SUSTAINABLE FASHION
CONSUMPTION AND THE
CONSUMER PARADOX

A RESEARCH REPORT ON THE
ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES
OF THE ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR GAP
What are the antecedents and consequences of the attitude-behavior gap?

Exploring consumer behavior towards sustainability in fashion

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11.06.2019
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Abstract

Sustainability in fashion has grown in scope and importance in recent years. The rise of the conscious consumer has lead brands to improve their sustainable practices in accordance to growing demand for ethicality. On the counter side, although many consumers claim to show positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion, they do not translate their ethical stances into purchase action. This paradoxical behavior is described as attitude-behavior gap and has presented a popular theme within the field of behavioral science and economic psychology. As consumer behavior is based on a variety of complex factors influencing individuals’ purchase decisions in both rational and irrational ways, this phenomenon has posed a challenge for fashion marketeers and managers alike. Influencing factors can be of individual, social or situational nature and involve, amongst others, personal attitudes, level of knowledge, social norms or even product availability at the point of sale. Therefore, in order to understand the reasons for the prevailing gap between attitude and behavior and give concrete solutions to this issue, this research report explores a variety of antecedents through both quantitative and qualitative consumer research methods.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

The concept of sustainability has gained global importance in recent years. Even though it is not a new phenomenon, dating back to the 1960s when people first became aware of the negative effects their consumption patterns had on the environment (Castro 2004) it is only now that it has reached a majority of people. With often recalled facts on increasing pollution and decreasing natural resources (Gardetti and Torres 2013), fashion’s hazardous impact on both the environment and society can no longer be denied.

As a result, the industry has experienced a shift towards a more conscious mindset with an increasing amount of consumers demanding more sustainable products (Weed 2017) and brands to address environmental and social issues (Amed 2018). Consequently, companies show signs of change in a number of different ways: Some through collaborations committed to specific causes such as Burberry’s and Vivienne Westwood’s collaboration to save the rainforest (Hodge 2018) or through campaigns that express their dedication to carbon-neutrality such as Reformation with its „Carbon is cancelled“ (Reformation 2019) campaign. Others even choose to integrate sustainability into their entire strategy. According to the State of Fashion 2019 research report by McKinsey, the amount of B-corps increased to almost 200 in 2018 compared to 2010 (Balchandani 2018).

Although consumers are increasingly demanding sustainability, are more alert when they decide for a brand and more loyal to brands that are in line with their ethical values (Amed 2018), it does not manifest in their consumption behavior (McDonagh and Prothero 2014). This relatively new occurrence, often described as “attitude-behavior gap” (Henninger et al 2017) sheds light on the prevailing barrier between motivation and consumption. Or as defined by Peattie and Crane, the „inability or unwillingness of consumers to turn claimed environmental concerns into sustainable purchasing behavior“ (Peattie and Crane 2014). This suggests that, despite mass media coverage, sustainability still seems to be a niche market.

While some researchers emphasize that this is due to a variety of internal psychological factors resulting from personal life experiences, self-identification, herd instincts or sceptical attitudes (Hirsch and Terlau 2015, Joshua and Rahmnb 2015, Niinimäki 2010), others stress that external parameters have a significant influence on the decision-making process of individual consumers. External influences can involve, amongst others, contextual barriers such as limited economic resources, research time, lacking product communication or limited availability of sustainable products (Caruana et al 2016, Salonen and Ählberg 2012). Consequently, suggestions encompass a wide array of solutions which range from providing adequate information on fashion sustainability through brand communication (Henninger et al. 2017) to increasing levels of transparency (Fashion Revolution 2018), to implementing effective strategies at the point of sale (Carrington et al 2010).

However, when antecedents of the attitude-behavior gap are evidently manifold and human behavior is not always rational, but in fact irrational during purchase decisions and can thus vary in time and space (Di Giulio et al. 2014, Güntner 2019), premature strategic solutions without further consumer investigation may not always be beneficial. Therefore, in order to bridge the prevailing gap between attitude and behavior and contribute to a sustainable development at large, the diverse and complex spectrum of factors affecting behavioral decisions of individuals need to be further investigated.

1.2 Research Aim & Questions

The aim of this research report is to explore the attitude-behavior gap (Henninger et al. 2017) in sustainable fashion consumption through consumer-centric research and, ultimately, find relevant solutions for the industry on how to bridge the prevailing gap. Thus, outcomes of this report will result in a strategic advice specifically developed for fashion managers and marketeers of ethical brands.

As the attitude-behavior gap phenomenon is stated to be a relatively new occurrence, yet research results are manifold and at times inconsistent (Caruana 2016), this topic asks for further consumer investigation. Although seemingly more steps have been taken in recent years in the attempt to reform the fashion industry, with regards to market data, initiatives may not be as effective as expected (Ethical Consumer, 2018). Thus, rather than constructing novel strategies that rely on existing market analysis, managerial solutions should be based on new, industry specific consumer research that considers a multitude of complex parameters influencing an individual’s consumption decisions. The main research question, therefore, is as follows:

What are the antecedents and consequences of the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption?

Hence, the first part explores how sustainable development, sustainable fashion, sustainable consumption and the attitude-behavior gap can be defined. Moreover, the attitude-behavior gap phenomenon is further elaborated by exploring decision-making models of behavioral psychology as well as influencing factors from pre-existing theories.

The second and third part explains the chosen methodological approach of this research, outlines quantitative findings and gives an in-depth statistical as well as qualitative analysis of the conducted market research.

Lastly, a final conclusion is drawn by suggesting appropriate managerial implications as well as indicating future research. In order to reach this aim, the structure will be as follows:

Chapter 2: How can sustainable development, sustainability in fashion, sustainable consumption and the attitude-behavior gap be defined?

What are pre-existing theories of behavioral psychologists and researchers on the attitude-behavior gap?

Chapter 3: Which research methods are most suitable to explore consumers’ paradoxical behavior?

Chapter 4: What are the antecedents of the attitude-behavior gap?

Chapter 5: What are behavioral consequences of the attitude-behavior gap?
1.3 Methodology

Different methodological approaches were used in this research report. The first part involved a descriptive method in which secondary data from online scholars and literature has been reviewed and described.

The second part has been approached by building a theoretical framework around the research topic. Identical to the first chapter, a descriptive method has been used in which secondary data from online scholars and literature has been reviewed and described in detail. In order to elaborate on existing theories in behavioral science and important parameters of the attitude-behavior gap, proficient knowledge had to be acquired by the researcher. Thus, the second chapter is the result of an extensive data review and presents next to textual content also visual representations that summarize key findings in tables and models.

The third chapter elaborates on the chosen research methodology of quantitative and qualitative research through a descriptive method of secondary data on quantitative survey research, hypotheses testing as well as sampling.

Chapter four implements the researched content of chapter three. Here, primary data collection happened in form of a quantitative survey method which was distributed via social media channels online and thus made use of convenience sampling. Additional qualitative interviews were conducted in order to elaborate on quantitative findings. For the evaluation of data, both deductive and inductive approaches have been used as hypotheses were (dis)confirmed as well as own conclusions formulated. Furthermore primary survey data was analyzed through an inferential approach as statistical results were concluded in both text and diagrams and appropriate implications were given on the basis of the quantitative findings.

1.4 Limitations

Due to the popularity of the attitude-behavior gap, an abundance of information in online scholars and literature is existent. Most studies on this topic refer to the general purchase of green products such as sustainable food or green energy and not directly to the fashion industry. Therefore, further research could have helped to find more scholars directly linked to the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption, yet due to time limitations it was simply not possible to review every single one.

As behavioral psychology and statistics are a rather complex and new field for the researcher, hypotheses formulation and testing might present minor inconsistencies and simplifications compared to more experienced researchers. In line with that, choice of sampling as well as generalization need to be mentioned. As the number of respondents which participated in the quantitative survey was relatively low, generalizing and transferring research results to a larger population should be done with caution. Although qualitative interviews aided to elaborate on some inconsistent quantitative findings to draw more concrete conclusion, statements of chosen individuals cannot represent a general consumer perspective. Interviewing a wider range of consumers could have offered more variation and thus, more comprehensive qualitative results.

Moreover, as the chosen data distribution method targeted people with both a fashion and non-fashion related background and thus different knowledge levels on sustainability in fashion, research outcomes only present the average of the two groups and may appear oversimplified in some parts. Exploring a specific demographic group could have helped to draw more concrete conclusions.

In addition, “social desirability bias” (Carrington et al 2010) needs to be taken into account when assessing both quantitative as well as qualitative data. This factor happens when participants feel social pressure to answer in a socially acceptable manner and may lead to falsified outcomes which is beyond the control of a researcher.

Lastly, the presented antecedents of the attitude-behavior gap in Chapter 2 and 4 have been prioritized in this research, yet this does not imply that other factors are not equally important. Moreover, when creating the survey questionnaire and the additional qualitative interview, personal interests in secondhand retail as well as communicating sustainability through store and product related attributes may have steered results into a certain direction. Although objectivity is important in research, personal engagement can lead to subjective influences.
2. Theoretical Framework

The following chapter forms the theoretical framework of this report by explaining key concepts and theories in regards to the research topic. It will start by defining general terminologies, such as sustainability, sustainable development as well as sustainable consumption. Furthermore, these concepts will be viewed in regards to the fashion industry by defining sustainable fashion as well as sustainable fashion consumption. Lastly, the phenomenon of the attitude-behavior gap will be explained by making use of theories and models from the field of behavioral psychology. On the basis of these theories hypotheses will be formed and presented in the end of this chapter as well.

2.1 Sustainability & Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has grown in scope and importance in recent years. Increasing concerns over environmental as well as social issues such as climate change, ecological degradation, poverty and social injustice call for immediate action (Baker 1996, Drexhage and Murphy 2012). According to the UN, if we continue as we carry on as before „the equivalent of almost three planets could be required to provide the natural resources needed to sustain current lifestyles“ (UN 2019). In the literature, the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development are often used in an interchangeable context, yet they should not be understood as the same. While sustainability indicates a state, „sustainable development refers to the process of achieving this state“ (Giovannoni and Fabietti 2013, p.22). The most commonly used “classic” definition of sustainability made its first appearance in the Brundtland Report „Our Common Future“ in 1987. In it the World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as „[a] development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs“ (WCED 1987) stressing the importance of a systematic change already four decades ago.

In contemporary scholars, however, the meaning of sustainability and what can be considered as sustainable development is diverse and, at times, contested (Drexhage and Murphy 2012, Gudmundsson et al 2016). Some refer to the concept as merely environmental (Joshi and Rahman 2015) whilst others also consider its social dimension (Purvis et al 2017, Di Giulio 2014). Yet rather than understanding its multifaceted notions as separate entities, Gudmundsson suggests to view it from an integrative perspective in which a wide array of diverse issues can work together as a whole (Gudmundsson et al 2016).

The three-pillar model (Fig.1) coined by John Elkington supports this integrative perspective by presenting the three main pillars of sustainability, the economic, the social and the environmental, with equal consideration. It offers a guideline to better understand the bigger picture of sustainable development and the need for a balanced approach (Purvis et al 2017).

2.1.1 Sustainable Consumption

Experts agree that individual consumption behavior can be considered as a key driver of current unsustainable development (Giulio et al. 2014), yet in the attempt to create a common understanding over the meaning of sustainable consumption, they highlight its definitional complexity as an obstacle to achieve a consistent development (Di Giulio 2014). The Brundtland definition may function as a guideline, but what can be considered as „sustainable‘ in regards to consumption is of subjective interpretation (Bray et al 2010, Geiger et al 2017). Proxies such as ‘ethical’, ‘mindful’ or ‘responsible’ consumption stress its diverse spectrum of interpretation (Markkula and Moisander 2011). Thus, in some cases sustainable consumption can concern the purchase of green products (Joshi and Rahman 2015, Henninger and Singh 2017), whilst others refer to a more conscious (Sánchez and Raymaekers 2018), possibly minimal consumption behavior (United Nations 2019).

Moreover, Geiger divides the sustainable consumption process into different phases which involve “acquisition, usage and disposal” (Geiger et al 2017, p.7) of consumed goods. This classification implies that consumption does not only encompass blatant purchase, but additionally pertains to the care and after-life of products such as appropriate and adequate washing and recycling initiatives.

In order to better understand an individual’s consumption behavior in all its complexities, Geiger furthermore proposes both „impact- [and] intention-oriented assessment approaches“ (Geiger et al 2017, p.10-11). The impact-oriented approach focuses on the effects of an individual’s consumption patterns on both people and planet regardless of his/her personal intentions (Di Giulio et al 2017), whilst the intent-oriented approach only takes into consideration an individual’s intentions behind his/her consumption behavior.

2.2 Sustainability in Fashion

Sustainability in fashion has become a “mega trend” (McDonagh and Prothero 2014). As the value of the ethical clothing market has grown by 19,9% (Ethical consumer 2018) in the past year and brands seek to respond to an increasingly demanding sustainable consumer front (Fashion Revolution 2018), signs of betterment within the fashion industry are apparent.

In the literature, however, the tone of voice on fashion sustainability are much more sceptical. The relationship between sustainability and fashion is often described as ambiguous and challenging (Gordon and Hill 2015). Some refer to it as a paradox (Black 2015) while others denounce it as an oxymoron (Clark 2008).

With fashion’s inherent characteristics of fast-pace and continuous change, accounting for 52 micro seasons per year (Henninger and Singh 2017), in theory this viewpoint is not too far-fetched. Trends such as now or never (Amed 2017) on the demand side and just in time manufacturing (Clark 2008) on the supply side have increased consumption levels and turned clothes into a disposable commodity (Black 2008). Moreover, from a psychological perspective fashion will always be an emblem of self-expression, identity and social status (Ma et al. 2012), which triggers over-consumption and unsustainable behavior of individuals (HCEAC 2019).
However, the black and white approach, simply rejecting the notion of fashion sustainability and its (in)ability of change, does not provide a solution to this apparent crisis. As suggested by Iran, sustainable fashion should rather be understood as:

„Clothing that is designed, produced, (re-)used and disposed in a way that is aligned with the concept of sustainable development. (Its) goal (…) is thus to reduce environmental and social impacts of the conventional fashion industry, whose production processes are historically amongst the worst polluting, as well as being associated with systematic labor- and human rights law abuses in manufacturing countries. Each step in the complex production and usage cycle of fashion needs to be transformed in order to create sustainable fashion (Iran 2015, p.141).”

Therefore, sustainability in fashion can be interpreted as a manifold approach which aims to positively impact the concept of sustainable development without denouncing fashion as such completely. Manifold in this context refers back to the three-pillar model (Chapter 2.1) which encompasses environmental, social as well as economical dimensions of the fashion industry (Henninger and Singh 2017).

In addition, sustainable fashion should not only involve a „material dimension [but also] a mindset dimension“ (Fletcher 2012), which moves away from the focus on mere production of ‘more sustainable’ clothing towards the role of the individual consumer and the impact his/her consumption behavior has on the sustainable development of the fashion industry (Greenstrategy 2017).

### 2.2.1 Sustainable Consumption in Fashion

Sustainable consumption requires systematic change within our consumer culture. Considering that consumption levels of the global fashion industry are expected to increase by “63%, from 62 million tons today to 102 million tons” (HEAC 2019), within the next decade while at the same time “nearly 60% of all clothing produced ends up in landfills within a year being made” (Remy et al 2016), special emphasis needs to be given to the role of the individual clothing consumer and the reasons for his/her unsustainable behavior. Particularly as changing current consumption patterns of fashion consumers could have a significant positive impact on the environment a sustainable development at large (Fletcher 2008, Allwood et al. 2006 cited by Mistrà 2012).

Sustainable fashion consumption is often associated with the slow fashion movement in which sustainable or ethical consumption is understood with regards to consumers „(ideally) reducing their consumption behavior or at least making a conscious choice of purchasing garments that have been produced in a more ‘sustainable’ manner compared to their counter parts” (Henninger and Singh 2017, p.106).

There are many ways to consumer more sustainably. In general, eight consumption types of sustainable fashion can be identified: 
- fair & ethical
- green & natural
- high quality & timeless design
- vegan
- custom made
- repurposed, recycled & upcycled
- secondhand & vintage
- rent, loan, swap & share

These types of sustainable fashion consumption are depicted in Fig.2 which presents a conceptual overview of sustainable fashion consumption.

#### Fig.2: Sustainable Fashion Consumption based on Black 2010, Fletcher 2008, Gordon and Hill 2015, Greenstrategy 2016, Henninger and Singh 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acquisition</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Disposal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fair &amp; ethical</td>
<td>wear</td>
<td>recycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>green &amp; natural</td>
<td>wash &amp; care</td>
<td>upcycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high quality &amp; timeless design</td>
<td>repair</td>
<td>resell or donate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>custom made</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repurposed, recycled &amp; upcycled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondhand &amp; vintage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rent, loan, swap &amp; share</td>
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<tr>
<td>fair &amp; ethical</td>
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<td>green &amp; natural</td>
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<td>high quality &amp; timeless design</td>
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<td>custom made</td>
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<td>repurposed, recycled &amp; upcycled</td>
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<td>rent, loan, swap &amp; share</td>
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### 2.3 Attitude-behavior Gap

In response to the industry’s increasing attention on sustainability and sustainable consumption, the attitude-behavior gap presents a key obstacle of sustainable development. This relatively new phenomenon has presented a popular theme in contemporary scholars and signifies a consumer’s inability to translate sustainable attitudes into purchase action (Young et al 2010). It is also referred to as „intention-behavior gap” (Caruana 2015), „knowledge-behavior gap” (Markkula and Moisander 2012) or „value-behavior gap” (Joshi and Rahman 2015).

Much of the key researchers, for instance, emphasize that while consumers have become more educated on the concept of sustainability, through e.g. “green movements“¹ within the food industry (Clark 2008) and show growing environmental and social concern (Markkula and Moisander 2012), sustainable purchase remains low (Henninger and Singh 2017, Hirsch and Terralau 2015). Moreover, a study on sustainable purchase behavior of students by the LIM College identified that although 34% of participants are driven by sustainability and eco-consciousness, they would nonetheless favor price, fashionability and availability of unsustainable clothing over ethicality (Garcia 2018).

Consequently, it can be said that positive attitudes alone do not always explain consumers’ actual behavior (Heinzle 2010, Kollmuss and Agymean 2002). Rather, purchase decisions can be influenced by a variety of complex factors. (Terralou & Hirsch 2015, Joshi and Rahmnanb 2015, Kollmuss & Agymean 2002, Carrington et al 2010, Markkula and Moisander 2012, Peatti and Crane 2005). Thus, many researchers underline the importance of behavioral science in this context (Di Giulio 2014, Güntner 2019).

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¹ “Green movements” refer to movements within the food industry which focus on production that is local, organic and approached with care and attention without degrading the environment, including soil and water management (Clark 2008)
2.3.1 Decision-Making Model

As sustainable consumption is based on a variety of complex conditions that take into account psychological, sociological as well as contextual circumstances (Vermeir and Verbeke 2005) many decision-making models in behavioral science have been developed to better understand factors influencing an individual’s consumption decisions.

In regards to the attitude-behavior gap, these models are of particular importance as they can help to identify hindering factors and aid in finding solutions to bridge the prevailing gap. However, within the context of sustainable fashion consumption, not all decisions can be simply explained through a rationally acting consumer. In fact a variety of irrational and contextually dependent factors contribute to inconsistent consumption patterns (Heinzle 2010, Carrington et al 2010). Thus, a combination of several decision-making models of key researchers have provided a guideline in this research (Fig.3). Amongst others, these include the „theory of planned behavior“¹ by Ajzen, the „ABC-model“² by Stern as well as the „holistic model of behavior“³ by Carrington.

2.3.2 Influencing Factors

In general, it is said that attitude influences intention, while intention determines behavior (Ajzen 1991). However, as Fig.4 presents, a distinction must be made between „pre-“ and „during consumption“ processes. In the pre-consumption stage, both individual as well as social factors can have a direct influence on attitude which then affects intention indirectly.

Individual factors are internal processes that involve e.g. attitude, knowledge, trust, habits, etc. whereas social factors are classified external factors as they encompass peripheral influences such as social norm, political incentives or peer pressure (Hirsch and Terlau 2015). Situational factors, on the contrary, are able to directly influence behavior. These appear during consumption processes at the point of sale and include parameters such as product attributes, information, price and availability (Carrington 2010).

It is important to note that these factors should not be considered in isolation from one another but viewed as a whole (Caruana 2015). Additionally, in favorable conditions even consumers who do not consciously have pro-sustainable tendencies might act in a pro-sustainable manner during fashion purchase (Joshia and Rahman 2015). Fig.4 gives a more detailed overview on the variety of influencing factors involved in the sustainable consumption process. These can either act as barriers (minimizing) or enablers (maintaining) of the attitude-behavior gap (Zralek 2017).

For research purposes, 4-6 out of the 14 factors have been prioritized and will be analyzed through hypotheses testing within the following chapter.

Fig.3: Decision-making model of sustainable consumption based on Ajzen 1991, Stern 2000, Carrington 2010, Hirsch and Terlau 2015

Fig.4: Influencing factors overview

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1. The ”Theory of Planned Behavior” states that purchase intentions are driven by personal values, moral norms and internal ethics. Moreover, it supposes that attitude always drives behavior (Ajzen 1991)
2. The ”ABC-Model” asserts that next to personal values and moral norms, behavior is also influenced by contextual factors that refer to external influences such as costs or legal factors (Stern 2000)
3. The ”Holistic model of consumption” builds upon the ABC-model and further specifies external factors as situational factors which include POS situations such as availability or accessibility.
4. “Greenwashing” refers to brands using communication strategies to overstate their actual sustainability initiatives in order to make profit.
Attitude

Attitude or sometimes also referred to as “level of environmental concern” (Hirsch and Terlau 2015), is the most fundamental variable in the ABG context. It is often stated that the higher the concern, the higher the possibility of a sustainable consumption intention and behavior. Moreover, moral responsibility and “perceived consumer effectiveness” (Nguyen et al 2018), the degree to which a consumer believes his purchase can have an impact, are other important parameters regarding the variable attitude.

H1.1: A pro-environmental attitude positively impacts sustainable consumption intention and behavior

H1.2: A pro-social attitude positively impacts sustainable consumption intention and behavior

Knowledge

Knowledge, in regards to environmental impact, is the most studied variable. However, even though many researchers have investigated this topic, there is no definite answer whether this variable has a direct influence on behavior. Some challenged its influencing ability whilst others have rejected it (Joshia and Rahman 2015). Thus, knowledge, also in regards to sustainability’s social dimension, needs to be further researched.

H2.1: Increased knowledge on fashion’s environmental impact has a positive impact on sustainable intention and behavior

H2.2: Increased knowledge on fashion’s social impact has a positive impact on sustainable intention and behavior

Trust

Especially in times of “greenwashing” (Peirson-Smith and Evans 2017), consumer trust has become a significant variable. Lacking trust in a brand’s sustainability claims can lead to scepticism amongst consumers and thus pose a substantial obstacle in sustainable consumption (Erve 2013). Transparency and eco-labels, however, are claimed to pose a solution in regards to trust levels in a brand’s sustainability claims. Moreover, a higher price of sustainable fashion is often stated to be a prevailing barrier of sustainable purchase, particularly when consumers do not want to sacrifice personal needs (Henninger and Singh 2017).

H3: Lack of trust has a negative impact on sustainable consumption intention and behavior

Social norm

Due to deeply rooted herd instincts (Hirsch and Terlau 2015) and dress as a symbol of social identity (Niinimäki 2010), social groups such as family, friends or peer-to-peer networks, depending on their tendencies, can have both enabling or preventing effects.

H4: Social groups with pro-sustainable attitudes have a positive impact on sustainable consumption intention

Clothing attributes such as quality and ethicality are pivotal and can positively influence sustainable consumption. However, when the representation of sustainable fashion is limited to a certain color palette or design (Fletcher 2010), it can have a negative effect. Moreover a higher price of sustainable fashion is often stated to be a prevailing barrier of sustainable purchase, particularly when consumers do not want to sacrifice personal needs (Henninger and Singh 2017).

H5.1 A high price has a negative impact on sustainable consumption behavior

H5.2 Hedonic values¹ have a negative impact on sustainable consumption behavior

H5.3 Design stigmas of sustainable fashion have a negative impact on sustainable consumption behavior

Store-related attributes

Store related attributes encompass availability as well as accessibility. Availability refers to stores offering a greater selection of sustainable styles. Accessibility means visibility or clear identification of sustainable clothing in store through convenient and effective communication (Carrington 2010, Joshia and Rahman 2015).

H6.1: Increased availability have a positive impact on sustainable consumption behavior

H6.2: Increased accessibility have a positive impact on sustainable consumption behavior

Conclusion

This chapter formed the theoretical framework of this research report. Various terminologies, concepts and theories have been explored. In summary it can be said that sustainability in both a general and more specific fashion context has gained increasing attention in recent years due to a variety of environmental and social issues highlighted by media, policy makers and key researchers alike. Sustainability requires conscious actions and systematic change and involves an integrative perspective (planet, people, profit). Moreover, it encompasses both production as well as consumption dimension which puts particular emphasis on the consumer behavior of individuals. In regards to fashion sustainability consumers can engage in a variety of consumption processes. However, at times these can be difficult to execute when several individual, social and situational factors prevent consumers from translating their sustainable intentions into actual purchase behavior. Many theories in behavioral psychology have been developed, yet need to be further investigated as no definite answer has been found to this point and consumer behavior is often times context dependent and irrational.

1 ‘Hedonic’ refers to consumer values which are driven by egoistic or self-enhancing tendencies. These often lead to unsustainable behavior when “personal costs associated with sustainability outweigh personal benefits” (Groot and Steg 2009). ‘Altruistic’ values, on the contrary, often lead to sustainable behavior and involve self-transcendent or pro-social tendencies.
3. Methodology

This chapter will explain the methodological approach of this report. It will begin with describing why the methods of quantitative research with hypotheses testing and the conduction of qualitative interviews were prioritized and will continue with explaining the data collection process, including an explanation on the standardized survey method, medium of distribution as well as the semi-structured interview method. Lastly, different variables will be specified.

3.1 Methodology

Both quantitative as well as qualitative research methods were chosen for this report. As the purpose of this report is to explore the antecedents of the attitude-behavior gap, a combination of these methods appears to be the most suitable. This is because quantitative research can investigate key influencing factors by testing pre-defined hypotheses and look at their relationship from a statistical perspective (Stumpfegger 2017). Qualitative research can then build upon these numerical findings and offer a deeper understanding of sustainable consumption behaviors of individuals by “exploring views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations” (Gil et al. 2018, p.292).

3.1.1 Hypotheses

The hypotheses developed in the previous chapter are based on existing theories from primary scholars on the phenomenon of the attitude-behavior gap. As some of them were focused on sustainable consumption within the food industry they were selected carefully and will therefore give new insight for the field of sustainable fashion. The article “Factors Affecting Green Purchase Behaviour”¹ (Joshi and Rahman 2015) functioned as a main guideline.

These hypotheses will be tested in the remainder of this report. Outcomes will result in a “confirmation or disconfirmation” (Bacon-Shone 2015, p.88) of the proposed hypotheses and possibly in a formation of a new theory. Therefore, the hypotheses formation follows a deductive approach which may lead to an inductive outcome (Gray 2014).

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Construction

Quantitative data was collected through a standardized survey method. The survey (App.18,19) was developed with the online software SurveyMonkey and consisted of 37 questions in total. The questions were based on the main influencing factors of the attitude-behavior gap outlined in the previous chapter, including attitude, knowledge, trust, social norm, product related attributes as well as store related attributes. Most of these questions were close-ended questions or statements that could be rated on a ‘5-point Likert scale’² with ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’. To eliminate semi finished results, every question had to be completed in order to move on.

Additional qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews (App.23-34) with four selected respondents that participated in the quantitative survey. Here, questions were based on the same factors investigated in the survey which needed further elaboration as well as on other themes such as consumer behavior, patterns and motivation.

3.2.2 Distribution & Sampling

Survey data was collected through the method of online convenience sampling. This specific type of sampling method enabled the researcher to distribute questionnaires throughout her social media network to receive diverse answers in a short duration of time (Dudovskiy 2018). The questionnaires were additionally distributed in Facebook groups of fashion schools, such as the Amsterdam Fashion Institute, HTW Berlin and UdK Berlin in order to have a wide array of respondents, some with a relatively low level of knowledge on sustainable fashion (own network) and some with a relatively high level (fashion school groups). In total 60 people completed the survey which was probably due to the length of the survey (7 minutes in total) and choice of the format (all questions had to be answered to complete the survey).

Qualitative interviewees were identified after the completion of the survey and contacted via the same social networks the quantitative study was distributed in. In total four additional qualitative interviews were conducted via Skype with a duration of approximately 30 minutes. Interviewees were between the age of 22 and 28 as these belonged to the two largest age groups that participated in the online survey (see ‘age’ 4.1.1). Educational backgrounds of participants were mixed, some with a background in fashion and some without. For the analysis in the next chapter, key statements of the four participants were extracted. The full interviews can be found in the appendix, including a short description and picture of each interviewee (App.23-34).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kieron</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Non-fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Christiane</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Non-fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Francesca</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Fashion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.5: Qualitative interviews participant overview

3.3 Variables

Independent variables are variables being manipulated by researchers whereas dependent variables are variables being measured or, as the word implies, are completely dependent on the independent variables. (Statslectures 2010) In this study sustainable consumption intention and sustainable consumption behavior are dependent variables which will have a direct effect on the attitude-behavior gap. A positive influence on sustainable consumption intention and behavior means bridging or downsizing the gap whereas a negative influence means strengthening or maintaining the gap. Independent variables and thus influencing factors are attitude, knowledge, trust, social norm, product related attributes as well as store related attributes.

1 In this article researchers Yatish Joshi and Zillur Rahman conducted an extensive literature review of 53 empirical scholars on the attitude-behavior gap and summarized occurring factors and themes. The majority of reviewed scholars were focused on the consumption of sustainable products in regards to the environment.

2 The 5-point Likert scale was utilized as it is one of the most reliable measures to collect attitudes, opinions and behaviors and can outline a wider range of tendencies compared to simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers (SurveyMonkey 2019).
4. Analysis

This chapter will summarize and analyze the data collected of both quantitative and qualitative consumer research. Data collection follows a descriptive as well as an inferential approach, meaning that results are described in both numerical and pictorial presentations. This chapter will start by introducing the participant profile and continue with analyzing collected data of key influencing factors outlined in Chapter 2.3.1.

The analysis of each key factor will begin with a (dis)confirmation of the developed hypotheses (3.3.1) and will continue with the explanation of data findings supported by pie chart diagrams as well as Pearson correlation coefficients. Pearson values identify relationships between different variables and statistically test if these factors influence each other in regards to the attitude-behavior gap. Statistically highly significant values involve the value $P < 0.001$ while statistically significant values involve the value $P < 0.05$. Values larger than 0.5 ($P > 0.5$) imply no relationship between tested factors (Bland and Altman 1996). Additional qualitative interviews were conducted to further elaborate on quantitative findings and draw more insightful conclusions.

4.1 Participant Profile

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics

In total 60 people participated in the survey with a completion ratio of 100%. The majority of respondents belong to the 19 to 23 years age group (with 37% in total), closely followed by the 24 to 38 with 35% as well as the 39-50 years age group with 22%. Consistent with the choice of distribution, 63% have a bachelor or master as current education level as well as a relatively low income of 999€ or lower (43%) suggesting that most of the respondents were students from the researcher’s academic network. Higher income levels may therefore relate to participants of older age. Clear distinctions are visible regarding gender and location. 70% of the participants are female, while only 28% stated to be male. Likewise, 75% live in Germany whereas only 17% are located in the Netherlands. In addition, it is noteworthy that 43% of these live in the capital cities.

4.1.2 Consumer Behavior

4.1.2.1 Consumption Patterns

The majority of respondents shop at high street and/or premium stores from which 68% of purchase happens offline and/or 48% online. Brands are either purchased at direct retail locations or through multi-brand retailers such as small boutiques, concept stores or online platforms, amongst others Zalando and Asos. Furthermore, 43% indicate to purchase secondhand clothing regularly either by visiting local stores directly or online re-sale platforms such as Depop or Kleiderkreisel. Moreover, planned purchases happen mainly online whereas spontaneous purchases happen in physical stores.

“I shop secondhand both online and offline. Online platforms such as Depop or Kleiderkreisel I mostly use to find specific items, but shopping in physical stores is more spontaneous.”

“I am definitely more of a spontaneous shopper (...) Sometimes I search for specific brands or discounts online, but most of the time when I buy something offline it is an initiative purchase.”

Concerning purchase frequency, 48% of participants indicated to purchase goods every 2-3 months, 25% once a month and 21% every 6 months.

4.1.2.2 Market Segmentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Segment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premium</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondhand</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

![Age](chart1.png)

![Level of Education](chart2.png)

![Monthly Income](chart3.png)

![Place of Residence](chart4.png)
4.1.2.2 Consumption Motivation

Reasons why respondents purchase clothing at mostly high street or premium retailers as well as secondhand stores or online re-sale platforms are based on different motives.

**High Street**

Respondents mostly purchase at high street retailers due to affordable prices and the desire to be fashionable despite their limited economic resources.

„It’s mostly because of budget why I buy brands such as H&M or Monki. I am still a student and anytime I have the opportunity to buy something stylish which is cheaper I take it. Of course, I’d buy better quality items more often, but that’s simply not possible for me right now….“

**Premium**

Attributes of high quality and durability are decisive reasons why participants purchase at premium brands. Due to limited economic resources these brands are mainly purchased at discount rates.

„Brands like Carhartt or Nudie I mostly purchase online but only when there are special deals or sales. I am trying to build a wardrobe with high quality items that are long-lasting but I also don’t have the money for it to buy them full price.”

**Pre-owned**

There are different reasons why respondents purchase pre-owned clothing. Some find the quality-price ratio important

„Quality is an important aspect for me. I always double check the material and quality of the clothing pieces I find in a secondhand shop and if I am lucky, I can get a clothing piece for a great deal“

while others see the uniqueness of style and/or ethicality as main reasons to purchase pre-owned garments

„Secondhand, especially vintage, I usually buy for style and ethical reasons. These two attributes go hand in hand for me“

„There is no point in buying new things when there are already so many existing ones (...) even if I had all the money in the world, I would still shop secondhand. It is more about my conscience and giving products a new lifecycle.“

Another group, in turn, sees ethicality only as a by-product of secondhand and chooses to purchase it for availability reasons, either when specific items were part of a limited collection or are temporarily sold out in-store.

„I buy secondhand mostly to find items which have sold out and I can’t find in store anymore. (...) Secondhand is not my main motivation when shopping, but when I find something that I like it feels good to have a clean conscience while saving money.”

4.2 Key Concept Results & Analysis

4.2.1 Attitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1.1: A pro-environmental attitude has a positive impact on sustainable consumption intention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1.1: A pro-environmental attitude does not have a positive impact on sustainable consumption behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1.2: A pro-social attitude has a positive impact on sustainable consumption intention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1.2: A pro-social attitude does not have a positive impact on sustainable consumption behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The key variable attitude involves the variables level of environmental concern and level of social concern. Data findings present that 30% of respondents are extremely concerned and 65% are concerned about the environment. Likewise, 30% are extremely concerned and 50% are concerned about social conditions. In addition, many participants believe to be morally responsible to purchase sustainable products. 27% present an extremely high level, while 48% present a high level of moral responsibility.

This suggests that consumers with pro-environmental and pro-social attitudes have positive intentions to purchase sustainable clothing. When it comes to the translation of their attitudes, however, only 22 % of participants are likely to define themselves as sustainable consumer, while the majority takes a neutral position with 47%.

The collected data indicates that positive attitude alone does not influence sustainable consumption behavior. Moreover, it underlines the relevancy of this research as the attitude-behavior gap requires a positive attitude towards both the environment and society of participants.

Additionally, participants are more likely to define themselves as sustainable consumer in regards to the environment than compared to social conditions which is highlighted by the correlation value $p < 0.000643$ in contrast to social impacts with a low correlation value of $p < 0.4331$ (App.23).
4.2.2 Knowledge

H2.1: Increased knowledge on fashion’s environmental impact has a positive impact on sustainable consumption intention

H2.1: Increased knowledge on fashion’s environmental impact does not have a positive impact on sustainable consumption behavior

H2.2: Increased knowledge on fashion’s social impact has a positive impact on sustainable consumption intention

H2.2: Increased knowledge on fashion’s social impact does not have a positive impact on sustainable consumption behavior

The key variable knowledge was assessed by examining participant's self-evaluation on the concept of sustainable fashion. The majority of participants stated to have a neutral opinion, while 25% indicated to have a high level of knowledge, suggesting that consumers are not extremely confident in their knowledge level on fashion sustainability.

In order to determine whether more knowledge could influence sustainable consumption intention and behavior, information on both social and environmental impact of an „unsustainably” produced shirt was provided and asked participants how likely they would purchase this item. Concerning information on unfair working conditions, 38% are likely and 27% very likely to boycott purchasing this item. In regards to information on the negative impact on the environment, only 22% are likely and 23% very likely to boycott this item. Moreover, the majority of participants said they would be likely to purchase sustainable clothing instead, if they knew under which conditions it was made.

These findings suggest that knowledge of social conditions presents a stronger influencing factor than knowledge of environmental issues and more transparency can have a positive impact on an individual’s consumption intentions. Furthermore, displaying information only through facts may not be an effective communication medium in regards to the mixed results on the likeliness to purchase an item knowing its environmental impact.

Qualitative research, on the contrary, highlights the prevailing barrier between intention and actual behavior. Statements suggest that although awareness is important to many participants, other missing factors are responsible for purchase action. These involve, amongst others, altruistic values as identified in the following statement

“I find sustainability a good thing, especially after finding out that the clothes I buy are not always produced under fair conditions or harm the environment. I have to admit though, I still go to H&M or similar stores, mostly because of money reasons (...) But I try to think more about these facts and I feel much more guilty now when I buy something unsustainable”

Besides, knowledge should be considered from a definitional perspective. Interesting qualitative findings were made when consumers were asked to give a definition on sustainable fashion. The majority understood sustainability in context of production with key words such as „organic“, „natural“, „green“ and „fair“, addressing its social and environmental dimension rather than its consumption dimension. In regards to the definitional understanding another interesting finding was made. Although 43% stated to purchase at secondhand stores regularly, only a small number of participants defined themselves as sustainable consumer.

Reason for this could be the choice of mixed market segments (Ch.4.1.2) where respondents stated to purchase both unsustainable (high street and/or premium) as well as sustainable clothing (secondhand). Another reason could be participants’ limited understanding of fashion sustainability. This is supported by qualitative findings in which sustainable consumption was understood as

“... being conscious about what you consume and how much you consume, and understand what goes into the production of a shirt from an environmental perspective.”

“... a combination of buying sustainably produced goods and buying less. ”

which highlights that most respondents do not consider their secondhand consumption behavior as a direct aspect of sustainability in fashion.

Therefore, when considering Geiger’s assessment approach of sustainable consumption from an impact perspective (Ch 2.1), participants are purchasing more sustainably then they intend. This emphasizes that in some cases sustainable purchase behavior is happening unintentionally and thus, the attitude-behavior gap may not be as prevailing as declared by many researchers.
4.2.3 Trust

**H3:** Lack of trust has a negative impact on sustainable consumption intention and behavior

Collected data shows that the majority of respondents have little trust in sustainability claims of brands. Together with the majority’s prevailing barrier to purchase sustainable clothing determined in the discussion of the key concept attitude (4.2.1), this finding suggests that lacking trust poses a significant obstacle. This is additionally supported by qualitative data in which respondents mention “greenwashing” as a barrier to purchase more sustainably.

Moreover, eco-labels and transparency initiatives, which are often claimed to pose a solution to trust issues, did not present a positive influence in this context. Even though more than 52% find eco-labels important and more than 48% would purchase sustainable items if brands were more transparent (4.2.2), according to the Pearson correlation these factors do not necessarily change skeptical attitudes. Here, the value between eco-labels and trust presented a statistically insignificant value of $p < 0.7527$ while the value between transparency and trust demonstrated a similar outcome with $p < 0.9355$ (App.23).

Qualitative statements, on the other hand, posed a solution to the issue of trust. When asking why respondents trusted in certain brands’ sustainability claims, many stated “authenticity” to be a key to trust. The statement additionally suggests that recommendations from close friends could achieve more trust in brands and highlights the need to focus on social factors.

Furthermore, when considering results from different age perspectives, eco-labels and certifications were particularly important for older participant groups with 62% stating it to be important and 30% to be very important for them. Thus, eco-labels may offer greater chance to overcome trust issues for older consumers while recommendations from close friends appear to be more impactful for younger age groups.

4.2.4 Social Norm

**H4:** Social groups with pro-sustainable attitudes have a positive impact on sustainable consumption intention

The key value social norm has a strong impact on individuals’ sustainable fashion consumption. More than 43% of participants indicated that both family and friends as well as brands and their social network can act as strong influencing powers.

Especially in regards to different age groups, a clear distinction can be made. Particularly younger participant groups presented to be more influenced by brands and their social networks. 48% indicated to be likely and 26% to be very likely influenced, while older participant groups appeared to be less influenced by this factor. Here, only 22% indicated to be likely and 8% to be very likely influenced by brands and their social network.

Moreover, the statement of a respondent

“I don’t use Instagram with the intention to imitate what for example bloggers do or wear, but I caught myself being more influenced by it than I thought (...) Last month I donated money to Unicef just because the influencer Wana Limar promoted it on her channel”

underlines the influencing ability of Instagram bloggers next to the social factors ‘family and friends’ and ‘brands,’ particularly with regard to younger consumer groups.
4.2.5 Product related attributes

H5.1 A high price has a negative impact on sustainable consumption intention and behavior

H5.2 Hedonic values have a negative impact on sustainable consumption intention and behavior

H5.3 Design stigmas of sustainable fashion do not have a negative impact on sustainable consumption intention

To assess the variable product related attributes, key parameters such as price, fashionable needs and style were investigated. Results concerning price are contradicting. Although over 53% of respondents state to be ready to pay price premium, more than 42% find sustainable fashion too expensive and would choose price over ethicality. Particularly when differentiating between different age groups, more than 50% of younger respondents find sustainability too expensive in contrast to older respondents with only 15%. Reasons for this are mostly due to participants’ educational situations and closely related low incomes which becomes evident in the following statement:

“I understand that sustainable fashion has to cost more, because it is produced under fair and environmentally friendly conditions, but I am still a student on a budget.”

This stressed sustainable fashion’s “high prices” as barrier to consume more ethically and moreover confirms the hypothesis that hedonic values, such as a lower price, have a negative impact on and individual’s sustainable consumption behavior.

Next to a lower price, other outweighing factors involve fashionability (80%) and quality (90%) suggesting that although participants have pro-environmental and pro-social attitudes and intentions, personal needs are more important to them when it comes to actual purchase behavior. ‘Fashionability’ involves mostly trendiness and fit, apparent in the following statement:

“If I like a specific style and if it fits me very well I don’t want to toss it just because it is not sustainable. That sounds horrible, but sometimes I want to treat myself.”

4.2.6 Store-related attributes

H6.1: Increased availability has a positive impact on sustainable consumption behavior

H6.2: Increased accessibility has a positive impact on sustainable consumption behavior

Similar to results on product-related attributes, participant statements are contradicting in regards to store-related attributes. Although the majority of respondents are willing to make an extra effort to research sustainable brands before purchase, 42% agree and 30% strongly agree that they do not know where to find them. Here, previously mentioned hedonic values, including carelessness, may be the cause or store-related attributes such as limited availability and accessibility.

Collected data underpin these assertions: 43% of respondents agree and 33% strongly agree that they would consume more consciously if their store of choice offered a greater selection of sustainable styles. Likewise, 42% agree and 37% strongly agree that they would consume more consciously if it was easier to identify sustainable clothing in store. Availability and accessibility of sustainable products are therefore impactful factors within the context of sustainable consumption.
Additionally, availability should be considered from two angles. Some interviewees mentioned their peripheral place of residence as a barrier to purchase sustainable products (A) whereas other respondents stated limited availability at their store of choice as an obstacle (B).

(A) „For me it is mostly about low availability why I am not buying more sustainable clothes. Where I currently live there isn’t any sustainable alternative (…)"

(B) „I would love to be more sustainable, but where I like to shop there is usually not a sustainable option. And I have to admit, when I want something specific, I want it right away... I don’t want to wait for it or not buy it if it is unsustainable but fits very well."

Thus, availability should be regarded from locational and habitu-al angles which underlines that both online as well offline channels should work on making sustainability more available and accessible. Moreover, eco-labels could help to improve accessibility in-store (p < 0,30924 between the variables eco-labels & accessibility) and more availability of sustainable products could lead to actual sustainable purchase behavior regardless higher prices (p < 0,000924 between the variables pay price premium & availability) (App.23).

Conclusion

This chapter summarized and analyzed data collected through the quantitative survey method and supportive qualitative interviews mentioned in the previous chapter. Significant influencing factors of sustainable consumption behavior and therefore influencing factors of the attitude-behavior gap could be identified. Enablers of sustainable consumption are knowledge, social norm as well as store-related attributes. Trust and product-related attributes, on the contrary, present serious barriers. On the basis of these behavioral findings, managerial implications will be outlined in the next chapter.

Additional key findings were made concerning the relationship of these factors and unexpected insights about consumption behavior and patterns. Although factors such as ‘trust’ and ‘price’ transpired to be hindering in the process of sustainable consumption, qualitative interviews and statistical correlation values shed light on possible solutions to these barriers. Particularly the factors ‘social norm’ as well as ‘availability’ and ‘accessibility’ could be identified as aiding influences. Instagram and influencers, for instance, can build consumer trust while ease of accessibility of sustainable products in store can drive consumption, regardless higher prices.

Furthermore, when exploring consumption behaviors and patterns, researched showed that although many respondents did not define themselves as sustainable consumers right away, they still behave so unintentionally. A great amount of participants turned out to purchase pre-owned clothing on a regular basis which is, as stated in Chapter 2.2.1, an aspect of sustainable consumption in fashion. In addition, it was interesting to see that a great amount of consumers still purchases clothing offline, particularly because the majority of participants belonged to the younger age group. This highlights that, although online commerce is an important aspect for sustainable fashion brands, offline retail should not be omitted. On the basis of these behavioral findings, managerial implications will be outlined in the next chapter.
5. Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the antecedents and consequences of the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption. A variety of influencing factors which can either strengthen or weaken this gap have been analyzed in the previous chapter. Therefore, on the basis of the examined factors this chapter aims to draw conclusions and give consequential implications which can be useful for fashion managers and marketeers alike.

Attitude

The majority of participants do have a positive attitude toward both environment and society, yet when it comes to actual purchase, this does not translate into action. This indicates that the attitude-behavior gap is still prevalent and attitude alone does not influence sustainable consumption behavior. In order to bridge the attitude-behavior gap and drive actual behavior negative influencing factors or barriers need to be overcome. Numerous positive influencing factors or enablers, can aid in this process.

Barriers

Significant barriers of sustainable consumption intention and behavior are trust and product-related attributes such as price.

Trust

The variable trust poses a significant obstacle in context of bridging the attitude-behavior gap. Research shows that neither eco-labels nor more transparency on social conditions did improve participants’ scepticism. This may be different in other cases, yet in regards to this study it shows that more attention needs to be given to the variable trust in future research. Additional qualitative findings, on the contrary, highlighted that reviews or recommendations from close friends can help to overcome trust issues. Implications to this finding can be found under the topic ‘Social norm’ later in this chapter.

Product-related attributes

Price presented another barrier for the majority of respondents. Many stated to find sustainable fashion too expensive especially in regards to their low income levels and education circumstances (‘student on a budget’). Store related attributes such as more availability in the next section could offer a solution to this problem, yet also new payment models such as renting, leasing or swapping of sustainable clothing could be a new opportunity for brands, mono- and multi-brand retailers alike. Furthermore, as many respondents presented a high affinity to quality in regards to product attributes, communication strategies in marketing could promote the benefits and actual ‘monetary savings’ when investing in a long-lasting, minimal wardrobe.

Enablers

Enablers of sustainable consumption intention and behavior are knowledge, social norm as well as store related attributes.

Knowledge

Respondents showed a positive attitude towards knowledge on sustainability, yet the factual information presented in regards to the environment did not demonstrate a significant influence on sustainable consumption intentions and behavior. Thus, focus should be put on the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘how much’ of communication. Presenting a lot of information which is merely factual may be ineffective. Instead, creative marketing strategies embracing, for instance, storytelling or reverse marketing as well as other communication tools such as simplified labels or scannable QR codes could offer smart and playful solutions in context of information transparency.

More attention should be given to educating consumers on the spectrum of sustainability. In the previous chapter it is apparent that consumers have a limited view on the meaning of sustainability and are more likely to define themselves as sustainable consumer in regards to environmental impact than in regards to social impact although they proved to be more affected by information on social issues. Thus, increasing awareness and knowledge on the definitional aspect may have a positive effect on consumption patterns and could involve, for instance, educational campaigns with celebrity endorsement or social media initiatives.

In consideration of participants’ tendency to purchase second-hand clothing, more awareness on the meaning of sustainable fashion and its ‘pre-owned dimension’ could be beneficial. This could happen in form of educational communication campaigns or business model extensions. The latter could involve new C2B and C2C strategies in which brands or retailers could offer a ‘pre-loved’ garment section or collaborations with secondhand market sellers such as Depop or Thred-Up. If retailers already offer such solutions they should work on better communicating these existing initiatives as several respondents did not associate secondhand garments with fashion sustainability.

Social norm

Participants appear to be extremely dependent on opinions of family, peer groups, their social network or even brands and would become more sustainable if these social groups expressed their pro-environmental or pro-social tendencies. Therefore, marketeers should consider ‘classic’ actions such as celebrity or influencer endorsement via social media or more playful communication approaches. An example for this could be a campaign in which actual peers or ‘the girl/boy next door’ promote sustainable fashion in an authentic and honest manner. Moreover, brands or retailers should make ‘peer-to-peer reviews’ or ‘as recommended by’ more obvious during purchase.

Store-related attributes

Research findings present that more availability of sustainable styles in store can help to overcome hedonic values of respondents and may bring consumers to actually pay indicated price premium rather than choosing unsustainable products instead. As often times respondents do not know where to find sustainable clothing even though it might be already available at certain stores of choice, brands or retailers should improve service as well as communication directly at the point of sale. Service could mean e.g. a personalized shopping or styling experience which considers an individual’s fashionable needs while focusing on sustainability. This could eliminate the risk of purchasing an unsustainable item by displaying only sustainable items to the consumer. Communication at the POS implies to clear product information, usage of labels, visibility in store through visual communication, navigation and an effective store layout. This could be achieved through e.g. color or symbol language, bold/striking lettering, posters, or a web shop redesign.

In addition, see-now-buy-now concepts on Instagram or nicely curated sustainable fashion directly visible on the main page of webshops could increase ease of sustainable purchase.
6. Final Conclusion

6.1 Final Conclusion

In this study, important findings could be made in regards to the antecedents and consequences of the attitude-behavior gap. Through both quantitative and qualitative research methods key enablers and barriers of the purchase of sustainable fashion were identified.

The variables 'knowledge', 'social norm' as well as 'store-related attributes' could be determined as key enablers of the purchase of sustainable clothing. Findings presented that increasing levels of knowledge by providing information on both the environmental as well as social impacts of production can have a positive impact on sustainable consumer intentions. Likewise, social influences including family environment and social media networks presented a positive impact on sustainable intentions. Specifically Instagram presented a strong influencing ability for younger consumers in this context. However, findings furthermore suggested that intentions can only be translated into actual behavior when sustainable clothing is easily available and accessible in-store. Thus, individual and social factors should always be considered in connection with situational factors at the direct point of sale.

The variables 'trust' and 'product-related attributes', on the contrary, could be determined as key barriers of the purchase of sustainable clothing. Particularly lack of trust in brands' sustainability claims posed a significant challenge for respondents. Although participants, especially older age groups, stated to find eco-labels and transparency important, these could not offer a solution to the issue of trust in this study. Product-related attributes, such as higher prices, presented another challenge particularly for younger consumers.

In regards to consumer motivation an behavior, the majority of respondents expressed price-quality ratio and fashionability to be main motives during purchase. In accordance with these findings, a large number of participants, especially younger consumers between the age of 18 and 38, stated to purchase pre-owned clothing on a regular basis due to the factors of price-quality ratio as well as ethicality which lead to the assumption that in regards to sustainable fashion consumption, many are already purchasing clothing in a sustainable manner.

Therefore, managerial implications should not only focus on enabling the purchase of newly produced sustainable clothing but also consider arising opportunities within the pre-owned clothing market in order to minimize the attitude-behavior gap and contribute to a sustainable development at large.

6.2 Future Research

This research report underlined the complexity and extensive-ness of the attitude-behavior gap in regards to fashion sustainability. As many researchers have attempted to examine the wide array of antecedents and have yet failed to draw a comprehensive and coherent conclusion, the manner in which this topic has been approached may have been too exploratory. Significant insights were made which partly confirmed and partly discon-firmed existing theories, yet in order to achieve more tangible and concrete results, attention must be given to a specific factorial angle. Thus, future research could focus on, for example, only situational factors, such as store-related attributes, in order to elaborate on the findings of availability and accessibility at the point of sale. Alternatively, another study could focus on the factor trust as this variable proves to be a prevailing barrier in the context of sustainable fashion consumption.

In regards to methodology, in future research a different distribution medium should be consider as the chosen social media distribution approach did not generate a high amount of participants. Random sampling of a specific population group with additional paper questionnaire distribution could be a more effective method instead. Moreover, a test re-test could improve the researcher's level of confidence in future research.
7. References


Bacon-Shone, J. (2013). Introduction to quantitative research methods. Hong Kong: Graduate School, The University of Hong Kong.


Environmental Education Research, 8(3), pp.239-260.


8. Appendix

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Interview Name   Gender  Age   Background
1  Kieron   M   28   Non-fashion
2  Christiane   F   22   Non-fashion
3  Kim   F   24   Fashion
4  Francesca   F   26   Fashion
Ch.3 Quantitative Online Survey

Sustainable Consumption in Fashion

1. How concerned are you about the environment?

   Not at all  |  Not at all  |  Very concerned

2. How concerned are you about social conditions, e.g. the violation of worker rights?

   Not at all  |  Not at all  |  Very concerned

3. To what extent do you agree?
   "I have a moral responsibility to buy sustainable products"

   Strongly disagree  |  Neutral  |  Strongly agree

4. "With every product I purchase I can make a difference in reducing climate change and/or improving working conditions"

   Strongly disagree  |  Neutral  |  Strongly agree

5. How would you define Sustainable Fashion?

6. How would you rate your knowledge on sustainability in fashion?

   Very little  |  Average  |  Very much

7. Nearly 65% of all clothing produced ends up landfills within a year of being made

   I don't know  |  I know

8. In Pakistan’s garment sector, 87% of women are paid less than the minimum wage

   I don't know  |  I know

9. "Around 1,200 synthetic plastic microfibers per garment are released when washed and enter our oceans"

   I don't know  |  I know

10. How likely would you define yourself as a sustainable consumer?

11. Where do you usually shop for clothes?

12. How often do you shop for clothes?

13. It takes around 2,700 liters of water and 1kg CO2 to produce one cotton shirt - how likely would you purchase this knowing this information?

14. How likely are you willing to make an extra effort to research sustainable brands before purchase?

15. To what extent do you agree?
   "Sustainability takes away the fun of shopping"

16. Sustainable shopping is inconvenient and time-consuming

17. "If I knew where to find sustainable clothing, I would purchase sustainable clothes more often"

18. Which attributes are important to you when purchasing an item?

   Quality  |  Availability  |  Price  |  Brand  |  Ethically  |  Nonflammable / Stylish  |  Other
20. To what extent do you agree?

- Would you pay more for a garment that is produced in a sustainable manner?

| Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree |

20. I would choose an item that meets my fashion needs (style, price, brand etc.) over an item that is produced in a sustainable manner.

| Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree |

21. Sustainable fashion only offers minimalist basics.

| Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree |

22. Sustainable brands are too expensive and not feasible for everyday.

| Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree |

23. Sustainable fashion is confusing.

| Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree |

24. If my store of choice offered a greater selection of sustainable styles, I would purchase sustainable clothing more often.

| Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree |

25. If it was easier to identify sustainable clothing in a store, I would purchase sustainable clothing more often.

| Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree |

26. Eco-labels & certifications are important to me.

| Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree |

27. If I knew who made my clothes and under which conditions, I would purchase sustainable clothes more often.

| Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree |

28. How much do you trust sustainability claims of brands?

| Not at all | Neutral | Very much |

29. If your favorite brand encouraged sustainability, how likely would you try to become more sustainable yourself?

| Not likely | Neutral | Very likely |

30. If your friends and family encouraged sustainability, how likely would you try to become sustainable yourself?

| Not likely | Neutral | Very likely |

28. With this survey in mind how likely will you consider to become more sustainable?

| Not likely | Neutral | Very likely |

32. Are there any other challenges for you to become sustainable & were not mentioned in this survey? Please write below.

33. Age

- Under 18
- 18 - 30
- 30 - 60
- 60 and older

34. Gender

- Female
- Male
- N/A

35. Monthly income

- Less than €999
- €1000 - €1999
- €2000 - €2499
- €2500 - €3999
- €4000 - €9999
- €10000 or above

36. Current level of education

- Primary education
- Secondary education incl. Abitur or HAVO/VWO
- Trade certification or Ausbildung
- Bachelor's or Master's degree
- PhD
- Other

37. Current place of residence
Ch. 4 Data Findings

4.1 Participant Profile

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics

- **Age**
  - 22% 39 – 59 years
  - 37% 18 – 23 years
  - 35% 24 – 38 years

- **Level of education**
  - Bachelor’s or Master’s Degree: 62%
  - Trade Certificate: 17%
  - Secondary Education: 37%

- **Monthly income**
  - 75% Germany
  - 43% Netherlands
  - 18% 999 € or less
  - 15% 1000 € – 1599 €
  - 22% 4000 € – 9999 €

- **Place of residence**
  - High Street: 48%
  - Premium: 45%
  - Luxury: 7%
  - Secondhand: 43%

4.1.2 Consumer Behavior

4.1.2.1 Consumption Patterns

- **Purchase medium**
  - Online: 22%
  - Offline: 43%
  - Both: 35%

- **Purchase frequency**
  - Once a month: 25%
  - Every 2 – 3 months: 48%
  - Every 6 months: 21%

4.1.2.1 Consumption Motivation

- **Price**
  - Extremely concerned: 30%
  - Concerned: 50%
  - Neutral: 17%

- **Quality & Durability**
  - Extremely concerned: 30%
  - Concerned: 65%
  - Neutral: 5%

- **Fashion-ability**
  - Extremely concerned: 22%
  - Neutral: 50%
  - Likely: 47%

- **Ethicality**
  - Extremely concerned: 37%
  - Concerned: 27%
  - Neutral: 4%

- **Availability**
  - Extremely concerned: 25%
  - Concerned: 65%
  - Neutral: 3%

4.2 Key Concept Results & Analysis

4.2.1 Attitude

- **Level of environmental concern**
  - Neutral: 47%
  - Likely: 37%
  - Very likely: 12%
  - Extremely high: 48%

- **Level of social concern**
  - Neutral: 50%
  - Likely: 22%
  - Very likely: 10%
  - Extremely high: 20%

- **Level of moral responsibility**
  - Neutral: 48%
  - Likely: 15%
  - Very likely: 27%
  - Extremely high: 25%

- **Self-definition sustainable consumer**
  - Neutral: 33%
  - Unlikely: 22%
  - Very unlikely: 23%
  - Likely: 10%
  - Very likely: 15%

- **Likelihood to purchase item knowing negative environmental impact**
  - Not likely: 27%
  - Not very likely: 23%
  - Likely: 35%
  - Very likely: 48%

- **Likelihood to purchase item knowing negative social impact**
  - Not likely: 38%
  - Not very likely: 23%
  - Likely: 50%
  - Very likely: 48%
4.2.3 Trust

Level of trust

4.2.4 Social Norm

Family & Friends

Brands

4.2.5 Product related attributes

Readiness to pay price premium

Sustainability is too expensive

4.2.6 Store-related attributes

Willingness to make extra effort to research

Would consume sustainably if I knew where to find

Would consume sustainably if greater selection at POS

Willingness to make extra effort to research

Would consume sustainably if easier to identify at POS

Sustainability only offers minimalist designs

Product attributes

Quality 90%
Price 78%
Ethicality 27%
Fashionability 80%
Ch.4 Data Analysis – Pearson Correlation Values

4.2.1 Attitude

$p < 0.0000643$ between Q10 Likelihood of participants to define themselves as sustainable consumer and Q1 Participants’ level of environmental concern

$p < 0.4331$ between Q10 Likelihood of participants to define themselves as sustainable consumer and Q2 Participants’ level of social concern

4.2.3 Trust

$p < 0.07537$ between Q26 Extent to which participants find eco-labels important and Q28 Participants’ level of trust in brands’ sustainability claims

$p < 0.9355$ between Q27 Likelihood of participants to purchase more sustainably if brands provided transparent information on production and Q28 Participants’ level of trust in brands’ sustainability claims

4.2.6 Store-related attributes

$p < 0.30924$ between Q25 Extent to which participants would purchase more sustainably if it was easier for them to identify sustainable clothing in-store and Q26 Extent to which participants find eco-labels important (POS accessibility)

$p < 0.0000924$ between Q19 Readiness of participants to pay more for a sustainable item and Q24 Extent to which participants would purchase more sustainably if there was a greater selection of sustainable clothing in-store (POS availability)
This interview was conducted with Kieron, a 28-year-old assistant marketing manager for HHV, a wholesale retailer for urban music and street style brands in Berlin. According to him, he doesn't have a big passion for trends and only recently developed a more „conscious“ mindset when it comes to purchasing clothes. He doesn't come from a fashion background (he neither did a fashion-related study nor „Ausbildung“ - the German equivalent to a trade certificate), but only got this job position by chance. When talking with him about his profession, he strictly emphasized that he would not define himself working in fashion as he is mostly responsible for music marketing.

1. CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

IR: How do you usually shop? (BEHAVIOR/PATTERN)

KM: I have to say since I started working at HHV I don't go on shopping that often anymore since we usually receive free merch (merchandise). That doesn't mean that I don't own a lot of clothes, though. I would say for a dude I have quite a big wardrobe. But also, only recently I am trying to minimize my consumption levels.

IR: Does this mean you don't shop for clothes anymore at all?

KM: No, actually when I think about it, I still buy clothes, but not your typical shopping stroll. It's mostly shop local secondhand shops in Berlin where I shop at currently.

IR: When you talk about a „typical shopping stroll“, you probably mean physical shopping, right? What about online shopping?

KM: Yes, that's true, somehow I associate only physical purchase with the expression „go shopping“. But to clarify it then, I also buy clothes online; mostly at wholesale retailers, so shops that carry a lot of different brands, and but only when there are special deals or end of season sales. But as I said in the beginning I try to purchase less now, but I also have to admit when I find a nice piece for a great deal I also wouldn't toss it.

IR: When you purchase online is it rather planned when there are e.g. deals on specific pieces?

KM: No, not necessarily. Some pieces I buy online are planned purchases. If I am looking for a t-shirt on sale, for example, I set the intention to buy a shirt, so that's a specific action I would say. But usually I browse more through the sale section and see if I can find a good deal regardless the style. So online is definitely more spontaneous than planned.

IR: And what about offline?

KM: Funnily enough, offline purchases happen much more planned. I usually have a certain idea in mind what I want and when I go into secondhand stores I check if they have an item similar to that idea. Sometimes I am also drawn to buy something completely different to what I have in mind which would be more of a spontaneous purchase then, but most of the time I walk out and look in a different store for that certain piece then.

IR: Are you familiar with any secondhand platforms and do you use any of these?

KM: Yes I do, I know Kleiderkreisel for instance, Ebay Marketplace or recently I have also heard of Depop. However, I haven't really used any of them yet. I have to invest extra time to get to know the platforms and also, if I order secondhand items directly from other people and if they don't fit me, I am stuck with it. It's a bit of a risk I don't want to take. But if it would be easier to use those platforms, especially return clothes I buy secondhand online, I would definitely do it more often.
IR: Do you have any „staple pieces“ or „essentials“ that you purchase more often than others?

KM: I would say most of the time I actually reach for workwear jackets. I first thought of t-shirts, but if I had to decide on an essential it would be a jacket.

IR: Which brands do you like then?

KM: Patagonia, Brixton, Stussy, Vans, Carhartt and Dickies - not only since I started working at HHV because they carry them, which is a nice bonus, but already before that. They have this casual workwear or skater look and great quality!

2. CONSUMPTION MOTIVATION

IR: Why do you shop this way?

KM: Secondhand, especially vintage I usually buy for style and ethical reasons. These two attributes go hand in hand for me. Individualism or authenticity and sustainability. It's nice that this type of clothing has a certain authenticity to it, rather than buying items that are trying to imitate this look and at the same time rebels against the current system of overproduction and waste. Ironically I also buy similar designs from the previously mentioned brands which are not secondhand…

But online shopping of these brands is mostly for the quality price ratio. I like street style brands that are a bit more pricy. So brands like Patagonia, Carhartt, or Nudie I mostly purchase online but only when there are special deals or sales so I can get high quality items for little money. As I am trying to be more minimalist, I am trying to build a wardrobe with high quality items that are long-lasting but I also don't have the money for it to buy them full price.

IR: Please finish this sentence: fashion to me means…

KM: …over-intentionality & pretentiousness. It is about fitting into a certain group, often practiced by people who don't necessarily believe into the actual meaning they are „dressing themselves in“. Fashion is fostered by trends or desires people don't have but want to be. It can never be authentic or true if you buy into an industry with artificially created trends. Fashion is the doctrine behind style. Style for me is authentic.

3. SOCIAL INFLUENCES

IR: Where do you get inspiration or what would you say influences you to shop this way?

KM: I am mostly influenced by artists or musicians I like. That includes different eras from the past as well as more contemporary artists - what they wear on a concert, on their CD, LP or post on their Instagram

IR: You mentioned Instagram, do you intentionally visit artist profiles to look for inspiration?

KM: No definitely not, I am not that type of guy… It's more by chance that I see what they are wearing in a post when I visit Instagram from time to time

4. SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

IR: How would you define sustainable consumption?

KM: Sustainable consumption is a combination of buying sustainably produced goods and buying less

IR: So you wouldn't define buying secondhand as sustainable?

KM: Somehow I didn't think about it right away because I have always liked to buy secondhand clothing even before this whole sustainability thing started. But when I think about it, sustainable consumption also includes secondhand and maybe even swapping.

IR: Would define yourself as a sustainable consumer then?

KM: Partly yes, partly no. I mean I am intending to buy less and more durable, high quality products and I am buying secondhand but still I wouldn't call myself a sustainable consumer. I still receive and accept a lot of free merch that is
definitely not high quality but made of normal cotton. You could buy a similar shirt at H&M, so I am definitely not a sustainable consumer but I am trying to be better!

**IR:** What are challenges for you to become more sustainable?

**KM:** Definitely the aspect of possessing less and saying no (boycotting) free un-sustainable gifts (the merch mentioned above). But also I think the whole industry needs to change. Of course it is challenging for me to be a sustainable consumer when there is also un-sustainably produced goods out for sale and only slow change is happening from an industry side. Also, it feels wrong that it is only on the consumers nowadays, the government should be much more involved into this whole dilemma!

**5. TRUST**

**IR:** What about trust in brands’ sustainability claims, is that an issue for you?

**KM:** I actually didn't think about that yet, but I don't think that is an issue for me… I just recently read that Patagonia for instance is doing a lot when it comes to sustainability and I believe them. They are such a big company, why would they risk lying about what they do. I mean in the era of the internet and info-overload we can basically research everything.

**IR:** Why do you believe Patagonia?

**KM:** Probably because it seems authentic what they do. It fits to the way they present themselves and not like a marketing tool. It's still part of their marketing strategy of course, but it’s an honest one. So I guess authenticity is the key to achieve trust.

**6. KNOWLEDGE**

**IR:** What do you think about this statement? „Knowledge is the first step to sustainability“

**KM:** I think it is true. I believe knowledge is the first step to sustainability, but simply leaving it by providing knowledge and not doing anything to make sustainable fashion more accessible to people isn’t the answer either. We know it from using less plastic. Everybody knows it is bad for the environment, but we still use it and it is still offered to us. There need to be other steps taken to actually achieve sustainability.

**IR:** Should brands help to achieve more „knowledge“?

**KM:** Definitely, it would be a start. But when I consider your question of trust again, it should be authentic. I mean, how can a brand that is not really sustainable work on making consumers more aware? It’s a bit paradoxical…

**IR:** Making consumers more aware in general is one thing, but providing adequate information is another. What do you think about this brand's initiative? Would you purchase something at this brand given this information?

**KM:** Besides the fact that I wouldn't shop at this brand because it looks like they only carry clothes for women, I think its good that they provide information. It shows that they don't have something to hide in their production processes. But honestly I with some numbers I don't know what to do with them. Good that they talk about „savings“ that always works well, but 1747 gal? what if it was only 150? would that be good too? I’m not sure…

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INTERVIEW #2 – CHRISTIANE

This interview was conducted with Christiane, a 22-year-old interior architecture student living outside of Bonn. She doesn't have a background in fashion, but an eye for aesthetics and design. Nonetheless, she doesn't invest in designer pieces as she is currently on a 'student budget'.

1. CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

IR: How do you usually shop?

CK: I usually shop online because where I currently live I don't like the selection of stores. They don't really fit my style and secondhand shops, for example, aren't available at all. When I was still living in Berlin I mostly went to local secondhand stores to buy vintage items. I also went to a lot of flea markets because there people sold more pre-owned items from last seasons and not only old pieces which I liked even more. I just really like the idea behind somebody not wanting a clothing piece anymore and me giving it a second life. Sadly these times are over and I only have online options.

IR: You said you shop mostly online, where do you usually shop?

CK: Mostly at Zalando (multi-brand retailer), but also sometimes directly at H&M, Monki, Mango or even &otherstories or Arket when there is a sale.

IR: Zalando, for instance, can be quite overwhelming with all those different brands offered with similar styles. Do you shop for specific pieces or brands then?

CK: That depends which online shop I visit. At Zalando I definitely plan upfront what I want or what I need. It is good that they have a selection but I definitely need to filter their selection. I am usually looking for specific items like a shirt or pants rather than a brand. Except Dr. Martens, I believe that is the only brand I intentionally search on Zalando.

IR: You mentioned that you 'plan upfront', do you usually buy items more planned?

CK: Again, that depends on which shop I visit and where I am. I am definitely more of a spontaneous shopper because where I live, you can't really plan to go anywhere specific because there isn't really any nice store I would like to go to specifically. It is more about being lucky when you find something that you like. Sometimes I search for specific brands or discounts online though, but most of the time when I buy something offline it is an initiative purchase.

IR: Do you know about online secondhand platforms? And have you every bought something there?

CK: I sometimes shop at Kleiderkreisel or Ebay when I have time to look for specific brands such as Dr.Martens and want to save some money before buying a new pair. But recently I didn't have so much time to do some secondhand hunting.

IR: Could you elaborate on 'hunting'?

CK: With hunting I mean really searching for pieces I want and that actually match my needs. It can be quite a challenge sometimes to find items which looks reasonably good and have a fair price. Sometimes it takes weeks to find what I am
looking for which can be fun sometimes but when you don't have time and really want something right away it can be frustrating. That's probably why I choose to shop online mostly at new stores and not secondhand platforms.

IR: And concerning favorite brands, you mentioned Dr. Martens a couple of times, what are other brands you like?

CK: I mentioned some already before. I also like Mango, &otherstories or Arket, but I have to say I don't shop at these brands often because where I live they are not available directly and, I think that's the more important reason, I currently don't have the money to always shop at those brands.

2. CONSUMPTION MOTIVATION

IR: You mentioned money and availability as reasons why you shop this way, are there any other reasons?

CK: No, these are exactly the reasons why. For me, it is mostly about availability why I am shopping online. And concerning the brands I buy, it's mostly because of my budget why I buy brands like H&M or Monki. I am still a student and anytime I have the opportunity to buy something I like which is cheaper, I take it. Of course, I'd buy better quality items more often, but that's simply not possible for me right now.

That's also the reason why I went secondhand shopping so often in Berlin, you don't just get a nice, unique item but you also get a piece of clothing which has a much better quality than e.g. H&M for a low price and it's an extra benefit to do something good for the environment. Just when you think about it, it's insane how much clothing is thrown away each year, so it feels good to do something against it and give something a second life.

3. SOCIAL INFLUENCES

IR: Where do you get inspiration or what would you say in fluences you to shop this way?

CK: Mostly social media, like Instagram when I see stories of others. This is probably the answer you want to hear, but I also have to admit I am a bit too old for this whole influencer business I think… So I also have to say it is definitely the community where I live. My friends inspire me a lot in what I wear.

IR: Please finish this sentence: fashion to me means…

CK: … self-expression, bargain hunting and judging from my closet sometimes also abundance

4. SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

IR: How would you define sustainable consumption?

CK: Sustainable consumption means to be conscious about what you consume and how much you consume, to understand what goes into the production of a shirt from an environmental perspective.

IR: So secondhand is not sustainable in your eyes?

CK: Yes, it does! I just wouldn't count it to sustainable consumption somehow… I mean if you would ask me again I would say sustainable consumption also incorporates secondhand, but I think it is more the purchase of newly produced sustainable products which are e.g. made of organic cotton or recycled materials that I would count to sustainable consumption. But maybe that's because it is mostly represented like this in media or from bigger brands.

And also, when I'm thinking about it now I probably didn't mention secondhand right away because my first intention when buying used clothing is not to be sustainable, that's only a by-product for me. It's mostly the uniqueness or value for price I am looking for.

IR: What are challenges for you to become a sustainable consumer?

CK: The problem is, I would love to be more sustainable, but firstly it is definitely the price. The few sustainable brands I know are way too pricy for me. And secondly, where I shop there is usually not a sustainable option. And I have to admit, when I want something specific, I want it right away (…) I don't want to wait for it or not buy it if it is unsustainable but fits.
IR: Availability for you mostly refers to in-store availability then?

CK: No not only in-store, but I guess also the location. So to clarify, for me it is also about low availability where I currently live why I am not buying more sustainable clothing. Also, as we discussed secondhand as sustainable option, even availability of secondhand clothing is a major challenge for me. I mean I could visit those typical charity shops where I live, but I also want to buy something I like and I feel comfortable in. If I only buy something so I buy it from a secondhand source and I never wear it, it doesn't make sense.

5. KNOWLEDGE

IR: Oftentimes many state their low level of knowledge on sustainability to be a challenge to buy more sustainably, what is your opinion on that? Do you feel the same?

CK: I believe knowledge is really important to be more sustainable. Only if you are aware of the impact our consumption behavior has on the planet, you are only then ready to make a change. If you don't know it, you can't change anything. But in regards to my current situation, just giving knowledge isn't the only way to sustainability. If there is limited availability, I can't be more sustainable although I find sustainability important.

IR: You also participated in the online survey a few weeks ago. Could you give a statement on the facts and if they have influenced the way you have bought clothes recently?

"Nearly 60% of all clothing produced ends up in landfills within a year of being made"
"In Pakistan's garment sector, 87% of women are paid less than minimum wage"
"Around 1,900 synthetic plastic microfibers per garment are released when washed and enter our oceans"

CK: The thing is, I find sustainability a good thing, especially after finding out that the clothes I buy are not always produced under fair conditions or harm the environment. I have to admit though, I still go to H&M or similar stores, mostly because of money reasons. I feel terrible to say it and even be in a situation like that, but I try to think more about these facts and I feel much more guilty now when I buy something unsustainable

IR: What do you think about this brand's way of providing information? Would you shop at this brand?

CK: It looks really nice and it is good that they inform their customers and what their impact or better environmental savings are. I would definitely buy something from this brand, I just wonder how much it costs, if it is sustainable it can't be too cheap.

6. TRUST

IR: Would you trust in this sustainability initiative?

CK: For that I would have to know more about what these actual savings mean. It is great that they mention them though.

IR: Have you ever considered trust to be an issue for you to buy or not buy a sustainable product?

CK: Not that I know of, I mean I don't intentionally shop at sustainable brands because I believe they don't work with my budget. It might be a different situation if I could spend more money on clothes, then I could see myself being more skeptical. But for now I know that the brands I shop at are not sustainable and therefore also don't promote it
This interview was conducted with Kim, a 24-year-old photographer who just finished her studies a few months ago. She currently lives in Amsterdam and makes a living with beauty product stills and fashion editorial stories for different magazines. She calls herself a fashion lover, but usually doesn't consider the aspect of sustainability when purchasing new clothing.

1. CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

IR: How do you usually shop?

KG: I mostly shop at &otherstories or smaller independent boutiques close to where I live when I have time for a whole day of shopping directly in stores. But when I don't have time, which happens often when I have a lot of projects going on, I buy things online.

IR: Which stores do you visit online?

KG: A combination of also smaller random brands such as Miista or Justine Clenquet which are a bit more on the pricy side, but also &otherstories or even Depop or Etsy sometimes.

IR: Would you define your shopping behavior are planned or spontaneous?

KG: That depends on availability of course, but I would say rather planned. Especially because I mostly purchase things online, the way I shop is mostly planned then.

IR: And what are your favorite brands?

KG: The ones I mentioned above, so more premium or high end brands because I believe they have much better quality and you can also see it I think. But I also like Prada or Nanuskha a lot, but sadly cannot afford a lot of pieces from them.

IR: Please finish this sentence: fashion to me means…

KG: … freedom, passion, creativity

2. CONSUMPTION MOTIVATION

IR: Why do you shop this way?

KG: As I said it is mostly time and availability. Online I can look for something anytime of the day and especially when I have to work full day, mostly six days a week, shopping in physical stores is barely possible for me nowadays. (…) The way I shop mostly targets specific items I have in mind which I saw on a shooting for instance and fell in love with.
IR: What about the online secondhand platforms you mentioned earlier, why do you shop at Depop for instance?

KG: I buy at secondhand options mostly to find items which have sold out and I can’t find anymore in store. Secondhand is not my main motivation when shopping, but when I find something that I like it feels good to have a clean conscience while saving money. (…) But especially now as I feel sustainability is becoming an increasing concern, I try to shop as much secondhand as I can when I want to have something specific and I know it is already existing. This is mostly online though, because when I am purchasing things in store it is mostly impulsive - if I like something I buy it, no matter if it is sustainable or not. But I think if there were more sustainable options directly in store I would definitely choose those.

IR: Do you also shop secondhand offline?

KG: Yes, I shop secondhand both online and offline (…) Online platforms such as Depop or Kleiderkreisel I mostly use to find specific items, but shopping secondhand in physical stores is more spontaneous. I mean it makes sense, you cannot plan what might be available in secondhand shops.

3. SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

IR: So the challenge for you to be more sustainable depends on availability?

KG: Yes definitely, I would love to be more sustainable, but where I like to shop there is usually not a sustainable option. And I have to admit, when I want something specific, I want it right away (…) I don’t want to wait for it or not buy it if it is un-sustainable but fits very well. If I like a specific style and if it fits me very well I don’t want to toss it just because it is not sustainable. That sounds horrible, but sometimes I want to treat myself. Also, I believe one item won’t really make a difference when I am not really wasteful in general.

IR: You said that secondhand is a way for you to be more sustainable, did you always know that buying pre-owned garments is a part of sustainable consumption?

KG: Funnily no, I mean it sounds logical now but I only realized it recently when I talked to a colleague of mine during a shooting we did that involved some vintage pieces. Of course extending the life cycle of a garment without producing a new one it is much more sustainable than producing a new one even if it is made of organic or recycled materials, but I believe many feel the same. Sustainability is mostly linked to words eco, organic or fair which doesn’t necessarily scream secondhand. And also, buying pre-owned items like designer bags isn’t a new thing, that’s probably why many, including me, don’t associate sustainability with it right away.

4. TRUST

IR: We already touched upon challenges to consume more sustainably but I would like to hear your opinion on two more factors which can be a challenging sometimes. What do you think about trust?

KG: Now that you are mentioning it, trust is quite a challenge for me. It’s sometimes very fascinating when I read about all these different sustainable brands that are now on the market. They never really interest me because on one side, they all look the same to me, on the other side I believe it’s mostly greenwashing. I mean just think about the fact that a majority of brands just started a business when sustainability become popular. And founding a new brand that offers sustainable alternatives isn’t that sustainable in my opinion.

IR: What would be a solution to this trust issue for you?

KG: It (trust) is a major challenge, but I would definitely trust in the advise of my close friends. If they told me that a particular brand is actually sustainable, I would shop there without any doubts.
5. KNOWLEDGE

IR: You also participated in the online survey a few weeks ago. Could you give me a statement on the facts and if they have or would influence you more when purchasing new clothes?

Nearly 60% of all clothing produced ends up in landfills within a year of being made

In Pakistan's garment sector, 87% of women are paid less than minimum wage

Around 1,900 synthetic plastic microfibers per garment are released when washed and enter our oceans

KG: These facts are definitely shocking, but I think that knowledge alone doesn't help. I mean look at smoking campaigns, we all know it and we still smoke and with fashion it is even worse. These unsustainable things happen so far away from us and don't even directly effect our health or at least not as badly as smoking. It is easy to push these facts away when we are in store and like something.

IR: What do you think about this statement then?

„Knowledge is the first step to sustainability“

KG: It’s surely true, you can only change your behavior when you know about what is going wrong. But again, knowledge alone doesn’t necessarily change our behavior.

IR: What about giving positive information? What do you think about this brand's transparency initiative?

KG: I don't know what these numbers mean, but I see something about savings and that always sounds good. But as I said earlier I am very skeptical about all these brands throwing around with their sustainable actions like there is no tomorrow. I understand that apparently consumers demand this type of information, but I’m just a bit doubtful.

IR: So you wouldn't purchase something from this brand?

KG: I mean if they have nice stuff and if it was on my radar when shopping online why not. But just because they mention these facts in their campaign I wouldn't, honestly.

6. SOCIAL INFLUENCES

IR: Where do you get your inspiration or what influences you to shop this way?

KG: Mostly when I look for inspiration for my shoots and check out what the competition is doing in other fashion magazines (laughs). Of course I also use social media platforms to find general inspiration but I also have to say that I don't use Instagram with the intention to imitate what for example bloggers do or wear. But I caught myself being more influenced by it than I thought (...) Last month I donated money to Unicef just because the influencer Wana Limar promoted it on her channel.
INTERVIEW #4 – FRANCESCA

This interview was conducted with Francesca, a 26-year-old fashion student commuting between Berlin and Amsterdam. As she has a background in fashion, she is well aware of current developments within the fashion industry including sustainability. Nevertheless, she does not purchase clothing at sustainable brands.

1. CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

IR: How do you usually shop?

FS: I have to say, I don’t visit normal shops anymore. I used to shop a lot at H&M, Zara or Mango but in recent years I changed my routine completely. Now I only shop at secondhand shops or vintage boutiques. Sometimes I go to car boot sales as well if the weather plays along.

IR: Does this mean you don't buy clothing online anymore?

FS: No, not at all. There are great secondhand options online. Vestiaire Collective for example is one of my favorite websites to find good deals on vintage designer pieces, but I also visit Depop or Kleiderkreisel when I look for more recent pre-owned brands or basic items from e.g. COS or similar brands.

IR: Would you say you are more of a „planned“ buyer then, that you want a specific item and look for it everywhere?

FS: Not necessarily. When I shop online I am definitely more specific in what I am looking for and with all these personalization tabs its much easier to find specific pieces than compared to physical stores. For example, I can tick boxes concerning which type of clothing I want, in which color, which size and which price it should have. That’s not possible offline.

So I would say in physical stores I am more spontaneous, kind of like a treasure hunter and online much more planned. Sometimes though, I browse through different secondhand platforms and see what they have, kind of like a quick version of physical shopping.

IR: Do you have any favorite brands or staple pieces you like to buy secondhand?

FS: It depends where I shop. Of course, if I make a great steal I prefer designer brands such as Prada, Dior or Jean Paul Gaultier but I also don’t mind if it is a no name brand if the material has a nice feel, good quality and most importantly a perfect fit. It could even be a piece that was just in store last season or even from brands like COS or Arket. (…)

And for a staple I’d say a blazer. I don’t think essential items should mean only basic shirts, but can also be more dressy depending on what you like as a person.

2. CONSUMPTION MOTIVATION

IR: Why do you shop this way?

FS: Mostly because I believe there are already so many existing clothes out there. I mean, we are living in a world of overproduction, I don’t want to be a part of this consumerist society that pushes production more and more when we already have all the resources to give existing clothes a second live.
IR: Is this the reason why you don't buy clothing at sustainable brands?

FS: Yes, that's probably the biggest reason why. There is no point in buying new things to support the linear economy when it ruins our planet. Although these new independent brands claim to be sustainable, for me it is not the case. They might use organic cotton, dye without toxins or even recycle plastic, but in the end they still produce new clothing which first of all needs energy and second of all still adds to this consumerist behavior. Again, I just don't understand why new clothes need to be produced when there are already so many existing ones out there.

IR: What if you had all the money in the world?

FS: Even if I had all the money in the world, I would not purchase at e.g. Prada. Possibly at Stella McCartney to keep it real, but even she doesn't produce everything sustainably. But to come to the point I want to make, it is more about my conscience and giving products a new lifecycle. Of course, sometimes you still can't buy items secondhand such as socks, underwear or swimwear but that is on the industry of how they can improve production processes, such as re-cycling these specific items.

IR: So for you it is only the aspect of sustainability why you shop secondhand?

FS: That's not the only reason. Because I am still a student I can find nice pieces for cheaper or designer pieces for the price of a premium brand which is amazing (…) So quality is an important aspect for me as well. I always double check the material and quality of the clothing pieces I find in a secondhand shop and if I am lucky, I can get a clothing piece for a great deal.

But I would nonetheless say that although quality-price ratio is important to me, it's more about doing something against our current wasteful system while finding pieces which help me build a unique wardrobe. I would not mind to only get a new piece every 6 months and save my money for it until then. With secondhand you can find your own style and actually become more creative yourself to create something that is re-worked or tailored to you. It doesn't mean that you are unstylish if you don't keep up with the artificially produced trends of our culture. It is also some kind of creativity challenge to go out looking for secondhand clothes.

Also, I always consider that I can customize garments if they don't fit me; if I buy clothes at secondhand shops some garments are worn in and don't have the exact fit anymore they used to have, especially when vintage shopping, but that should not be a reason to pass it on or not purchase it. When I really like the item I am more than willing to get it tailored to my specific body shape, especially when the garment has a high quality and will last very long. For retailers such as Zara or H&M U would never consider getting it tailored as the quality is not as good and it wouldn't be worth it.

IR: Please finish this sentence: fashion to me means…

FS: … no trends, no overconsumption & giving clothes a second life.

3. SOCIAL INFLUENCES

IR: Where do you get your inspiration or what influences you to shop this way?

FS: Mostly my school education and critical mind on society is what influences me to be more conscious. But concerning my style, of course I have to mention Instagram but rather as an unconscious source. Intentionally, though, it is online magazines or curated web shops such as Ssense. They have managed to find the right balance between an online store and a magazine (referring to e-commerce editorial design). It's a great way to see what the high end and luxury markets are doing and then see which looks I could find secondhand or vintage to re-create them myself.
4. SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

IR: What is sustainable consumption?

FS: Definitely only purchasing products secondhand! For some pieces like underwear, socks or swimsuits I am fine with recycled fabrics, but other than that it should always be secondhand.

IR: What are challenges for you to become a sustainable consumer?

FS: I think I am already quite sustainable, but sometimes it is still the underwear and socks like I said. I would even consider myself a minimalist, especially when I am at my parents' place because there is not one nice secondhand store around.

IR: Where do you see challenges for others then?

FS: I can see the challenge in this whole sustainable consumer context. Many probably see sustainable fashion only as newly produced garments under environmentally friendly or fair conditions. That is of course very narrow minded but if you only view it from this angle, then I wouldn't be a sustainable consumer either. I think this is also a major fault caused by media representation of sustainability. The way it is portrayed on e.g. Instagram is very superficial and like I said only puts emphasis on the part of production or consumption of newly produced items. It still feeds this new and opulent consumption rather than supporting a minimal mindset. (…) In a capitalistic world in which only profit counts this is very well understandable, but in order to find actual future-proof solutions I believe the industry needs to come up with different solutions rather than feeding into this system in which only the new is desirable.

5. KNOWLEDGE

IR: I had some questions prepared concerning knowledge, but rather from an angle of how providing adequate information on production could lead to the consumption of sustainable products. But I think you made your opinion on buying newly produced sustainable clothing quite clear… Could you still give my your opinion on this statement?

„Knowledge is the first step to sustainability“

FS: I mean it is part of it (…) it depends on how you grow up and what kind of values you learn while growing up. Knowledge on what is happening in the industry is so important, to see what goes into e.g. making a shirt. I talked to my dad about it and watched The True Cost with him and he was so shocked by it, he kept talking about it for days…But also, he doesn't really change his behavior.
People like to live in their comfort zone or you just too ignorant. And especially with the example of my dad in mind - and not considering that I find the average sustainable clothing piece not sustainable - many don't know where to get „more sustainable“ items or simply don't have the means to do so. Either because of financial resources or because where they live, H&M for instance, is the only option.

6. TRUST

IR: What about trust, is there a way brands could be more trustworthy even for the ones amongst us who have thrown in the towel?

FS: That is quite a challenge I believe (…) but I also don't think it is hopeless. I think if a big player like H&M really translated its plans of being circular into action and completely changed the way we consume now, then I think I wouldn't be so skeptical anymore. As for now, these claims are full of hot air (referring to greenwashing or over exaggerating on initiatives for marketing purposes).