Research Report

on emotional sustainability

Paulína Blahová
Beyond the frame: on emotional sustainability

Paulína Blahová
500723701
International Fashion & Management
Anja Köppchen & Jan Piscaer
June 11, 2019

1 paula.blahova@gmail.com
Disclaimer:

1. This report, as part of the graduation project aimed at attaining the BA title from the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, has been written and/or compiled solely by me.

2. This project report (or any amended form of it) has never before been submitted by me or anyone else in the framework of a learning assignment aimed at the attainment of a certificate or degree, within the AMFI programme or elsewhere.

3. The work that was necessary for the realisation of this project was performed entirely by me. All the data that have been collected are original.

4. All quotes from other sources are recognisable in the report by quotation marks and the sources of all my information have specifically been indicated.

Date    : June 11, 2019
Place    : Amsterdam, Netherlands
Name     : Paulína Blahová

Signature

[Signature]
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / ABSTRACT

This project aims to recognise consumers' ability to develop an emotional attachment towards clothing, how it affects its durability and in what ways can it influence the fashion industry's sustainable future. It goes beyond a traditional frame of production focused sustainable practices and shifts its direction towards user-ship of the garments.

The research builds its reasoning on conducting interviews, where people describe their favourite pieces in their wardrobes. This is where the report brings attention to the specific elements that lead to their likeability. It argues that the emotions of the consumers are not purely individual but rather based on general preferences, in which comfort, security and versatility prevail.

It then bridges the emotions towards clothing with its longevity. The consumer's behaviour is recognised as a driving source behind keeping and disposing a piece of garment. Research argues that favourite pieces are in fact kept longer which leads to conscious behaviour of an individual. This is where the emotional durability is defined.

Through primary and secondary data collected on various levels of the market research proves that user-ship is an important topic in brands’ strategies. While the upper premium ones count on the aspect of emotional durability to be the reason why consumers go to them, fast fashion market needs to be more vocal and in its user-ship strategies and educate on the subject to attract the often unaware consumer. Overall, analysed brands reach out to only specific scope of consumers, distinctive by its preference for simplicity and uniformity.

Based on the findings as described in the report, emotional attachment is a crucial part of any fashion brand’s sustainable future. Emotional durability represents a sustainable approach away from the frame of traditional conscious production strategies. Instead of making it gives attention to using. And in the critical times when the only way forward is to consume less, the emotional durability in fashion becomes as relevant as its sustainable production.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE / INTRODUCTION

rationale 8
aim 9
research questions 9
methodology 10
structure 11

CHAPTER TWO / EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT

definition 12
drivers 13

CHAPTER THREE/ EMOTIONAL DURABILITY

length 17
frequency 18
origin 19

CHAPTER FOUR/ INDUSTRY

slow fashion 20
premium fashion 21
fast fashion 22

CHAPTER FIVE/ FINAL CONCLUSION 24

BIBLIOGRAPHY 25

APPENDIX 27
CHAPTER ONE

I think I like this sweater so much because I wear it at times of recreation or during activities which I particularly enjoy. It's like emotional holiday. I am not sure whether it comes from its character, because the sweater is warm and homey or because I bought it at the right time and all the contexts just blended together.

- ANDREJ

Since I have these jeans for quite some time they have moulded to my body and now feel like my second skin. Items of clothing such as your favourite pair of jeans or your favourite shoes become sort of your best friends and accompany you in your day-to-day life. You see every mark on them, the wear and tear of your every day.

- EMMA

INTRODUCTION

In above mentioned statements that have been collected through the following research, consumers are reflecting on their favourite pieces in their wardrobe. In both Andrej’s and Emma’s case, these are products of mass market. Consumers describe the emotions they feel towards their favourite clothing item. Both of these situations happened on a consumer level, without brand’s influence on it. However the emotions that were attached to these garments caused that they were used and kept in their wardrobe longer. This project aims to recognise consumers’ ability to develop emotional attachment towards clothing, how it affects its durability and in what ways can it influence fashion industry’s sustainable future.
BACKGROUND / RATIONALE

The continuous growth of fashion waste brings up serious environmental concerns. With increasing awareness from both society and government, fashion industry’s willingness to act rises. Attention of the fashion businesses in terms of sustainability is predominantly directed towards products’ life cycle (R. Ehrenfeld, 2004, Zerbo, 2017). Brands concentrate on fair material sourcing, transparency of the manufacturing processes, efficiency of logistics and possible recycling of post consumer waste. The fashion industry rethinks energy and material use per garment and even high street giants introduce ethical, environmentally friendly lines. Although it is debatable whether their decision to act sustainably is caused by the increasing anxieties of consumers or is actually encouraging genuine social change, larger brands’ willingness to engage with good causes is a healthy thing, whatever their reasons for doing so (Foley, 2017).

Yet even if the fashion industry is able to lower the impact of a single garment, the scale of consumption outweighs the efficiency (Fletcher, 2016). What happens post purchase falls out of the industry’s spectrum. And while the industry’s efforts on waste of resources and attempts to “close the loop” are still a way forward, they do not go far enough and ignore the core problem, the high volumes of clothing that continue to be produced (Wahnbaeck and Cobbing, 2017).

Yet even if the fashion industry is able to lower the impact of a single garment, the scale of consumption outweighs the efficiency (Fletcher, 2016). What happens post purchase falls out of the industry’s spectrum. And while the industry’s efforts on waste of resources and attempts to “close the loop” are still a way forward, they do not go far enough and ignore the core problem, the high volumes of clothing that continue to be produced (Wahnbaeck and Cobbing, 2017).

Fashion nowadays is accessible, offers variety and constant novelty. Planning for durability is no longer industry’s priority. To keep showing industry’s growth and influence consumer spending, garments have to become obsolete, at least in psychological terms (Burns, 2010). According to McKinsey (2016) clothing production doubled from 2000 to 2014, and the average number of garments purchased each year increased by 60 percent. And not only are consumers buying more; the rate at which their clothing gets discarded is becoming increasingly quicker (Zerbo, 2017). It seems that most of the garments lose their psychological appeal before they start to lack on their physical properties and functions.

These facts suggest that the root of overconsumption does not only lie in the production processes, but in the user-ship of the garment. The sustainability crisis is a behavioural issue, and not one simply of technology, production and volume (Chapman, 2009). What happens post purchase seems to determine the consumer’s decision to purchase again. The fashion industry lacks the conversation with the consumers on the user-ship of the garments. Yet as Kate Fletcher argues in her Local Wisdom: Post Growth fashion (2015) consumers are able to grow a genuine emotional connection towards their clothing, that results in pieces being kept in service longer. Rather than slowing the churn of garments through the economy, they improve the resourcefulness of each item as it is used (Fletcher, 2015).

What if brands learn how to recognise emotional connections and behavioural tendencies of consumers towards their clothing? Can their reach in post purchase activities go beyond attaching the care wash label? And how can such a consumer-driven model affect a sustainable future of fashion?
PURPOSE / AIM

This project aims to broaden fashion industry's understanding of sustainability. By explaining the role of emotions in conscious behaviour of consumers it advocates the importance of emotional sustainability. It goes beyond the traditional frame of production focused sustainable practices and shifts its direction towards user-ship of the garments.

While there has already been some research conducted on a topic of garment's user-ship and increasing its value through time (Post Growth Fashion by K.Fletcher, 2015), most of the knowledge seemed to stay on a consumer level. This project aims to gather the information from users but translate it into an industry knowledge. Therefore it looks into emotional behaviour connected to the clothing and at the specific attributes or qualities of garments that create attachment. Furthermore the research suggests its application in business and design practices by providing clear guidelines in its product.

The product takes form of an informative booklet. This could be distributed by a social organisation with a focus on sustainable solutions within different fields of industry, such as Circle Economy. The booklet is aimed at the fashion industry professionals and brands that are already implementing sustainable strategies to their business and are interested in learning about how to prolong user-ship of their garments.

QUESTIONS

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the relevance of emotional attachment to garments in fashion industry's sustainable strategies?

SUBQUESTIONS

I. What are the drivers behind emotional attachment to the garments?
II. To what extent does emotional attachment to the garments affect consumption?
III. How is the current fashion industry involved in garments user-ship?
METHODOLOGY

The methods used to complete the research are mainly focused on empirical data; information collected from interviews with the consumers and industry professionals. Because of the emotional nature of the topic it is important to recognise that the research relies on people’s perception. Emotions are subjective and intangible data. The project however aims to draw objective conclusions through recognising similarities in emotional attachments of individuals and translating them into relevant industry practices. Research is supported with visuals to clarify the (often) aesthetic attachments/elements.

TARGET GROUP INTERVIEWS

In total 40 interviews have been collected, both male and female consumers in the age between 16-30. All of the respondents have been either students or young professionals from Europe. The interviewees were invited to talk about their favourite item of clothing. By agreeing to participate, they have formed their own target group of young financially limited consumers who are interested in more conscious consumer behaviour (see appendix 1, pg 27 for target group profile). The interviewees represent sufficient scope of data for the start of the research however the results are indicative and cannot be applied for all of the members of society.

I. What are the drivers behind emotional attachment to the garments?

In order to recognise the importance of user-ship and engagement in the sustainable future of the fashion industry, the various emotions that lead to an attachment to the clothing need to be defined. First, the term emotional attachment is explained, using secondary literary research (Emotional Design, 2003, Handbook of Attitudes, 2005) Secondly the chapter includes interviews with the consumers. Focus is on consumers’ favourite pieces, the emotions they connect with them and specific qualities they value in the clothing (see Appendix 2, pg 29 for list of interview questions) Interviews are coded with the in vivo “literal coding” and then grouped into general conclusions.

II. To what extent does emotional attachment to garments affect consumption?

This question explores how emotional connection leads to garment’s durability in consumer’s wardrobe. It continues with the collected data from the interviews on subjects of duration and frequency of using their favourite clothing and asks whether its origin has an impact on the durability and length of its ownership.

The chapter proposes how the emotional connection leads to garment’s durability in consumer’s wardrobe.
III. How is the current fashion industry involved in garments user-ship?

The focus of the question is on identifying fashion industry’s existing practices that are engaging with consumer’s post purchase behaviour. The offline research is done through conversations with two industry professionals, designers already involved in creating garments meant for longer lasting and engaging user-ship. The analysis is also supported by online research into industry’s innovations relevant to the topic.
Research has been aimed towards European consumers and brands. In total eight brands are interviewed or analysed online based in Slovakia, The Netherlands and Sweden.
The goal of the question is to critically examine existing solutions and their feasibility on the market.

STRUCTURE

The research consists of five chapters. The first chapter introduces the background and the logical reasoning behind purpose of this study and formulates research questions. In the second chapter emotional attachment to the clothing and its various types are defined. This is where interviews with consumers are concluded and their wardrobes discussed. The third chapter uses quantitative data from the interviews to support and argument on how emotional attachment towards the garment influences further consumption. It continues with defining the words emotional durability and its relevance in sustainable fashion consumption. Chapter four explores the topic of user-ship and emotional durability on industry level. It researches market’s innovations that are engaging with customers’ post purchase behaviour and refers to existing professional practices. The final chapter represents the conclusion of the project where it addresses the relevance of user-ship and emotional engagement in brands’ sustainable strategies.
CHAPTER TWO

What are the drivers behind emotional attachment to the garment?

1.1 Definition of emotional attachment

To research the drivers behind emotional attachment, it is necessary to first define the meaning of the word.

The definition of an emotion according to a dictionary is “a conscious mental reaction subjectively experienced as strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes in the body.” (Merriam-Webster, 2019)

The word attachment as described in the dictionary is an affection, fondness or sympathy for someone or something (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2019)

It is argued that emotions change behaviour over a relatively short term, for they are responsive to the immediate events (Schimmack, 2005). What Donald A. Norman suggests in his book Emotional design (2003), is that as humans, we are processing these emotions on three levels. Visceral, the most basic level, appeals to our senses. It is based on what we see, touch and feel and is both involuntary and subconscious. The behavioural level is how we act or use certain things. Through this level we control the everyday behaviour and act automatically. On both levels, these are immediate emotions we process while we experience them.

The third, reflective level refers to person’s feelings before, during and after experiencing certain situation. This is where interpretation, understanding and reasoning comes. Therefore thought and emotion come together to create a feeling that is rooted in a person's self identity. Reflective level is about the long term relations where an individual remembers the past and contemplates the future.

Norman furthermore connects these emotion levels with a design practice and suggest that reflective design is about feelings of satisfaction, produced by owning, displaying and using the product. It is both a sympathy that comes from most basic acts of liking something and person's past attitudes towards using the certain product. (Norman, 2003)

Therefore when people are emotionally attached to items it is not only based on the objects’ appearances, but also on their past experiences with them. Emotional attachment is a conscious act.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMOTIONS</th>
<th>DESIGN ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>comfortable/cozy/survive the whole day</td>
<td>oversized</td>
<td>denim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homey</td>
<td></td>
<td>cotton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calm/serenity</td>
<td>baggy/bulky</td>
<td>wool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>safe/ always to count on/certainty</td>
<td>wider fit</td>
<td>warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second skin</td>
<td>covering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>security/protection/bulletproof</td>
<td>loose straight fit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hide</td>
<td>long silhouette</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self expression/ individuality</td>
<td>easy to layer/style</td>
<td>colours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>differentiation/recognition</td>
<td>fitting well</td>
<td>textured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>special/unique/not own by everybody</td>
<td>details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>timeless</td>
<td>simple clean silouettes</td>
<td>ages well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td>denim/ leather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentimental/nostalgic/memory</td>
<td>baggy/bulky</td>
<td>warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral, not outspoken/eyecatching/not too</td>
<td>simple clean silouettes/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>much attention/modesty/humble</td>
<td>minimalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>casual every day/effortless/careless</td>
<td>baggy/bulky</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy/energy/joyful/pleasure</td>
<td></td>
<td>colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fresh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confidence/strenght</td>
<td></td>
<td>leather, colorful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>universal/versatile/variability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ coordination of colors/outfit</td>
<td>simple clean silouettes/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ elegant while casual at the same time</td>
<td>minimalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ seasonless</td>
<td>solid/boxy shape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ consistency</td>
<td>easy to layer/style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.2 Emotional attachment drivers

In order to research emotional attachment towards clothing, this section analyses interviews with people on the subject of their favourite piece of garment. This is to identify what lies behind the pleasure of wearing and recognising whether favourite piece of garment is a purely subjective choice out of the reach of the fashion industry or can be influenced by certain design elements and preferences that are rather general than individual.

Interviewees have been asked to identify the type of garment, the emotions they feel towards it and the specific garment features that makes them like this piece of clothing.

All the forty users interviewed have indicated that their favourite garment is an item in which they “feel good”. Yet the meaning of this word is heavily dependent on the context. To find out what exactly lies behind this phrase, the interview transcriptions have been coded and divided into 3 groups emotion, physical quality and design (please refer to appendices 3,4 and 5 for specific codes and frequency of use)

The reflective emotions have been grouped together and connected with remaining visceral and behavioural categories (figure 1, pg 13)

In terms of emotions the most reappearing word has been comfortable, also described as cozy, or “to be able to survive the whole day in it”. The word comfortable kept being associated with versatility and variability of such favourite item and the sense of security and protection.

“I strive for everything in my closet to feel like home, but only certain pieces do. Those are the ones that bring me comfort and safety, pieces that I wore so much that I now know them from the inside out,” Vanda, 20

The above mentioned emotions closely depend on each other. Comfort kept being associated with the sense of security and certainty, that these are the items that can be worn every day.

The feeling of individuality and self expression contrasted with modest and “not too outspoken” emotion while wearing something neutral and casual. “I think I don't want to be readable at first sight. I feel like this sweater covers me, protects me and doesn't disturb from what I'm saying. If it would have a pattern or a design I feel it could be stealing some attention from what I am presenting. The sweater basically doesn't say anything and lets me do the talking.” says Soňa. “There is nothing special about this piece and that makes it special!” adds David.

The physical qualities that interviews have associated with their favourite piece of clothing were the good quality materials, which if mentioned were always of natural origin (cotton, wool). Several interviewees indicated that they like materials that mould and age well, such as denim and leather. Neutral colours have been preferred over the vivid ones.

From a design perspective, most of the favourite garments were oversized, longer and covering. Simple clean silhouettes and solid shapes came right after. Garments that “fit well”, seemed to be important. Equally the ability to layer and style easily.
HANNAH, 23 in her favourite oversized t-shirt

KRISTIN, 23 has several of similar overcoats in black

EMA, 18 outfit of her favourites
CONCLUSION

Having provided the theoretical framework behind emotions, and the act of processing them, research has suggested that emotional attachment towards and object is based both on primary, sensual experiences and conscious identification of our past and future experiences with it.

Continuing with this argument, the interviews from consumers proved that the emotions held towards their favourite garments were not purely irrational but based on physical qualities and design elements of the garments. These were not so different between individuals, as most of the respondents identified comfort, variability and easy user-ship as the most important features. These were connected with the use of natural materials and oversized, wider fits that covered their body.
CHAPTER THREE

To what extent does emotional attachment affect consumption?

“One can’t separate emotion from action; they are part of the flow of events, one leading into the other” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008)

Having provided the answers to what lies behind an emotional attachment to the garments, research now continues to analyse its effect on fashion consumption of the individuals. It dives into duration and frequency of using such garments and analyses their origin. It explores the meaning behind emotional durability in fashion.

3.1 The length of emotional attachment towards a garment

When asked about the length of the user-ship, respondents tend to own the garments on average of two and a half year, ranging from two months up to ten years. Only a few interviewees suggested owning the piece for less than a year. This indicates that to claim something as a favourite takes time and experience of using it. If the clothing has been owned for a short period of time, respondents said that this was a piece they have desired before and only now managed to get. All of the interviewees suggested that they plan on keeping a garment as long as it lasts or in the case of younger respondents (16-20 years) until it goes out of style. This can relate to the fact that all younger interviewees indicated, they still search for who they are and what they like in fashion.

“I still find it hard to predict how long will the things I own keep on being worn,” Alica, 16

The length of user-ship was not compromised by the type of material, however, respondents have expressed fear in a possible decline of the quality of their favourite pieces. Denim and leather items were referred to as pieces that will “last a lifetime”.

“If I find something that meets my expectations, I take very good care of it, because I am afraid I won’t find something similar in the future!” - Patricia, 24

At this point, the research has raised a question on what is a time limit when even a favourite piece becomes obsolete and how long should a person own a piece of clothing for it to pay off the damage it has created while being produced?

According to the Waste & Resource Action Programme (WRAP, 2015), consumers keep clothing for an average of 3.1 years, depending on the type of a garment. Surprisingly while the average life of jeans is approximately 3 years, t-shirts tend to stay in the consumers’ wardrobe for a little while longer. (Figure 3, pg 29)

Studies on garments’ life cycles, however, do not have a clear answer for what is an appropriate amount time of time when the ownership of the garment overcomes the carbon footprint that it had created while being produced. This might be because the additional pollution, caused by consumers’ aftercare is more individual and therefore harder to measure. This would be a subject of further research.
3.2 Frequency of wears

When asked about how often they wear their favourite clothing, 80% of respondents said they wear it regularly meaning at least once a week, depending on the type of a garment. Pants and outwear, especially in denim, has been worn 3-4 times a week. Denim was considered versatile and easy to combine with the rest of the wardrobe. Remaining 20% of respondents have said that their favourite item has been more occasional wear. This was either because of the dressy nature of it or since the garment has been worn for many years, it no longer looked appropriate for certain situations.

“I wear my favourite black turtleneck on a regular basis, more times a week. Still getting sad when I have to wash it and wait for it to dry out!” - Alexandra, 21, pictured

Considering the average weekly usage and the fact that respondents had owned the garment for 2.5 years, this would mean that they had worn it approximately 130 times. Even if some garments, such as sweaters were not suitable all year round (excluding summer), the total number of wears would still come to as much as 100 times. The Make Fashion Circular initiative from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation has stated that increasing the average number of times clothes are worn is the most direct way to cut waste and pollution in fashion. According to them by doubling garments usage we can decrease the industry's greenhouse gases by 44%. (2019).
3.3 Ownership and origin

An important fact to add in the subject of individual consumption is that 65% of the respondents have bought their favourite garments by themselves. Therefore they have been capable of making the long term choice on their own. The remaining respondents either received their favourite garment as a gift or have inherited it from their family. However, only 5 of these people have connected the garment with a nostalgia. 2 respondents have said that they valued the clothing because of who gave it to them. The favourite garments were not as much influenced by sentimentality and nostalgia, which is a subjective feeling that goes beyond the fashion industry’s reach but rather the individual experience with the garment and its physical qualities.

On the subject of the garment’s origin, 47% of favourite items were fast fashion, 40% second hand, and 13% (exactly 5 garments) which have been either tailored or designer wear. Younger respondents (16-19) were much more inclined towards second-hand options and expressed that they tend to avoid any high street products. Remaining respondents, between the age of 20 - 30 have been able to grow emotionally attached with fast fashion garments.

Favourite items mentioned were rarely expensive, as the chosen target group has been limited in financial spending by their age and occupation.

CONCLUSION

The initial interview questions did not specify whether the meaning of a favourite clothing item is something that is worn regularly, or rather treasured and kept away. The majority of respondents, however, demonstrated that their favourite is, in fact, something they wear on a weekly basis. It has been noted that to grow attached to an item, it needs to be experienced in various situations. The average frequency of the user-ship of the garments and the future plans on keeping them proved that being emotionally attached is acting consciously towards individual consumption. Therefore to own emotionally durable clothing means, to own it long and wear it often, as an everyday item.

However, washing and drying of the garment create a significant carbon footprint of its own that cannot be overlooked.

The research has conducted that nostalgia or historical references were not that important, and respondents tended to prefer pieces they have bought on their own. Respondents were, therefore, able to make a conscious choice in their own fashion consumption.
CHAPTER 4

How is the current fashion industry involved in garment users-ship?

By getting familiar with the term of emotional attachment between consumer and the garment, research has proved its positive effect on prolonging the user-ship of clothing. Previous chapters have demonstrated that emotional durability does have relevance in sustainable consumption. But is the fashion industry itself aware of it? And what are the current practices of fashion brands on the subject of post-purchase behaviour of their customers? This question aims to explore the presence of a longer lasting user-ship in brands’ sustainable strategies and whether such activity is feasible on the market.

4.1 Slow fashion and Tailoring

Even though the made-to-measure businesses seem in today’s rapidly moving fashion industry almost archaic, there are still designers who refuse to make clothes for an anonymous mass of consumers without knowing the size of their hips or hearing their individual stories. “I want people to participate in the design process of the clothes which they buy from me,” says Boris, Gerrit Rietveld Fashion Graduate, who’s been working as a tailor since graduating in 2017.
“To tailor is to create clothes that last beyond season and therefore beyond fashion. Tailoring is timeless because it is a ritual as it is about meeting the person who makes your clothes. It is about upkeep of a human connection.” - Boris Kollár, tailor

Boris believes that customer should be given an opportunity to be educated about the product that the whole business he invests in is built upon. And that human is in its nature is a very sustainable creature and consumerism is just learned behaviour.

Although tailoring now represents only a very small part of the contemporary market, it still carries positive connotations (Designforlongevity.com, 2019) Rather than a product, tailors offer a service. There is little or no attention paid to trends. The customer's needs and preferences are the starting point of the whole design. And because personalised fit and comfort are still highly appreciated, people are willing to invest. The attention and customisation lead to the overall physical and emotional durability of these garments.

4.2 Premium market, designer wear

Many premium market brands proud themselves on choosing quality over quantity. They specifically target a consumer who is willing to pay a higher price for a well-manufactured garment from fine materials. But is that all it takes for a garment to be emotionally durable?

Amsterdam based Bonne is a suit brand that tries to change the way people are programmed to think about fashion. They offer one product for a fair price in good quality for any way or circumstance in life. (Reijn, 2017) When asked about who is the suit for, Bonne Reijn, founder and designer explains:

“I made my suit for everyone. See it as a uniform for your character. I think clothes nowadays derive you of your personality. Some people might say it would be dull if everybody wore the same, but I disagree, as then style will be more about your personality, and not about what shirt you are wearing.”
The “Poor Man’s suit” (pictured above) is an almost exact copy of a Dutch Farmer Suit, two-piece, comfortable and unisex. It comes in a variety of durable materials (twill, denim, corduroy) and colours, but the shape stays the same.

The key part of accessibility is the suits price, therefore brand avoids selling in retail stores, and only sells online or in its showroom. Bonne also works on limited release, and the customers keep on returning.

“The biggest goal, to introduce simplicity back to fashion. For me the fashion industry presents too many silly options, this is bad for the way people look and most of all, bad for the environment.” (Reijn, 2018)

A similar approach can be also found within a premium denim market. Brands such as Nudie Jeans, A.P.C. Momotaro sell the same 5-pocket styles for decades, and not just because there is not much to change on the design of classic jean but because the demand stays the same (Heddels, 2014) A separate category in emotional durable design is raw denim, which some of the premium denim brands feature. This is an unwashed material that is broken in by time and only laundered after 3-5 months of wearing, leaving unique traces of honeycombs and fades that have been created by its wearer. This is a unique example of clothing that triggers attachment by its design.
However raw denim is not easy to obtain and only available at selected places.

Brands on the premium market do offer unique ideas on emotional durability, however, they are often exclusive for only fashion enthusiasts and sub-cultures.

4.3 Fast fashion

Even though the higher costs of above-mentioned premium brands and tailors are reasonable for what they offer, they are still not accessible to everybody.

It is, however, questionable whether fast fashion with its mass quantities, fast lead times and low-cost disposable products can ever be sustainable and care about prolonging the post-purchase life of its garments. But there are few exceptions. Fashion giant H&M that not only groups a brand of the same name, but other fast trend labels such as Weekday or & Other Stories also houses two very specific durable design-focused brands, ARKET and COS.

ARKET’s mission is to democratise quality through widely accessible, well-made, durable products, designed to be used and loved for a long time (ARKET, 2017)

The brand offers essential clothing in simple silhouettes and limited colour palette. It has a refined archive system, where each product is given a specific code. That makes it easier to refer and preserve the clothing and built a clear system for future designs. Arket is based on repetition, “a solid foundation of products you want to find again and again”. The variety of materials and fits creates an easy everyday uniform.
“Value for money will be achieved through economies of scale, with the use of initiatives such as the yarn projects and, above all, by establishing styles that endure. The result will be a seasonless production flow, lower development costs, and the ability to refine over time” (ARKET 2017)

"Value for money will be achieved through economies of scale, with the use of initiatives such as the yarn projects and, above all, by establishing styles that endure. The result will be a seasonless production flow, lower development costs, and the ability to refine over time” (ARKET 2017)

The brand also provides a very detailed product care guide, that helps the consumer to preserve the quality of the clothing for longer.

Its sister brand COS represents functional considered design offering reinvented classics and wardrobe essentials. COS has been rated C by Rank a Brand, scoring 14 out of 31 points, by following its Code of Conduct that assured worker’s right at their factories. Production wise, COS is on its way towards sustainability, but more improvement is needed (2015)

Together with ARKET, these brands create collections that are “made to last beyond the season.” They are easy to wear, use and combine. However, with their sleek appearance and minimalistic styles, they do often come out as highly sophisticated pieces suitable for a mature consumer.

CONCLUSION

As illustrated across various levels of the market, garment user-ship is an important topic in brands’ strategies. And while the upper premium ones count on the aspect of emotional durability to be the reason why consumers go to them, fast fashion market needs to be more vocal and in its user-ship strategies and educate on the subject to attract the often unaware consumer.

All of the brands seem to have a loyal group of customers that come back for the repetition of styles and ability to built “brand uniform”. Premium and slow fashion brands advocate their value for the price, while COS and ARKET contrast between their high street origin and transparent communication of their mission and design practices.

Overall, analysed brands reach out to only specific scope of consumers, distinctive by its preference for simplicity, uniformity and versatility.
CHAPTER FIVE/ FINAL CONCLUSION

To conclude this report it is in order to repeat that the sustainability crisis is, in fact, a behavioural issue and not one simply of technology, production or volume. (Chapman, 2009) Throughout the chapters, the consumer's behaviour kept on being recognised as a driving source behind keeping and disposing of a piece of garment.

Having explored its potential both on an individual and industry level, the research is now able to answer its main question *What is the relevance of emotional attachment to garments in the fashion industry's sustainable strategies?* Based on the findings as described in the report, emotional attachment is a crucial part of any fashion brand's sustainable future. Even though it is not possible to completely stop the demand for new, it should be in the fashion industry's high interest to slow down the rapid consumption. That is to be done by turning the attention towards prolonging user-ship of the garments.

Analysis initially started with an idea that attachment is an individual emotion which varies by consumer and therefore is hard to be recreated by the industry. However, the report has proven, that the emotional attachment towards garments is not an impulsive subconscious act, but rather a collective preference for certain attributes in design. Interviewed consumers demanded comfort, variability and utility. The more emotionally attached they got to a garment, the more likely they were to use it for longer. And not only longer but also more regularly. The favourite clothing, therefore, became emotionally durable.

By increasing usage of one garment and not replacing it with another people gain direct power over cutting waste and pollution in fashion production. The research has also proven that the interviewed consumers were able to make a conscious long-lasting fashion choice by themselves. They were driven by physical aspects of the clothing rather than nostalgia or sentiment.

Exploration within industry practices has shown many smart yet simple ideas on how to approach emotional durability. The brands researched value functionality and comfort, offer repetitive designs and clean silhouettes. Their development process is, therefore, easier and they can refine the quality of their products over time. That not only affects consumer's wardrobe but could also simplify the design processes and help towards more effective product development of the fashion brands.

Emotional durability represents a sustainable approach away from the frame of traditional conscious production strategies. Instead of making it gives attention to using. And in the critical times when the only way forward is to consume less, the emotional durability in fashion becomes as relevant as its sustainable production.


Ellen MacArthur Foundation- Instagram. (2019). Make Fashion Circular on Instagram: “Increasing the life of our #clothes is imperative to #MakeFashionCircular, and this spring you can help! As part of the #WearNext in…”. [online]


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Souchet (2018) Make Fashion Circular, Instagram Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/BqaMySUHGu/


* images not referenced in the bibliography are the interviewees’ own
APPENDIX

1 consumer’s target group (40 respondents)

1A AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>16y</th>
<th>17y</th>
<th>18y</th>
<th>19y</th>
<th>20y</th>
<th>21y</th>
<th>22y</th>
<th>23y</th>
<th>24y</th>
<th>25y</th>
<th>26y</th>
<th>27y</th>
<th>28y</th>
<th>29y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 70% 16-19 years
- 18% 20-25 years
- 13% 25-29 years
2 interview questions

- What is your favourite garment in your wardrobe?
- How long have you had it? Do you think you will keep it?
- How often do you wear it? Is it a regular, or more occasional wear?
- How do you feel when wearing it?
- How did you get it? Did you buy it yourself?
- Please describe the emotions you feel towards this garment.
- What makes it your favorite (think about emotions, but think also about the specific elements, the shape, color, the way it fits)?
- Do you know what you like in the area of fashion and clothing?
- Is there anything you have in multiple? Why do you keep buying this certain piece?
- What are the specific clothing attributes that make you value in clothing? What do you generally consider important? (comfort, style …)
- What are you trying to achieve when you dress?
- Does the clothing you buy always end up being worn? Have you figured out how to know in advance?
- How would an outfit that you could wear happily at any point in your life look like? What would be special about it?
- Looking back at your purchases from past five years, what sort of things were the most valuable to buy?

3 WRAP product lifetime estimate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Knitwear</th>
<th>Shirt</th>
<th>Jeans</th>
<th>Socks</th>
<th>T-shirt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Current lifetime estimate (years)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Target lifetime (years)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Average wear days per year</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Implied wear days per month</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Total days of wear for the target lifetime</td>
<td>112.5</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Hours of wear for the target lifetime</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Estimated days of wear per wash</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Hours of wear per wash</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Average number of washes for the target lifetime</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>