Unison climate concern*

The first category is *Unison climate concern*, which consists of repeated answers from the interviewees of a positive attitude towards sustainable fashion and an expression that sustainable fashion is time-consuming; extensive research is required to understand how to make sustainable purchases. Also expressed was the concern regarding the pressure on the climate when supporting fast fashion companies. See example:

“My attitude is positive. I think, in the first place, products should not even be made to not meet the sustainability standards. if everything is produced in accordance with sustainability standards, you don’t need to have an attitude. you just buy and don’t think about those negative aspects. It is good to avoid supporting bad companies that are bad for the climate.” – Interviewee 8.

“I think about sustainability more than ever. It depends on the situation. If I need it quickly, I go to fast fashion brands or similar stores, but if I have time and resources, I think about it more and I go to second-hand for example. But it depends on the situation.”

– Interviewee 2

These types of actions and similar answers were repeatedly mentioned by all participants who shared a common interest and awareness about sustainable choices and the complexity of the temptation for fast fashion. The following quotes explain this notion:

“It needs to go quickly. I do not have the time or energy to buy sustainably. [...] Everyday outfits need to be accessible, and companies should be better with their marketing about sustainable clothing to make me choose it over the normal assortment.” – Interviewee

Participants also mentioned that to make them choose sustainable options it needs to be as easy as when shopping for fast-fashion alternatives. The green choices need to compete with the non-green so that the benefit is weighted in the favour of environmentally friendly purchasing behaviour. A lack of knowledge of what type of sustainable choices exist was discovered among some of the participants and is presented in this quotation:

“I do not know what options for sustainability exist. I shopped second hand a few times and maybe some garments which are made from 100 percent recycled material, but in general, I do not know.” – Interviewee 4

4.1.2. Obstacle for Sustainable Purchasing Decisions

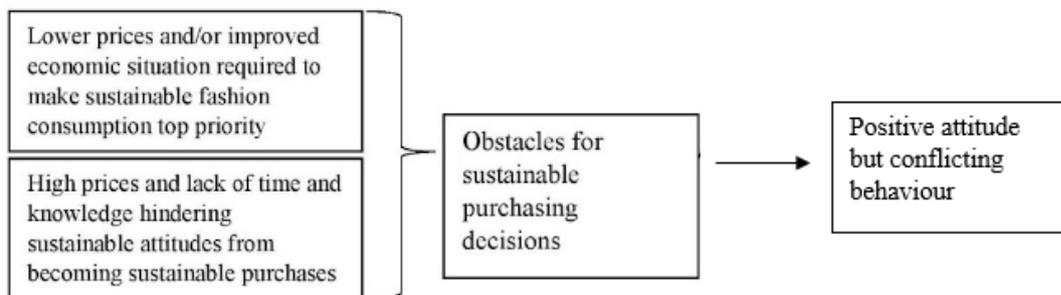


Figure 5: Obstacle for sustainable purchasing decisions

The second category for the aggregate dimension **Positive attitude but conflicting behaviour** is the *Obstacle for sustainable purchasing decisions*, which means obstacles and factors hindering sustainable consumer behaviour. It is stated that the majority of participants feel that sustainable options tend to be sold for much higher prices, that sustainable options are less accessible, and that they, therefore, need to take fast-fashion alternatives to be able to save money and time, as explained in an interview:

“Higher accessibility and lower prices would make it easier. What I see now, there is still not such an availability of sustainable fashion products, so if the availability and offers would expand, it would be easier. Now it’s more difficult to purchase sustainable stuff and it is more expensive.” – Interviewee 1

And also:

“[...] Price is important. It would cost more if it is produced in a sustainable way. My taste is important as well - it could be a product that is produced in a sustainable manner, but I do not like how it looks - that is also a factor impacting if I buy it or not. If you do not think about these things, you would just purchase it without thinking. Now the process is longer and more difficult [...]” – Interviewee 10

Not only was price, according to the participants, the main factor. During the collection of data, it was explained that knowledge and interest play a big role as well:

“What stops me from buying sustainable fashion is my knowledge and the time for me to find sustainable clothing and do the research. I do not have much interest in general when it comes to fashion, I just want clothes quickly when I need them. I cannot see the difference between fast fashion and sustainable fashion.” – Interviewee 4

Moreover, the participants stated concerns regarding feeling that they cannot make a difference. Individual actions, like buying sustainable products, do not seem to convince the participants that it will result in helping to minimise the general environmental problems because it has such a small effect on the bigger problem as a whole. This means that the motivation and interest levels remain low due to the actions that do not feel appreciated:

“It is not a conscious feeling of obligation to purchase sustainable fashion. I have certainly bought t-shirts made from recycled material, but because I liked the t-shirt, not because I feel obligated to choose a sustainable option. It feels like it does not matter because everybody is still buying fast fashion” – Interviewee 1

“yes, I would like to purchase more sustainably but right now I do not have the energy to invest in change” – Interviewee 7

4.2. Education of Sustainable Fashion and Accessibility in the Society

As presented in Figure 6, the aggregate dimension of **Education of sustainable fashion and accessibility** is constructed from the two categories *Awareness exists but is not accessible enough* and *Social image and identity*.

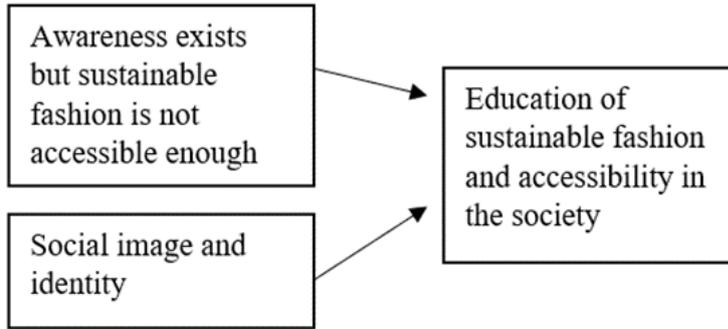


Figure 6: *Education of sustainable fashion and accessibility in the society*

4.2.1. Awareness Exists but Sustainable Fashion is Not Accessible Enough

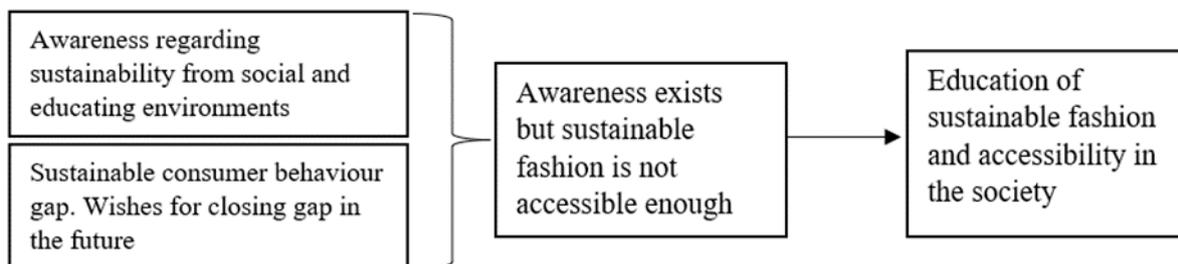


Figure 7: *Awareness exists, but sustainable fashion is not accessible enough*

The category **Awareness exists but sustainable fashion is not accessible enough** (Figure 7) emerged after the themes *Awareness regarding sustainability from social and educating environments* and *Sustainable consumer behaviour gap. Wishes for closing gap in the future* were identified.

The common answer from all participants in the interviews when asked about whether they were conscious about sustainability and how that consciousness was developed, was that awareness regarding sustainability exists. This awareness has emerged from social and cultural contexts such as family, friends, and from social media, as well as from educational institutions where sustainability has been part of the curriculum, as presented in three of the interviews:

“I have an awareness about sustainability, and specifically within the fashion industry. My awareness was created mostly from social media and from companies spreading sustainability messages there.” – Interviewee 4

“I have become more sustainability conscious since I moved to Sweden due to all my exposure to sustainability matters, at uni and outside of uni. The culture in Sweden gave me these attitudes.” – Interviewee 6

“I would consider myself conscious about sustainability. I would say that it developed from my peers, friends and family and of course social media. From the general attitude of people and change in behaviour that something should be improved and done differently.”
– Interviewee 7

Although all participants showed a clear consciousness regarding sustainability, the theme among them displayed a gap between the concern about and attitude towards sustainable fashion and how the group consumes today, often due to economy and a low level of knowledge perceived by the individuals; they do not know how to make fully sustainable choices. As presented in the interviews:

“If I had more knowledge and more education, I would buy more sustainably. Money is also a factor.” – Interviewee 1

“Of course, I wish that I purchased more sustainably and did something good for the environment. The reason for not doing it is lack of knowledge, and not taking the time to look up if a clothing item is sustainable or not before buying it”. – Interviewee 3

“I wish that I would get more knowledge and a bigger interest for sustainability and how things actually work, and also take the time to purchase second hand instead of new clothes; look at Tradera more and purchase more from there.” – Interviewee 4

In addition to stating economy as a reason for not purchasing sustainable fashion and low levels of knowledge about what is sustainable and what is not, the lack of individual drive was found as a reason for the attitude-behaviour gap:

“[...] I believe I have a long way to go. I do not even know if I am making that big of an effort to become more conscious about my choices, I take the easiest route for me, which is buying second-hand clothes. For others that might be more difficult, but I have done it for a long time, so I do not see any obstacles.

“[...] it is too much of an effort to read product descriptions and try to make the most sustainable choice.” – Interviewee 9

“I would like to purchase more sustainably, but right now I do not have the energy to invest in change.” – Interviewee 7

“I would like to purchase more sustainable fashion, but the money or laziness takes over. I don’t have the motivation to buy sustainably when at the store.” – Interviewee 3

Brand loyalty is also an evident factor when making a purchasing decision. One interviewee stated that the change towards sustainable fashion needs to be made by the stores:

“The store that I buy from today is not as sustainable as I would like. You would want all clothes you buy to be made from 100% recycled material, produced closer to home and in more sustainable ways and get a more sustainable cycle. The issue is that the brand does not offer clothes at that level where I would like to be. When Dressman becomes more sustainable, I will join them!” – Interviewee 8

The consciousness regarding sustainability is evident within the sample, as well as the gap between attitude and behaviour. For the gap to close and the behaviour to become more sustainable, it needs to become easier to make sustainable choices, without having to put as much effort into researching brands and with no risk of being exposed to greenwashing:

“Organic cotton is great, but there are plenty of aspects that make another material even better. There is so much I do not know that makes it feel useless to hunt for the best, most sustainable option. [...] companies can pay for certifications showing that they are sustainable, while another company that is equally sustainable is not certified the same way just because they have not paid for it.” – Interviewee 9

4.2.2. Social Image and Identity

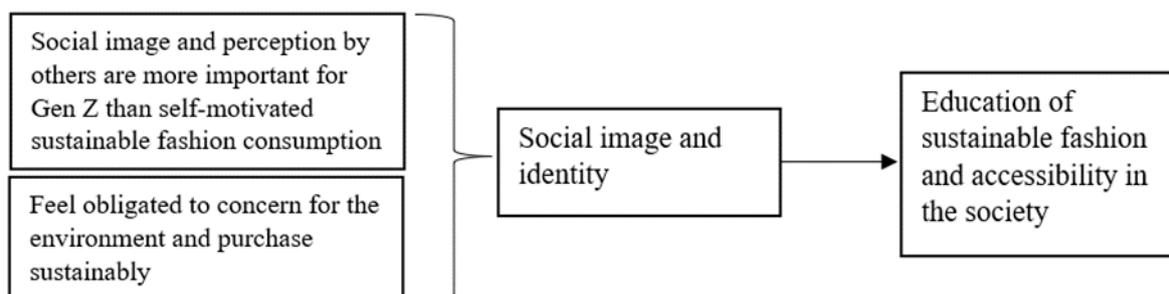


Figure 8: Social image and identity

The category **Social image and identity** (Figure 8) emerged after the two themes *Social image and perception by others are more important for Gen Z than self-motivated sustainable fashion consumption* and *Feel obligated to concern for the environment and purchase sustainably* were identified.

Social image and what others might think of them is an evident contributor to how many people dress and purchase clothes within Gen Z. Social media is a source for inspiration and can influence purchase behaviour, as stated in interviews:

“Yes, absolutely, to a large extent I would say. Of course, I like clothes and fashion on my own, but a lot of times I get influenced by social media and trends shaping an image of what is a trendy look.” – Interviewee 4

“I would say I care about what others think. If someone sees a product that I am wearing that is from Shein, I would be embarrassed of what people would think or say.” – Interviewee 6

“You would like to be perceived as you care for the environment, but unfortunately there’s not enough energy for that. My surroundings are not judgmental.” – Interviewee 10

Interviewee 8 explained about a pressure to buy second-hand based on social image and fitting into a group of people, while Interviewee 9 states that social image indeed has an impact on people and on her, but that her drive to buy sustainable clothes from second-hand does not come from that social image:

“[...] it is a big deal, who you hang out with. You may have some sort of second-hand clothing item or something like that.” – Interviewee 8

“I can imagine that it makes a difference, but I would not say that my social image is what makes me choose to buy second-hand.” – Interviewee 9

While external pressure from social image impacts consumer behaviour for most participants, self-identity was not as highly expressed by the participants as a driver towards purchasing more sustainable fashion:

“I would not say that my self-identity is motivating me to buy sustainable fashion.”
– Interviewee 2

“Ehm [sigh], no I do not think that self-identity is making me shop sustainably.”

– Interviewee 3

“I would not say today that I push myself to buy sustainable fashion or question myself about why I do not.” – Interviewee 8

Two interviewees express a wish to have sustainable fashion consumer behaviour as part of their self-identity, but state that it is not evident today:

“I would like to view myself as conscious about it, but at the same time I have not reached a point where I only buy sustainable fashion [...] I think our generation is expected to take responsibility just because we have all the facts presented to us.” – Interviewee 4

“I want sustainable purchasing behaviour to be part of my self-identity, but it is not like I have reached that point that I do it. I am lazy. I shop a lot online and do not look up if it is sustainable then.” – Interviewee 5

Furthermore, two participants presented sustainability as part of their self-identity:

“I care about sustainability, and I think it is good and I think we should be more conscious about it and in the future, we might be in huge trouble if we don't care now. If I start myself, I can affect people around me and it is always good if people are aware about it.”

– Interviewee 7

“Since we live in a world where we consume, I believe that sustainability is something you need to think about. I think you should take responsibility for yourself and do your best, and I want to be that kind of person.” – Interviewee 9

The scatteredness among the findings concerning self-identity together with the evident external pressure from social image, can be related to the feeling of obligation towards- and expected responsibility of concerning for the environment; however, the opinion regarding perceived obligation which influences a sustainable consumer behaviour towards purchasing fashion is split, as presented in the interviews:

“It is not a conscious feeling of obligation to purchase sustainable fashion. I have certainly bought t-shirts made from recycled material, but because I liked the t-shirt, not because I feel obligated to choose a sustainable option.” – Interviewee 1

“[...] It does not affect my consumer behaviour. I have the feeling in the back of my head, but I do not act upon it.” – Interviewee 2

“I do not have any obligations, it’s my will to purchase things. it might change in the future.” – Interviewee 7

“Yeah I would say that I feel obligated to be concerned for the climate and not buy fast fashion. You are very aware of what affects the environment and should really become better at purchasing sustainably.” – Interviewee 10

In addition, there is a sense of obligation towards purchasing sustainably, but the fashion companies should show leadership in the field rather than the customers; the market for sustainably produced apparel today is very limited, as stated in one interview:

“Of course, I feel that in general it is good to be as sustainable as possible, but when it comes to fashion it feels like the market of sustainable products is way too small. Not even the market has invested properly in it and that makes me feel like I should not have to contribute myself.” – Interviewee 8

The findings show that the cohort does feel pressured to be concerned for the climate and that how they purchase fashion is often based on social image. Furthermore, it is believed that a sustainable consumer behaviour should not only come from the individual consumers, rather it needs to be implemented on a higher level by the companies on the market and in the society, to facilitate the sustainable consumer behaviour. It is easier to find fast fashion options in the stores than sustainable ones, and the responsibility that lies on the individual to research what is sustainable and what is not, and understand what is the most sustainable option today, is heavy, which makes it easier to choose what is less sustainable.

4.3. The Will to Change for a Better Future

Throughout the interviews, it was confirmed that the aggregated dimension of **The will to change for a better future** is one important aspect, and behaviours, according to the participants, are performed as acts of guilt because of the feeling that they need to leave something good behind for a better future. Two categories were discovered: *Wish to be guided towards sustainability*, *Sustainability should be beneficial*. See figure 9.

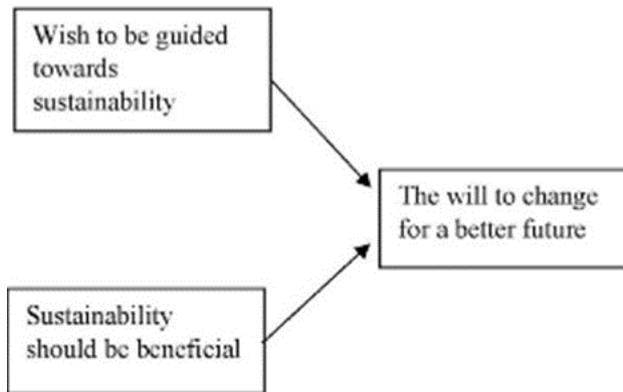


Figure 9: *The will to change for a better future*

4.3.1. Wish to Be Guided Towards Sustainability

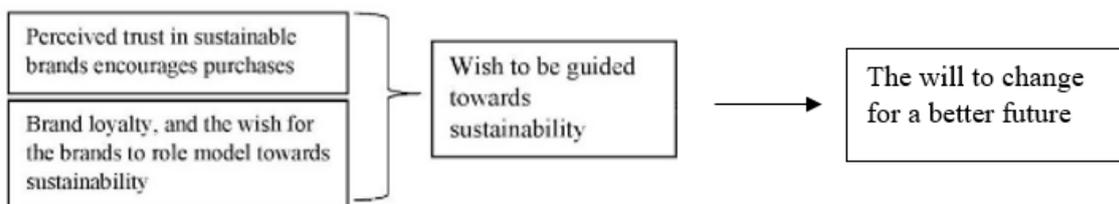


Figure 10: *Wish to be guided towards sustainability*

Wish to be guided towards sustainability (Figure 10) involves the interviewees' expression of how to maintain sustainability in their fashion consumption and the support needed to turn this into a conscious, repetitive behaviour. Moreover, the participants indicate that the lack of support and information regarding sustainability options are motivators to choose fast fashion instead. These concerns can be explained in the following quotes:

“I would say in general that sustainability products need more promotion and advertisements so I can get exposed to that, whether it is on social media or outside, like any exposure would be beneficial, just like promoting ‘buy this, this is sustainable and made in a good way, no one was harmed in the making.’ [...] Also, like surrounding myself with people that are really into sustainability.” – Interviewee 8

The participants showed different expressions of brand loyalty and its impact on their purchase behaviour. Especially when it comes to brands that claim to be sustainable and how much belief the participants have in this type of promotion. The following quotes express concerns regarding this issue:

“I kind of have to. if they make a claim they announce publicly, we have to trust what they say. Otherwise, they are lying. If they want us to trust them, they must trust themselves. the higher the trust, the more likely I am to purchase [...]” – Interviewee 3

“No, I do not trust them, due to my own knowledge. I have been well informed about greenwashing and therefore do not trust fast fashion brands to be completely honest in their marketing.” – Interviewee 1

Moreover, some of the participants expressed positive attitudes regarding the fast-fashion brand’s sustainable collections in the following way:

“When I choose to buy from a fast-fashion brand I choose to buy from its sustainable collection. I think it is good that companies can offer these types of alternatives so you as a customer can decide how involved you want to be [...]” – Interviewee 7

4.3.2. Sustainability Should be Beneficial

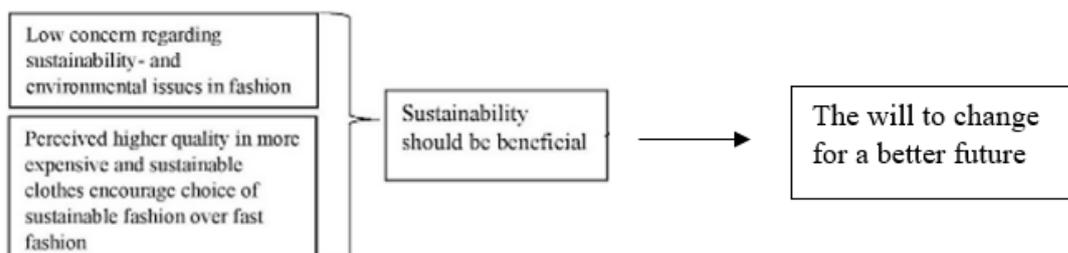


Figure 11: *Sustainability should be beneficial*

Next category *Sustainability should be beneficial* (Figure 11) contains the interviewees' attitudes and hopes for some kind of benefit of choosing sustainable fashion over fast fashion. This can involve selling sustainable apparel for cheaper prices or limiting fast fashion options. The participants stated several reasons why high price and low supply of sustainable fashion affect their purchase action and therefore, highlight that sustainability should generate some type of beneficial outcome in order for them to buy it. Furthermore, some participants confirmed this in the quotes below, when asked about the motivation towards purchasing sustainable fashion:

“Benefits of some kind. You need to earn from it, otherwise, you will just go with the cheaper alternative if your income is low. Or some kind of regulation from the government.”

– Interviewee 4

“It is probably better quality in the sustainable clothes and if you think about investing long-term, the chance is that the sustainable clothes will last for much longer than fast fashion, so you can say that in the long-run you will save money by buying sustainable because then you do not need to buy as frequently.” – Interviewee 6

This motivation was further presented by the participants when explaining the important aspects of creating awareness and interest in sustainability. The participants do not express a big enough concern to change their consumer behaviour to purchasing fully sustainable fashion. In addition, it is argued that doing research on fast-fashion brands is too time-consuming and that it should become easier to gain knowledge about sustainable options, for consumers to change their behaviour. The following quotes explain this notion:

“[...] I understand fast fashion is a big problem, but at the same time it is a bit contradictory because I still shop a lot of fast fashion. I would say that I am worried but not on a level where I would change my purchase behaviour” – Interviewee 2

“My knowledge is stopping me; I do not know how to look for sustainable options so it is just easier to pick fast fashion. Also, I do not have the time or energy to research what is sustainable or not. I do not know how to search for sustainable clothes.” – Interviewee 10

On the other hand, some of the participants revealed big concerns. See following quote:

“Well as I said the importance is growing more every day, the world is changing also, and we need to protect it at all costs and do everything possible to not harm our future. So yes, there is a growing need to be aware and to be sustainability conscious. I research every store before going, or at least I try to. I know their background or history and reduce the times I purchase clothes.” – Interviewee 5

The participants also pointed out that trends impact how often they purchase new clothes and the issue of keeping up with the latest trends and at the same time being sustainable. Sustainable fashion is more expensive compared to fast fashion. Hence, the participants are split, as they express concern for sustainability, while also wanting to keep up with trends. They highlight that if sustainable options are to be a priority, it needs to become more beneficial. Moreover, the struggle of wanting to buy clothes frequently or buy sustainable clothes that usually contain better quality and last longer and still keep up with the trends is challenging. See quote:

” [...]. Of course, I like clothes and fashion on my own, but a lot of times I get influenced by social media and trends shaping an image of what is a trendy look.”
– Interviewee 4

“Except for the price, new trends are important because I want to follow the latest trends and unfortunately trends have a start and end time so you will end up with clothes that you do not use anymore.” – Interviewee 3

In addition, see the following quote:

“It is for sure better quality in the sustainable items compared to the fast fashion, and it is more beneficial to spend your money on items that will last for several seasons than constantly buying garments that get worn out after one season or less.” – Interviewee 5

4.4. Synthesis of the Findings

The three aggregate dimensions that were identified from the collected data were developed because the participants demonstrated a unison climate concern, but also an unwillingness to make personal sacrifices and purchase sustainable fashion. In addition, there is a need for higher accessibility of sustainable fashion and a wish for education that works as guidelines for sustainable fashion purchases. Lastly, the respondents show brand loyalty and the belief that

companies should take a bigger responsibility of further integrating sustainable fashion on the market, while also demonstrating a wish to change to more sustainable consumer behaviour in the future, for the sake of the planet.

5. Analysis

The fifth chapter consists of the analysis of the findings from the empirical data collected and presents the framework of sustainable choices.

5.1. Positive Attitude but Conflicting Behaviour

Positive attitude but conflicting behaviour is the first aggregated dimension presented in this research and it is influencing the other two dimensions *Education of sustainable fashion and accessibility in the society*, and *The will to change for a better future*. The reason for this influence is the participants' mindsets and values regarding sustainable possibilities and green solutions. Overall, the attitudes are positive toward environmental-friendly concepts, but sustainable behaviour gets limited due to lack of knowledge and several factors that restrain the possibilities to purchase sustainable. The participants express high interest but low efforts in making these actions occur. Existing literature has explained how fast fashion generally is being bought by consumers with high impulse decisions, who tend to switch out garments frequently and who are controlled by trends (Weber et al., 2016; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). So, to apply the theory of planned behaviour, the green options need to be prioritised among the consumers and thus make the impulse decisions become planned decisions on sustainable alternatives. Furthermore, the participants highlight the limited alternatives for sustainable options and therefore fall for other alternatives like fast fashion that offer a wider range of collections. The literature states that Gen Z values companies that prioritise sustainable questions and can avoid fast fashion brands if the brand is unconcerned regarding sustainability (Vajkai & Zsóka, 2020). This type of statement fits the participants' attitudes towards negative feelings regarding brands that do not consider sustainability as an important matter, but other factors negatively impact the interviewees' intentions to consume only sustainable fashion over fast fashion.

To further explain what type of factors that influence the purchase process, the outcome is divided into two categories. Firstly, is the Unison climate concern, where the participants share a common worry for climate and for supporting fast fashion companies that are damaging to the climate when producing their products. Secondly is Obstacle for sustainable purchasing decisions where obstacles like price, time, and effort are some of the main factors for the continued purchase of fast fashion. Sustainable garments tend to be sold for higher prices than

clothes from fast fashion brands, meaning that the purchase decision can be dependent on income (Guo et al., 2020). Also, the effort is more time-consuming to find sustainable options and more limited due to fast fashion having larger demand among the stores when shopping. Therefore, the participants are split on what actions are needed to be taken in order to be completely sustainable.

5.2. Education of Sustainable Fashion and Accessibility in the Society

The high degree of education within Gen Z (Fry & Parker, 2018) and a focus on implementing sustainability in the Swedish school environment have aided the creation of general awareness regarding sustainability and have resulted in raised concerns for the future health of the planet among the cohort in Sweden. The degree of education has enabled the cohort to develop strong values regarding environmental issues, such as fast fashion (Fry & Parker, 2018), which is also evident from the findings, where the main sources for the developed awareness are social surroundings such as schools, friends, family, and social media.

Despite the strong values and consciousness regarding sustainability being expressed by the participants and confirmed by existing literature (Williams, 2015; Parzonko et al., 2021; Fry & Parker, 2018), there is a gap between the values and concerns resulting in the positive attitudes towards purchasing sustainable fashion, and the less sustainable ways that Gen Z consumers behave when purchasing fashion. The cohort consists of people born between 1995 and 2010 (Ismail et al., 2021), i.e. between the age of 12 to 27, although this research included young adults; people between the age of 18 and 27. The reasons for the gap that were discovered from the findings were the perception of having low income, which contributes to price sensitivity, and the union opinion among participants that sustainable fashion is too expensive. In situations where the consumer is choosing between two similar alternatives of fashion apparel, where one alternative is sustainable but costs more than the second alternative which is a cheaper fast fashion item, the majority of Gen Z choose the cheaper, less sustainable alternative. This behaviour is in line with previous research claiming that, as sustainable products are often more expensive, Gen Z is likely to perceive a higher value from low costs and thus dismiss a sustainable product that has a high price for a cheaper, less sustainable option (Guo et al., 2020; Chen & Chai, 2010; Naderi & Van Steenburg, 2018; Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018; Joergens, 2006), and that the accumulated value from

factors like price, product features, and style, is likely to be greater than solely the value from purchasing sustainably (Beard, 2008).

Price was not the only identified reason for the attitude-behaviour gap; knowledge was also a stated cause among the participants. The impact of external factors, such as knowledge and ability affect the perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1985). The general knowledge within the field of sustainable fashion is perceived as low, which was presented by all participants. Gen Z is characterised by unsettledness (Williams, 2015), speed, and impulse (Djafarova and Bowes, 2021) and people do not feel as though they are educated enough to make fully sustainable choices. In addition, there is not a will to do research on which brand, material, or fashion item is the most sustainable, but the cohort rather believes that the brands and stores they purchase from should provide better information, in order for them to become confident that the choices they make when purchasing fashion items are fully sustainable. The speed and impulse can also be related to the lack of individual drive displayed by the participants, as there is little will to make a personal effort in becoming more knowledgeable about sustainable fashion, as well as spending time looking for sustainable options in stores and online. The cohort believes that the attitude-behaviour gap could become smaller should the companies provide better facilitation of sustainable options by making them more available, and should the brands make it easier to understand which choice of fashion items is the most sustainable one. The high brand loyalty displayed in the findings further suggests that the brands and stores should take a leading role in turning consumers' positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion into sustainable consumer behaviour.

Fashion is a way for people to develop and express their identity and uniqueness (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Vajkai & Zsóka, 2020), and is also often used to adhere to a social image and fit in with social groups to ultimately become accepted in the society (Belk, 1985; Richins, 1994). Social image is influenced by fashion trends and symbolic consumption, which Gen Z has shown to be sensible towards (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). This was shown in the findings, as participants claimed that how they view, and purchase fashion is often impacted by their social image and influenced by trends from social media and/or the opinion of friends or social groups. What others might think of them has a big role in how they purchase fashion, which is confirmed by literature (Djafarova & Foots, 2022). In addition, while some people feel pressured to follow trends and choose fast fashion to keep up with the set trends, others feel pressured to express a concern for the climate through their consumer behaviour, by choosing to buy second hand because it is considered socially admirable among their peers. Hence, the opinion of others and the desire to fit in exceeds the self-identity as a driver for self-

motivated consumer behaviour, both in regards to purchasing fast fashion and sustainable fashion. The social image and its impact on consumer behaviour is further acknowledged by Ajzen (1985), who described subjective norms as the beliefs of approval by others and claims their importance for an individual or a social group in the purchasing process.

Social image has a great impact on Gen Z, but self-identity as a factor for sustainable consumer behaviour is not shown to be as prominent among the interviewees. While moral reasons have been stated as the biggest impact on fast fashion avoidance among Gen Z (Vajkai & Zsóka, 2020), it rather seems that, although Gen Z shows a great concern and positive attitude towards sustainable fashion, the moral is not always sufficient to conduct sustainable consumer behaviour. The findings, however, display a wish to implement sustainability into one's self-identity in the future, which can be related to feeling obliged, or pressured, to care for the environment.

Due to their digital nature and large online presence, Gen Z gains global knowledge about issues in the world (Bencsik et al., 2016; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Hess, 2021), which could influence people to feel as though they should take personal responsibility for implementing sustainability in their lives, when they do not consider having a sustainable lifestyle today. The findings are scattered regarding the sense of obligation to care for the environment as some participants present a clear sense of obligation to be concerned about sustainability and the environment, while other participants do not feel any personal obligation to be concerned. The participants do, however, display a mutual wish to change into a more sustainable fashion consumer behaviour in the future, and hence this can be connected to the cohort's perception that brands and companies producing and selling fashion should take a leading role in integrating sustainable fashion to a larger extent on the market and making it more accessible for the consumers.

5.3. The Will to Change for a Better Future

The last dimension *The will to change for a better future* is highly prioritised among the interviewees. From the existing literature, Gen Z is considered as a generation with strong values regarding environmental issues that result in consequences of their own consumption impact on the planet and for future generations to come (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). Therefore, this generation is described as driven and willing to find solutions and create a sustainable future (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Through the findings, the literature was extended by statements from all participants in a shared mindset and attitude towards wanting to help the

planet and leave something positive for future generations. The findings led to further analysis for this dimension and were divided into two categories, firstly is the *Wish to be guided towards sustainability*. Secondly is *Sustainability should be beneficial*.

Moreover, the lack of information and creating awareness for sustainability from sustainable companies were discussed among the participants, who highlighted the poor supply and low support. However, factors like price and quality have a crucial impact on the purchase decisions (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022), which results in leaving the participants' ambitions for choosing sustainability to be challenged by fast fashion alternatives. In order to make sustainable fashion a top priority for gen Z, governmental legislation of some sort needs to be implemented (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). This was frequently discussed among the participants and in order to make sustainability a top priority, they argued for some type of benefit or restrictions if the common goal is to achieve a huge impact on creating sustainability on this planet.

Furthermore, brand loyalty is explained from current literature how it indicates high satisfaction levels among consumers and can be used as a tool to gain competitive advantages. Strong brand loyalty could decrease any tendencies the consumer might have to switch from one brand to another (Rosenbaum-Elliott, et al., 2018). Brand loyalty was shown to be important for some of the interviewees, who argued that they show loyalty to the fast fashion brands claiming to provide sustainable collections, while other interviewees suspect greenwashing when such sustainability claims are made by fast fashion brands. They shared both negative and positive attitudes where some negative aspect regarding greenwashing was brought up during multiple occasions. Some of the participants feel deceived and see fast fashion brands' sustainability collections simply as a marketing trick to gain more customers while in reality they are not at all sustainable. While on the other hand, some participants had strong beliefs in trusting their favourite brands to be sustainable if they are marketing it as such.

When understanding the attitudes and behaviour toward choosing sustainable fashion over fast fashion, trends need to be taken into consideration, as they encourage people to purchase and dispose of apparel at a frequent pace. Fast fashion brands offer season-based collections of clothes based on what is trending at that time (Bruce & Daly, 2006). Some of the participants struggle between wanting to keep up with trends, meaning purchasing many items often which makes low prices more preferable, or buying fewer sustainable items that are more expensive but where the quality is often better so the item will last for several seasons.

5.4. Sustainable Choices

In order to make sustainable choices a top priority among the consumers in gen Z, existing literature and the empirical findings agree to applying some type of beneficial outcome, or introduce governmental regulations promoting sustainable behaviour (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). Gen Z in Sweden shows a great concern regarding the climate crisis and what the consequences of today's action will be in the future. The findings and existing literature agreed that a high awareness regarding sustainability exists, but the cohort is unwilling to make necessary individual sustainable efforts, while practical alternatives for choosing entirely sustainable fashion are slim. Choosing sustainability should give more and contribute to changing the mindset among consumers in order to take the right path for sustainable fashion purchases.

This study provided three aggregate dimensions of Gen Z's attitudes and consumer behaviour towards sustainable fashion. Figure 12 presents this framework and displays how these dimensions are interconnected.

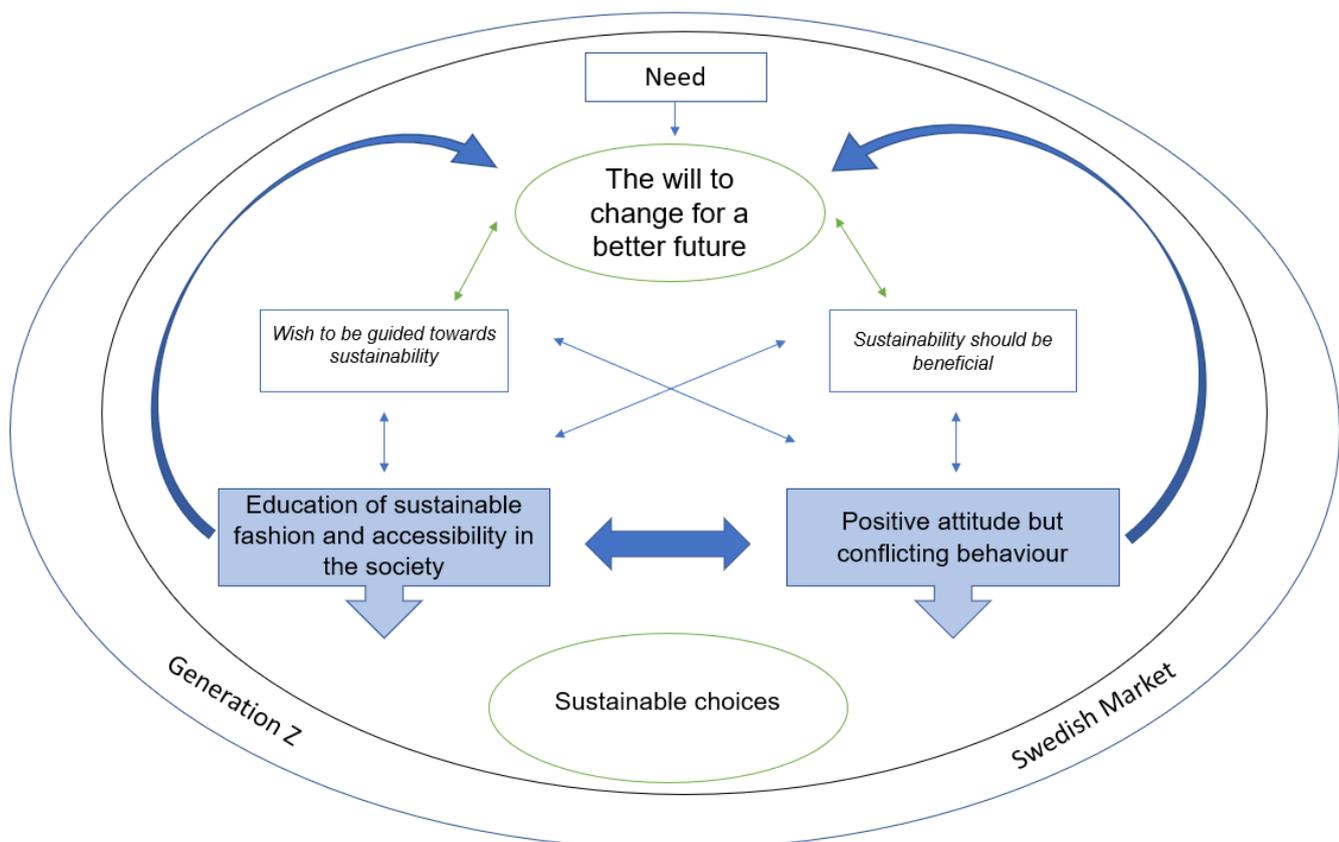


Figure 12: Framework of sustainable choices

The cohort expresses a unison wish to become more sustainable in how they purchase fashion. However, to implement a more sustainable consumer behaviour, there is a need for guidance from brands, companies providing fashion, as well as from sources influencing social norms in the society. In addition, sustainability needs to become beneficial for the individual to motivate a change in behaviour, as the accumulated value from fast fashion today exceeds the value from sustainability alone, often resulting in unsustainable consumer behaviour. Furthermore, to make sustainable choices, the accessibility of sustainable fashion needs to be equal to, or exceed the availability of fast fashion, and it must be made easy for the cohort to gain knowledge about whether a product is sustainable or not, to ensure confidence in the sustainable choices made.

6. Conclusion

The sixth chapter presents a conclusion of the empirical data and seeks to answer the two research questions. It concludes that the attitudes towards purchasing sustainable fashion products on the Swedish market is positive, but the behaviour towards purchasing sustainable fashion products on the Swedish market is not in line with the attitudes.

The purpose of this research was to study consumer attitudes and behaviour towards purchasing sustainable fashion products on the Swedish market. The research was conducted through 10 semi-structured interviews that provided data that emerged into the three aggregate dimensions *Positive attitude but conflicting behaviour*, *Education of sustainable fashion and accessibility*, and *The will to change for a better future*. A framework was developed from the aggregate dimensions, existing literature, and the theory of planned behaviour model which was used as a theoretical lense for the research. The research was concluded by synthesising the analysis of the two research questions:

RQ1: What is the attitude of generation Z towards purchasing sustainable fashion products on the Swedish market?

The unison attitude among Gen Z towards purchasing sustainable fashion products is positive. The awareness that has been created during their upbringing and from social environments such as school and social media has had a big influence on the cohort's attitude towards sustainability in general, as well as sustainability in terms of fashion. Social settings and subjective norms also have an influence on the generation, which values the opinion of others. There is a genuine concern for the climate and the future of the planet among the cohort, which also has an impact on the attitude and the belief that a change needs to be made to ensure the health of the planet's future generations to come.

Despite the positive attitude towards purchasing sustainable fashion products, there is an existing gap between the positive attitude and consumer behaviour.

RQ2: How does generation Z behave towards purchasing sustainable fashion products on the Swedish market?

Gen Zs are not to a large extent purchasing sustainable fashion products. As presented in the findings and as supported by existing literature, the accumulated value from factors such as price, style, and availability is often higher than the sole value of an item's sustainability factor; Gen Z does not express a high enough concern for the unsustainable consequences of consuming fast fashion to turn their positive attitude towards sustainable fashion into sustainable consumer behaviour. Fashion is a major tool for self-expression within Gen Z, and the behaviour is often influenced by social image. The responsibility of showing sustainable consumer behaviour should, therefore, not be on an individual level, and to close the gap between how the cohort consumes today and how they wish they would consume, the biggest changes need to be made by the companies and brands producing, marketing, and selling fashion.

7. Discussion

The seventh and last chapter of this thesis presents theoretical implications, managerial implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research within the studied field.

7.1. Theoretical Implications

This research has developed valuable theoretical implications for providing an understanding of Gen Z's attitudes and behaviour towards purchasing sustainable fashion. The gap in existing research that this study aimed at exploring in a field that is under-researched (Lundblad & Davies, 2016) has provided further perspectives of the cohort's values, factors influencing when shopping for fashion, and obstacles for turning a positive attitude towards purchasing sustainable fashion into sustainable consumer behaviour, by application of the theory of planned behaviour. While most findings contribute to an understanding towards the existing literature, a few of the findings debunk them, indicating that further research is required within the field of attitudes and behaviour among Gen Z.

7.2. Managerial Implications

The managerial implications that have developed from this study are mainly focusing on how existing fashion producers and brands can expand and adapt their business to adhere to an increasing, future need of sustainable fashion items. The positive attitude towards sustainability and the concern for the climate requires action from the fashion brands, in order for consumer behaviour to become sustainable. Brand loyalty is an important factor influencing the choices made by Gen Z, and fashion brands should thus take a leading role in providing accessibility of sustainable options. Sustainable apparel typically costs more but is perceived as being of higher quality that lasts longer, as supported by the findings of this study. Therefore, angling marketing towards this benefit, in combination with offering sustainable fashion that is more timeless, unique, and durable, is vital. Fashion brands and stores can also offer services that encourage a more sustainable lifestyle, such as clothes repair, recycling, or second-hand selling and buying. This could inspire customers to reduce their individual consumption and ultimately spend less money on new fashion items, while still engaging with, and supporting the brand. Furthermore, there is a need for education and support for consumers as a means to guide them

towards conducting a more sustainable consumer behaviour, hence decreasing the amount of time and energy spent on research needed to be made by the consumer and instead have brands providing educational marketing content to facilitate sustainable purchasing could deepen the customer-brand relationship, as well as position the brand in a leading role for sustainability, possibly resulting in increased revenue and bigger market shares.

7.3. Limitations

This study provides many valuable findings, but there are also some important limitations to consider. Firstly, the study was conducted using a small sample size. This still provides a clear understanding of the behaviours for Gen Z but does not apply for generalisations to be made to an entire population. Further research needs to consider a wider sample size in both numbers and age range, for example by including several generational cohorts. Furthermore, a larger sample size would be recommended due to the selection of a model that is mostly used for quantitative research, the theory of planned behaviour. A larger sample size could also generate a deeper understanding of the investigated area. Also, the sample includes 6 women and 4 men, and the outcome could possibly have been different had the study had an equal division between the genders. Moreover, as the majority of the sample contained students, the results could be impacted by the participants' existing knowledge in sustainability from educational environments and activity on the same social media platforms.

Secondly, the method of transcribing and coding the raw data could result in similar findings among the researchers, due to the researchers having similar academic backgrounds. Triangulation was applied to minimise the risk of investigator biases affecting the outcome, but unfortunately, this cannot be ignored. Also, the researchers' similar mindset regarding the sustainability question in general may affect the outcome of this study's findings.

Thirdly, in order to better understand attitudes and purchase behaviour regarding sustainability among gen Z, further research in a different context is needed to validate the research findings, for example by applying it to a different industry than fashion.

7.4. Future Research

This study provides possibilities for future research. Firstly, since this study has investigated and built an interpretative understanding of Gen Z's behaviour and attitudes toward sustainable fashion from the perspective of planned behaviour, further research should be conducted in a quantitative method manner. Furthermore, the findings from this research show that perceived

low income and perceived high prices on sustainable fashion is a big reason for withstanding sustainable consumer behaviour, and hence fast fashion that is offered at lower prices becomes attractive for the cohort (Bruce & Daly, 2006). Thus, it is suggested to conduct similar research in the context of the luxury fashion industry, where customers usually tend to have higher incomes, to study if the attitudes and intentions of that consumer group have a similar impact on the consumer behaviour. Furthermore, future research should investigate other aspects of sustainability within fashion, such as upcycled- or circular fashion.

Secondly, this study contains a relatively wide age range within Gen Z, but in order to collect a more precise understanding, it would be suggested to adapt the age range to a varied sample size with a wider age range, or include several generations and not limit to Gen Z.

Thirdly, it would be interesting to conduct similar research on Gen Z residents in Sweden in the future. The oldest people included in Gen Z are 27 years old in 2022, and thus results may become different some years in the future, as generational cohorts are continually evolving and the people of Gen Z in Sweden today are likely to study full- or part-time with a limited income and are thus less likely to have found their career fields.

Lastly, it can be suggested to conduct comparative studies where Gen Z is compared to other generations. Moreover, Sweden is ranked one of the top countries in the world in regard to sustainability, and hence it would be interesting to take the research further to compare cultural aspects and explore similarities and differences among the generation in different parts of the world.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Guidelines

1. Introduction:

- Introducing ourselves
 - Names
 - School and Programme
 - Present the topic and purpose of the thesis
 - Explain what the interview will cover and that we want to listen to the interviewee's own story, experiences and thoughts.
- Informing about privacy
 - Interviewee will be anonymous
 - Right of withdrawal from participating at any time during the interview
- Asking for consent to record the interview
- Explain about the informed consent process. Explain
 - Data anonymity
 - How the data will be used
 - How the data will be stored
 - Confidentiality

2. About the interviewee

1. What is your age and which year were you born?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your occupation?

3. Attitudes

4. Would you say you are sustainability conscious?
 - Probe: What has given you these attitudes?
5. To what extent are you concerned about sustainability- and environmental issues in connection to fashion products?

6. How would you describe your attitude towards purchasing sustainable fashion products?
7. How would you describe your attitude towards purchasing unsustainable, i.e., fast fashion products?
8. Is your attitude towards sustainable fashion products ever based on social image?
9. Self-identity is how you identify and define yourself. Would you say your self-identity represents a motivation to purchase sustainable fashion?
 - Probe: If yes – why is it part of your self-image?
10. Do you trust brands' claims regarding a product's sustainability?
 - Probe: Does trust in a brand's sustainability make you more or less likely to purchase and why?
11. What prevents your sustainable attitudes from turning into purchase behaviour?
12. What do you think is needed to make sustainable fashion consumption the biggest priority for you?

4. Behaviour

1. Could you explain the importance of sustainability and how that impacts you when you are shopping for fashion?
2. Do you have any sustainable obligations which made or makes you feel like you must purchase for sustainable and environmental reasons?
 - Probe: If yes, why is or was this and did you make the purchase?
3. What kind of sustainable fashion products do you buy?
4. If you wanted to purchase a sustainable fashion product, could you tell me what factors would make that difficult or easy for you?
 - Probe: (If the main factor was price), are there any other barriers like accessibility, availability, product education, actual taste, etc., preventing you?
5. How much impact does price have on your purchase behaviour in regard to sustainable fashion products?
6. What are influencing factors when you discard a product you once had a desire to purchase?
7. Are there any sustainable fashion products you have an intention to purchase? Or repurchase?

- Probe: If so, what is the product and what has prevented you from purchasing it already?
8. Imagine that you want to purchase a t-shirt; at your regular store you find one fast fashion t-shirt of your liking that is on sale for 100 kr. You also find another, similar-looking t-shirt that is made from 100% recycled material for 300 kr. Which one do you purchase and why?
 9. Have you ever made a conscious effort to be more sustainable with consumption in your lifestyle?
 - Probe: If yes, what were these efforts, and why did you make this decision?
 10. What are some of your priorities when making a fashion purchase online or instore?
 11. How frequently would you say you purchase fashion products that are environmentally sustainable?
 12. What motivated you to turn these sustainable purchase intentions into sustainable purchase?
 13. Would you say there is a gap between how you hope to purchase, and how you purchase?
 - Probe: If so, what is the reason for this?

5. Closing the interview

- Thank the interviewee for participating in our study
- Ask the interviewee if he/she has any questions for us
- Offer to send transcript of the interview to the interviewee for approval
- Ask the interviewee if he or she has any people in his/her personal network that could be interested in participating in the study.