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IMPACT OF CONSUMER TRAITS AND PREFERENCES ON SUSTAINABLE FASHION CONSUMPTION

How different fashion consumers perceive sustainable fashion practices

Noora Lähdesmäki

International Business
Bachelor's Thesis
Supervisor: Srdan Zdravkovic
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ABSTRACT OF BACHELOR'S THESIS

Author: Noora Lähdesmäki
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Objectives
The main objective of the study was to identify connections between fashion consumer types and sustainable fashion practices. The study introduces three fashion consumer types that research has identified: self-consumers, social consumers, and conscious consumers. Furthermore, the sustainable fashion practices introduced are repairing, reselling, and renting. This study aims to identify which fashion consumer type is likely to prefer each sustainable fashion practice, in order for fashion brands to adjust their sustainability practices based on their target fashion consumer type.

Summary
This study focuses on fashion consumers' preferences and behavior regarding sustainable fashion practices. Traits and values of the three types of fashion consumers are further explored in the research. Primary data was gathered utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research methods in the form of two interviews and an online survey. The interviews assisted in hypothesis construction and survey design, whereas the survey collected data on consumers' actual sustainable fashion practice preferences.

Conclusions
The quantitative research and data analysis found that on the basis of this study, all three fashion consumer types prefer resell over repair or rental services. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the more a fashion consumer classifies as a conscious consumer, the higher their preference to each sustainability practice will be. An inverse effect towards sustainable fashion practices was found in the other two fashion consumer types. The study additionally concluded that simple and positive communication of fashion brands' sustainability objectives motivates sustainable fashion consumption.

Key words: consumer behavior, consumer identity, fashion, sustainable development, clothing industry

Language: English

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OUTLINE
Bachelor's Thesis

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1. INTRODUCTION

This section is an introduction to the research on sustainable fashion practices and consumers' motivations towards sustainable fashion. Firstly, background is given for the study as well as the topic of research. Secondly, the research problem and research questions of this study are identified. Finally, the structure of this research is explained.

1.1. Background

The fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world (Niinimäki, 2013). The two most important stakeholders of the fashion industry overall can be considered to be those who supply fashion – brands, and those who buy fashion – consumers. Amongst both brands and consumers awareness of the unsustainability issues in fashion has been raised in the recent years (Kutsenkova, 2017, McNeill & Moore, 2015). In order for the industry to make a change into a more sustainable direction, fashion brands as well as consumers have an equal responsibility in considering their actions.

The change into a more sustainable fashion industry needs to be taken step by step. Some fashion brands have begun to implement sustainability in their operations, offering different sustainable services and products (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020). Existing research introduces sustainable fashion practices such as repairing, reselling, and renting (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020, Nellström & Saric, 2019, Niinimäki, 2013, Sandvik, 2017, Strähle & Schnaidt, 2017). Fashion brands that are new to the sustainable fashion practices ought to start with one thing, such as the implementation of one sustainable alternative in their operations. In order for fashion brands to know where to start it is crucial to identify what type of sustainable practices they have demand for. There are differences among fashion consumers in regards to fashion item trait preferences and fashion consumption habits. Previous research divides fashion consumers into three consumer types – self-consumers, social consumers,

and conscious consumers (McNeill & Moore, 2015, Niinimäki, 2010). Different fashion consumer types can be expected to prefer different sustainable fashion practices. The right sustainable fashion practice for each fashion brand therefore exists, it simply requires to be identified. A slow and sustainable change towards a more sustainable fashion industry can in this way be set in motion.

1.2. Research Problem and Research Questions

This research studies the connections of fashion consumers and sustainable fashion practices. Fashion consumers have differences in characteristics such as valued traits in clothing items, fashion consumption behavior as well as purchase frequency. Different consumers most often respond to fashion practices in different ways, thus differences in attitudes towards sustainable fashion practices are likely to exist.

For the purpose of this study it was necessary to identify the traits and preferences of different types of fashion consumers. Additionally, the potential existence of connections between consumer types and sustainable fashion practices required potential identification. To further specify the connections it was necessary to research which sustainable fashion practices out of repairing, reselling, and renting were preferred among the different consumer types. The fashion consumer types used in this study were self-consumer, social consumer, and conscious consumer. The purpose of this study is to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the fashion consumption preferences of a self-consumer, a social consumer, and a conscious consumer?

RQ2: Is there a connection between fashion consumer types and fashion brands' sustainability practices, and which consumer type prefers which sustainability practice?

RQ3: Which one of the three sustainability practices – repairing, reselling, and renting – should fashion companies implement depending on their target consumer group?

1.3. Thesis Structure

This research paper is divided into six sections. The first section is the introduction, where the background as well as objectives of this study are introduced. The second section is the literature review, which summarizes and discusses the existing literature of the topic of research. This section additionally offers more in-depth background on fashion consumers as well as sustainable fashion practices for the primary research of this study. Third section is the methodology, which introduces and describes the methods used for the primary research, and the reasoning behind the chosen research methods. The findings, which is the fifth section, summarizes and analyses the data collected in the primary research. The data analysis and research results are further examined in the fifth section, the discussion, which also addresses the limitations of this study. The final part, the conclusion, combines and discusses all the findings of this study and proposes implications for international business on the basis of these findings. In addition, the final section elaborates on suggestions for further research on the topic of this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the paper examines and summarizes the existing literature of sustainable fashion consumption and sustainability practices in the fashion industry. Firstly, sustainability is defined in general and in the context of fashion. Secondly, the drivers of sustainable consumer behavior are examined and proposed fashion consumer types are introduced. Thirdly, three different sustainable fashion practices – repairing, reselling, and renting – are defined. The last chapter of this literature review provides a framework that is built based on the findings of the examined literature. The framework will later be used for research in primary data collection.

2.1. Introduction

Sustainability is a phenomenon that has brought up discussion across industries (Niinimäki, 2013, Beard, 2008). From green energy to climate-compensated shipping alternatives, electric cars, recycled materials, and plant-based alternatives for meat and dairy – the newly emerged trend of sustainability and eco-friendliness across industries (Quoquab & Mohammad, 2020). Fashion is an industry where defined sustainability goals in product design, manufacturing, material choice, as well as consumer relationships have gained popularity in particular. This has resulted in environmentally aware consumers raising demand for what is considered “sustainable fashion”. Brands are increasingly introducing different sustainable fashion practices such as reselling, repairing, and renting fashion items (Niinimäki, 2011, 2013). In order for these sustainable practices to become an industry-wide norm for fashion brands, consumers’ interest needs to further increase. The following sections introduce the phenomenon of sustainable fashion as well as motivating factors for fashion consumers to purchase sustainable alternatives over non-sustainable fashion items.

2.2. Defining Sustainability

The term “sustainability” can be defined in various ways. In the year 1987 the World Commission on Environmental Development defined sustainable development as

“development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Kotob, 2011). Studies have found that the definition of sustainability can differ depending on the object of study. Environmental sustainability is defined by Niinimäki (2013) as finding “sustainable balance in the use of economic, social, and environmental resources while simultaneously taking care not to destroy the ability of future generations to fulfil their needs in a sustainable way”. Thus, the core concept of environmental sustainability is maintaining the state of the environment as livable for future generations through new business practice innovations that don’t cause damage.

During the last decade more research has been conducted in the field of sustainability. Consumers and people all over the world have become more aware of global warming and its universal effects (Beard, 2008). Research goes mostly into environmental sustainability, although the other sustainability areas – economic and social – ought to be researched just as well. Kotob (2011) expresses concern for the meaning of the term sustainability to be mis-understood, as researchers have different ways of defining it depending on their research objective. A particular study puts the goal of sustainability and ecological balance considerably simply when looking at the phenomenon from a wider perspective; according to the study there must simply be “a trade-off between producing, supplying, and purchasing goods and the preservation and maintenance of natural resources” (Kutsenkova, 2017).

As CEO’s and entrepreneurs have acknowledged consumers’ preferences for ecologically friendly and sustainably made products over their non-sustainable competitors, the entire business world has started implementing the movement of sustainability (Kutsenkova, 2017). Business strategists have begun to change their plans into more environmentally sustainable ones to address and affect issues such as climate change, global warming, and pollution (Quoquab & Mohammad, 2020, Tran, 2021). However, this shift might not be so easy, since achieving sustainability has been most often assumed to be uneconomical and result in business degrowth (Kotob, 2011, Niinimäki, 2013). The most affordable materials and fashion production practices are also often the most unsustainable ones. Fashion business owners might be reluctant to adopt more environmentally sustainable practices since it is simply more expensive, and could result in less profits for the company (Kotob, 2011).

2.2.1. Unsustainability Issues in Fashion

Fashion and environmental sustainability are often considered as phenomena that cancel each other out, as fashion is associated with fast production, overconsumption, and materialism (Ozdamar & Atik, 2015). According to Niinimäki (2013), textile and clothing consumption create 5% of households' carbon emissions and negative environmental impact. The fast fashion industry aims to produce styles and clothing to continuously meet the newest trends, the life expectancy of an individual piece of clothing shortening more and more over time (Clark, 2008). The fashion industry creates casualties in the environment as well as people, as the speed of production is prioritized before the well-being and the salaries of workers, or the quality and sustainability of materials used in production (Clark, 2008, Niinimäki, 2013). As the market of fashion has become global and accessible to nearly anyone, consumers increasingly demand clothing that follows the current trends and is produced fast (Kutsenkova, 2017, Ozdamar & Atik, 2015).

Technology has made it possible for the fashion industry to create a production style that Clark (2008) calls "just in time". Clark's research sheds light on the short lifespans of clothing items, as consumers purchase more items per year than ever before yet end up throwing most of the items away or not using them. Niinimäki's study (2011) supports Clark's findings, stating that the affordability of fast fashion items results in impulse purchases and increased consumption, further leading to short lifespans of fashion items and textile waste. This phenomenon of increased supply and demand can be considered to resemble a never-ending cycle. Fast fashion brands introduce new collections multiple times a year, with costs as low as possible, constantly following the latest trends without missing even one (Linh, 2020).

The volume of annually consumed fashion items is more than 30 million tons. Thus, the fashion industry's effects on the environment are considerably substantial (Chen & Burns, 2006). Fashion item production requires more water than any other industry other than agriculture. An average of 79 liters of water is consumed by the fashion industry every year (Niinimäki et al., 2020). The fashion industry additionally creates vast amounts of textile waste not only due to overconsumption but also overproduction

according to Niinimäki, (2013), some fashion items being transferred directly into landfills from factories. According to Niinimäki et al. (2020) the estimated amount of textile waste created by the fashion industry annually is over 90 tons. Research further estimates that the fashion industry covers 8-10% of global CO_2 emissions brought on my both fashion item production and the disposal of textile waste (Niinimäki et al., 2020, 2013).

In order to break this “vicious cycle” that the fast fashion industry is considered to fall into, the importance of sustainable objectives ought to increase amongst fashion brands (Ozdamar & Atik, 2015). Research predicts that the phenomenon of fast fashion itself may not survive, as innovations and developed technology become available, and the fashion industry as a whole develops towards a more sustainable future (Linh, 2020).

2.2.2. Sustainable Fashion

Sustainable fashion is a relatively new phenomenon, aiming to reduce textile waste and the industry’s negative effects on the environment. Additionally, sustainable fashion promotes fair and ethical treatment of employees (Kutsenkova, 2017). Kutsenkova (2017) states that the goal of the sustainable fashion movement is “to slow down the global production and consumption process in order to form an industry that will be more sustainable in the long run.” Thus, sustainable fashion can also be described as “slow fashion”, which can be considered an alternative to fast fashion (Aakko & Koskennurmi-Sivonen, 2013).

Fashion designers began exploring the idea of fashion production that maintains ecological, social, and cultural diversity in the early 90s (Ozdamar & Atik, 2015). Since then, consumers have become all the more aware of the “dark side” of the fast fashion industry.

In their research, McNeill and Moore (2015) agree that various sectors of the fashion industry have adopted unsustainable production techniques, mostly due to the increasing fast demand of fashion items. They counterargue this by stating that the increase of consumer awareness has brought up sustainable options in the market of

fashion products (McNeill & Moore, 2015). More research agrees with this – consumers are better informed than ever before about the practices of fashion brands, as brand transparency and global communication becomes increasingly common (Kutsenkova, 2017).

Reaching 100% environmental sustainability in the fashion industry seems an impossible task. Fashion brands ought to make significant changes in their production processes, using eco-friendly materials that generate less waste as well as water contamination (Linh, 2020, Niinimäki, 2013). For reaching a more sustainable fashion industry, Clark (2008) created a possible conceptual framework introducing the "three lines of reflection" in the fashion production process: the valuing of local resources and economies, transparent and decreased production, and sustainable products. Sustainability in the fashion sector could begin to move forward if fashion brands and manufacturers set these lines of reflection as their goals for production (Clark, 2008). This type of industry broad considerably fundamental change will require not only new innovations but also time (Linh, 2020).

The sustainable fashion movement needs to explore its techniques further than it so far has. It has potential, however, to become universal in the entire fashion industry as awareness of fast fashion's unethical working conditions and non-sustainable production practices is raised amongst consumers (Kutsenkova, 2017). More research agrees with this, showing that environmental sustainability is raising discussion and becoming a global goal specifically in the field of fashion (Linh, 2020). The issue demanding researchers' attention, however, is the relationship between sustainable brands and consumers – how people behave and what affects their behavior (ibid.).

The idea of a sustainable future in the field of fashion is in fact becoming a clear goal for various fashion brands and designers. Studies have shown a promise in the movement of slow fashion and alternative, environmentally sustainable fashion production methods as pioneers in shaping the future of fashion (Ozdamar & Atik, 2015, Tran, 2021). What isn't clear, however, is what is the best method for sustainable fashion production or consumption. (Aakko & Koskennurmi-Siivonen, 2013). In order for the phenomenon of slow fashion to not vanish, attention must be paid not only to organizations and fashion manufacturers, but consumers as individuals as well.

2.3. Sustainable Consumers

The growing popularity of sustainable fashion and increasing awareness of environmental issues of the fashion production chain open a possibility for an entirely new market for only sustainable fashion (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Sustainable fashion designers and producers have begun to make their way towards a sustainable fashion industry, but consumers are yet to adopt sustainable consumption behavior (Lee, Levy & Fen Yap, 2015). In order to gain consumers' attention and activate sustainable purchasing behavior, it is important to for sustainable fashion suppliers to understand consumers' own preferences and drivers of sustainable fashion consumption (Niinimäki, 2010). According to Niinimäki (2010), fashion manufacturers ought to hold importance in "consumer commitment, wishes, needs, values, desires, and emotions" when designing sustainable fashion. Customers should be treated as one of the primary stakeholders in the fashion production process (ibid.).

2.3.1. Drivers of Sustainable Fashion Consumption

Consumers are more likely to make sustainable purchase choices if they believe that their sustainable choices have an actual positive effect (Antonetti & Maklan, 2013). Guilt and pride as two opposite feelings following a purchase situation play an important role in regulating consumption behavior. Guilt makes consumers feel as though they've done something wrong and they might not be as happy with their purchase, in comparison to when they feel pride in consuming sustainable items (ibid.). Moreover, studies found that even though guilt can strongly affect consumer behavior, positive feelings such as desire and pride remain stronger drivers for not only sustainable but all consumption (Niinimäki, 2010). The feeling of desire drives most fashion consumption, since aesthetic aspects remain of key importance when purchasing clothing items (ibid.).

2.3.1.1. Identifying Consumer Types

Several studies investigating consumer identity as a driver of consumer behavior have divided fashion consumers into groups or "types" that they can be identified as. In McNeill and Moore's research (2015), fashion consumers are divided into three

groups: “self” consumers, “social” consumers, and “sacrifice” consumers. When looking into the consumer types, different intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for fashion consumption can be found that unite certain consumer types; there are consumers who mostly make purchases thinking of themselves, consumers who do what others do, and consumers who believe what they purchase can affect the entire world.

McNeill and Moore’s (2015) defined “sacrifice” consumers put their personal purchase environmental impact above all else regarding their clothing consumption habits (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Another study by Niinimäki (2010) identified so called “ethical hardliner” consumers, who put personal, ethical values first when purchasing clothing similarly to McNeill and Moore’s “sacrifice” consumers (Niinimäki, 2010). This consumer group, however, according to both studies remains relatively small. Research indicates that consumers that rely on personal ethics and environmentalism in their consumption habits mostly purchase clothing in second-hand stores (McNeill & Moore, 2015). This might bring up a problem, however, as purchasing simply second hand is not supportive of fashion brands that adopt a sustainable production system, and thus does not increase sustainable fashion demand. These consumers could potentially be directed towards sustainable fashion consumption if their trust was gained by fashion companies (ibid.).

Sustainable consumers such as “ethical hardliners” and “sacrifice” consumers make sustainable consumption decisions based on guilt and pressure of the environmental effects of their behavior, whereas “conscious consumers” as defined in their study by Linh (2020) associate more positive feelings and personal preferences with ethical fashion consumption. These consumers appreciate quality, long product life, and careful design in sustainable fashion items, instead of feeling environmental or social pressure to “save the world” (ibid.). The goal from the perspective of sustainable fashion brands, could be to turn the “ethical hardliners” and “sacrifice” consumers into conscious consumers as defined by Linh (2020), as they are consumer types that have strong potential towards sustainable fashion consumption.

McNeill and Moore’s (2015) “self” consumers could be identified as what constitutes a significant number of fashion consumers to this day. This type of consumer is most concerned with the aesthetic of clothing items, as they enjoy building their own self-

image through dressing up in pieces of clothing that they desire. Studies have shown that they additionally prioritize speed and low prices over other things in fashion consumption (McNeill & Moore, 2015). The “self” consumers tend to use shopping as a hobby, not spending much time on worrying about the environmental effects of fast fashion as they purchase items. This importance of the act of shopping can additionally categorize these type of consumers as “experience-oriented” as defined by Linh (2020). Fashion consumers who prioritize the self over external factors such as the environment make purchase decisions based on what they desire to wear and what to look like at a specific moment. Through fashion consumption this type of consumer fills the need to experiment with different styles – different ways of expressing themselves.

The “social” consumers treat fashion and clothing consumption as a means to fit in with people around them (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Due to their increased social awareness these consumers often also acknowledge the ethical and unethical purchase decisions they make. Considering sustainable fashion consumption as socially acceptable could potentially drive these socially conscious consumers to consume more sustainably (ibid.). More research supports this; people’s perception of what can be considered fashionable can easily be changed. Sustainable fashion consumption behavior could gain popularity if it was simply made popular, trendy, and socially acceptable (Mayer, 2019). Additionally, Linh’s research (2020) found that in order to exist at all and be attractive to consumers, fashion needs to be accepted in a social context. On the other hand, one study found that sustainable consumption was a way for sustainable consumers to stand out from the crowd (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). These consumers didn’t wish for sustainability to become the new fashion industry norm, thus even though they support the phenomenon as individuals, they’re not helping the movement forward (ibid.).

Another type of “social” consumer was identified in a study, where “social status” consumers are considered to simply purchase specific luxury brand items to enhance their social status and image (Linh, 2020). This consumer group doesn’t typically put much effort into potential sustainable consumption, thus it could be considered a less price-sensitive part of the “self” consumer group.

Research proposes, however, that while consumers' ethical values affect their consumption habits, egoistic values such as self-expression and sense of pride still play a larger part in affecting sustainable consumption behavior (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). The same study predicts that consumers are not likely to sustain their ethical consumption behavior for simply the good of the planet and others, which will keep the market for sustainable fashion still a premium, high-priced market for some time (ibid.). Primarily "self" as well as "social" consumers are not likely to consume sustainable fashion unless they are motivated to do so by an intrinsic factor. Thus, consumers' egoistic motivations for sustainable consumption need to be researched more thoroughly.

2.3.2. Sustainable Consumption Issues

There is possible confusion between consumers and sustainable fashion retailers. On the retail end, the expectations and desires of consumers in regards to sustainable fashion are unclear (McNeill & Moore, 2015). This results in sustainable fashion simply appealing to the "ethical hardliner" and the "sacrifice" consumer, who make consumption choices purely based on environmentalism and ethics (ibid., Niinimäki, 2010).

The amount of affordable fast fashion clothing items available confuses consumers even further, as spending more money on less clothing on the account of only sustainability may seem irrational (Niinimäki, 2010). The dilemma of available fashion items and the non-appeal of sustainable clothing results in an attitude-behavior gap, indicating that consumers are aware of unsustainable purchasing choices, but are not yet ready to make a change (ibid.). Another study defines the attitude-behavior gap of sustainable consumption as consumers being aware and worried about the environmental impacts of their consumption choices, but find it difficult to translate this worry into behavior (Young, Hwang, McDonald & Oates, 2009). In addition, Linh (2020) proposes that the unsustainability and unethicalness issues of the fashion industry can be stressful to consumers, thus deepening the attitude-behavior gap in sustainability awareness and actual consumption.

Confusion and mistrust amongst consumers about whether their purchasing habits are environmentally sustainable or not increases as fashion brands turn to sustainability and eco-friendliness as marketing tools without properly showcasing that their practices align with these terms (Linh, 2020). This phenomenon called greenwashing has increased in marketing in the fashion industry since sustainability issues came relevant discussion topics in the industry's development (ibid.). An example of greenwashing in the fashion industry is when a fashion brand uses paper bags in the place of plastic bags and thus claims to act environmentally sustainably, when in reality the bags are only a small detail in possibly a highly unsustainable organization (Niinimäki, 2013).

High pricing of fashion items is another factor keeping consumers away from sustainable fashion consumption (Linh, 2020, McNeill & Moore, 2015, Abdulrazak & Quoquab, 2017). The most price-sensitive consumers could potentially even consider increasing sustainability in the fashion industry as a threat to their consumption possibilities, in case it resulted in higher prices in the entire fashion industry, lessening their purchasing power (McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Ozdamar and Atik (2015) state in their research that the modern fashion industry is driven by two forces; globalization and increased consumerism. With information of the latest trends in fashion spreading around the world faster than ever before, consumers more easily feel the need to stay up to date in their clothing choices and styles. Access to the newest trends needs to be gained as fast as possible, to which fast fashion brands respond to by producing new styles at a quick pace, with costs as low as possible (Ozdamar & Atik, 2015). As a potential response to the accessibility and globalism of fast fashion, Kutsenkova (2017) finds that consumers must simply be made aware of the negative social and environmental impact that large, fast fashion brands have, in order to change their consumption behavior (Kutsenkova, 2017). Some research argues, however, that educating consumers is not sufficient to change consumption behavior and that change should take place through legislation of businesses (Lee, Levy & Fen Yap, 2015).

Niinimäki's (2010) research predicts that in the future consumers will be divided into small groups that will not likely follow trends and whose consumer behavior will be

difficult to predict or understand. Thus, the question of which sustainable factors of fashion production and distribution are preferred in which consumer group should be further investigated.

2.3.3. Fashion and Identity Expression

Fashion has throughout time been considered a way for consumers to express themselves. Through clothing consumers have the ability to create an entirely new identity for themselves if they wish (Mayer, 2019). Although research has divided consumers into groups with different motives for fashion consumption, one thing amongst researchers is considerably clear; all fashion consumers express themselves through clothing, even unconsciously (Niinimäki, 2010, McNeill & Moore, 2015, Linh, 2020, Ilaw, 2014).

Fashion consumers can develop strong emotional connections to clothing items as they can boost a consumer's confidence and make consumers feel better about themselves. Additionally, sustainable fashion items add all the more meaning to clothing items (Mayer, 2019). More research supports this, as Lundblad and Davies (2016) found that sustainable fashion has both physical and psychological benefits for the consumer. The natural, ecological materials of the clothing items make consumers feel physically comfortable while the idea of doing the right thing having purchased a sustainable fashion item provides psychological benefits on top of enhancing self-esteem (Lundblad & Davies, 2016).

Interviews conducted in one research found that many consumers are able to show who they are through the clothing that they wear (Linh, 2020). The same research found that the self-expression of fashion doesn't end with simply one's own identity expression, but exceeds to reflecting an individual's way of living. This results in the surroundings of consumers affecting their fashion consumption preferences relatively strongly (ibid.). This could potentially further lead to sustainable consumption, as awareness of environmental sustainability issues in the fashion industry increases. However, this identity expression through fashion items can considered to be problematic, as it drives consumers to purchase more items to define themselves (ibid.).

Previously mentioned research showed strongly ethically conscious consumers basing their fashion purchase behavior on their own personal values. This phenomenon doesn't limit to only ethically conscious consumers; research finds that fashion consumption behavior reflects consumers' values in life universally (Mayer, 2019, Linh, 2020).

2.4. Sustainable Fashion Practices

While consumers have a considerable amount power to change the direction of the sustainability of the fashion industry, fashion companies need to find ways to take part in this change as well (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020).

The longer life of fashion items is a key element in striving for sustainability (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020, Nellström & Saric, 2019, Niinimäki, 2013, Sandvik, 2017). Fashion brands as well as consumers have begun to focus more on this concept that ties together most sustainability practices that fashion brands can implement in their role as sustainable suppliers (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020). However, different sustainability practices that fashion brands can implement can be identified more thoroughly. This study investigates the following three sustainability practices: repairing, reselling, and renting.

2.4.1. Repairing

Fashion companies have started to offer services to consumers where clothing items are repaired in stores in order to extend the product lives. This movement motivates consumers to take better care of the clothes they own instead of buying new ones, thus promoting extended garment life (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020). A particular fashion company practicing repairing is a Finnish clothing brand Arela. Their cashmere knitwear is known to be of high quality, However, in order to stand the test of time the garments need to be taken care of (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020). As sustainability is stated as Arela's core value, the brand aims to communicate it to their customers by offering services to take care of the cashmere items for them (ibid.).

Another company with repairing as one of their offered services is a Swedish fashion company called Nudie Jeans. The denim company repairs customers' old jeans right in their own stores to clearly communicate to consumers as clearly as possible that taking care of old clothing is one of their core values (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020).

Third example of a fashion company that offers repairing possibilities for its customers is a Finnish children's wear brand Reima. In addition to its clothing Reima sells the clothing items' strong, durable material as batches that can be used to repair the clothing, thus promoting the long life of their clothing items (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020).

In their research Niinimäki and Durrani (2020) found that repairing as a sustainability practice can help consumers appreciate their garments more, and motivate them to give their clothing a longer life. Additionally, the research predicts that the repaired aesthetic of clothing items could potentially become a new fashion trend amongst the mass produced similar looking clothing items in the market (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020).

The mindset of taking care of clothing items is essential in moving to a more sustainable direction in fashion. However, research finds that this type of manufacturing shift implemented in a bigger picture than just a few fashion brands will take time and creativity from fashion companies (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020, Sandvik, 2017).

2.4.2. Reselling

Some fashion companies have started promoting the reselling of their used garments. This sustainability practice demonstrates the quality and long life of clothing items, giving the garments a longer life through reselling (Strähle & Schnaidt, 2017). An example of a company with reselling as one of their sustainability practices is the previously mentioned Swedish denim company Nudie Jeans. The company sells old jeans that returned by customers as second-hand items in the brand's own stores (Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020). Another study reports that Nudie Jeans has an approach called "Repair, Reuse, and Reduce". In addition to reselling the customers' old jeans, the brand collects worn out jeans in their stores and reuses the material for other

products such as caps (Nyfeler, 2013). A 20% discount is given from the next clothing purchase for a customer who brings their old jeans to the store, in order to incentivize garment recycling (ibid.). The collected fabric that can no longer be reused is broken down and recycled for new clothing material altogether. Thus, Nudie Jeans attempts to extend its garments' and fabrics' lives past only single consumer usage, while reducing all possible waste from production (Nellström & Saric, 2019).

Another fashion brand that has implemented the sustainability practice of reselling is a Swedish fashion brand called Filippa K (Strähle & Schnaidt, 2017). The brand opened an entire second-hand store online meant for used clothing items returned to the brand from their customers (ibid.). By doing this, Filippa K demonstrated to consumers the long-lasting quality and timeless design of its clothing items. Additionally, the Swedish fashion brand works in collaboration with a second-hand clothing distributor app Cirqle, which enables used Filippa K clothes to be sold in several second-hand clothing stores in Finland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands in addition to Sweden (Strähle & Schnaidt, 2017).

2.4.3. Renting

Fashion renting has become a trend in the fashion industry in recent years (Shrivastava et al., 2020). Consumers desire to try different styles without the commitment of an actual purchase, and can do so through rental services. Moreover, online clothing rental services provide customers with the ability to browse through endless amounts of products in rental apps on their phones (Lee & Huang, 2020).

Fashion renting is an effective way to extend the life of clothing items and lead on the sustainable development of the fashion industry (Lee & Huang, 2020). Research finds that some consumers shop fast fashion due to the desire to wear different clothing items often and switch up their wardrobe. Clothing rental services allow consumers to do just this – without throwing excessive amounts of clothing away (Strähle & Schnaidt, 2017).

Filippa K, a Swedish fashion brand, has introduced a service titled "Lånegarderoben", a Swedish word for a rented closet. The concept is that consumers can rent out brand

new FIlippa K clothing items for 4 days paying only 20% of the item's actual price. If the product has already been rented out to another customer before, thus isn't new, the price is 15% of the original instead (Nyfeler, 2013, Strähle & Schnaidt, 2017). Thus, FIlippa K promotes the long lives of clothing items, as the clothes are rented out instead of bought and later possibly thrown away due to not enough use for the item. The Swedish fashion brand's original mission statement was to create timeless fashion and promote durability (Nyfeler, 2013).

According to Strähle and Schnaidt (2017) Filippa K aimed from the very beginning to create a capsule wardrobe with long-lasting items, so consumers could wear the same pieces year after year not having to buy new ones. Filippa K, as well as all fashion brands implementing repairing, reselling, and renting in their business practices, help consumers appreciate clothing items through promoting garment care and extended product life (Strähle & Schnaidt, 2017).

2.5. Conceptual Framework

The framework used in this study addresses the division of fashion consumers into types based on their consumption motivators, preferences, and habits, and the relationship between the identified types and fashion sustainability practices. The framework (Figure 1) separates fashion consumers into three identified groups – self-consumers, social consumers, and conscious consumers – and assumes a connection between a sustainability practice and a specific consumer group.

The consumer types are created on the basis of previously conducted research introduced in the literature review, which provided an answer to research question 1 (RQ1). As defined by McNeill and Moore (2015), Niinimäki (2010), and Lundblad and Davies (2016), self-consumers are likely to value affordability and style experimentation in clothing items, social consumers are likely to value trendiness and fitting in with the people around them, and conscious consumers are likely to value ecological attributes and high quality. Assumptions of preferences towards the three sustainable fashion practices introduced – repairing, reselling, and renting – were made on the basis of the identified consumer types' fashion consumption traits and

preferences. On the basis of these assumptions the three main hypotheses for this study and a conceptual framework were created.

The literature review found no answers to research questions 2 and 3 (RQ2 and RQ3), as previous research of fashion consumer types' sustainability practice preferences has not yet been conducted. Thus, a gap in research was identified which the research hypotheses and the conceptual framework were created to fill. By identifying a connection between consumer type and their preferred sustainability practice, the attitude-behavior gap addressed by Niinimäki (2010) in environmental sustainability awareness and actual executed sustainable consumption can be addressed and solved. The framework below will be used to guide the primary data collection, which is used to test the research hypotheses that are identified below as well as to answer the previously introduced main research questions RQ2 and RQ3 of this study.

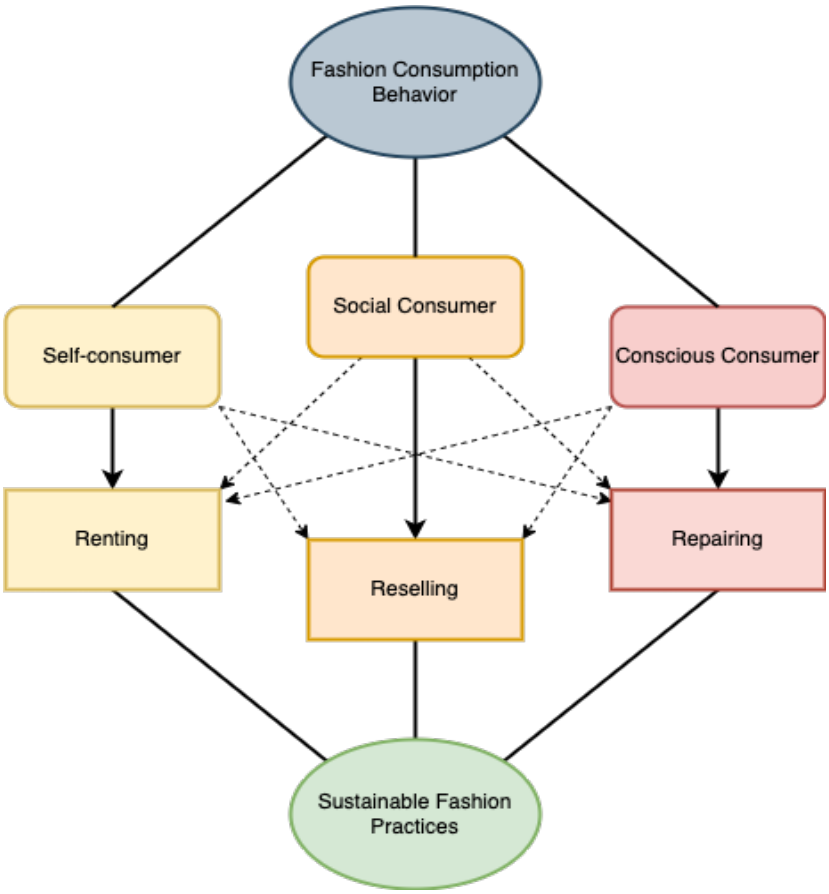

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Lähdesmäki, 2022).

The conceptual framework predicts that there is a connection between a specific consumer type and a sustainability practice offered by a fashion company. However, all three fashion consumer types will likely be attracted to all three sustainability practices to a certain degree depending on possible situational or demographic factors. The primary research will attempt to answer RQ2 and RQ3 and explore the existence of a connection between the consumer types and the predicted preferred sustainable fashion practices. The research is guided by the conceptual framework, and the research hypotheses of this study are the following:

H1: A self-consumer prefers renting services over the other two sustainable fashion practices.

Based on the findings of the literature review this study predicts that self-consumers will prefer renting as a sustainable fashion practice due to the possible fast changing styles and options. Additionally, self-consumers will be the fashion consumer type who prioritizes affordability in clothing items, which renting services also offer.

H2: A social consumer prefers reselling services over the other two sustainable fashion practices.

Social consumers are predicted to prefer reselling due to the trendiness of second-hand shopping as a phenomenon and the possibility to access popular brands and styles more affordably through purchasing used items.

H3: A conscious consumer prefers repairing services over the other two sustainable fashion practices.

Conscious consumers are predicted to prioritize quality and ethicalness of fashion garments over affordability or trendiness, therefore repairing is predicted to be their most preferred sustainable fashion practice.

The primary research will further look into possible situational or demographic factors affecting consumer type preferences, where individuals from a specific consumer

group would prefer a different sustainability practice than others in their group depending on a mutual factor such as gender.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section further clarifies the methodology that was used in gathering primary research data. Firstly, the chosen methods of collecting data are explained. Secondly, the research design is described in further detail. Thirdly, the selected sample model is discussed, after which the methodology for data analysis is explained.

3.1. Research Method and Data Collection

The literature review gathered information from existing research and articles written of the topic of this research. The literature review allowed for a base to be created for this study, and assisted in creating a conceptual framework for research. The gap in research of identifying connections between fashion consumer types and preferred sustainable fashion practices lead to conducting this primary research.

Both qualitative and quantitative research were conducted to find answers to the research questions 2 and 3 (RQ2 and RQ3). Qualitative research, in the form of two separate interviews with fashion brands that have adopted sustainable practices in their activity, was conducted. The interviews worked as background research to support research hypotheses and to assist in quantitative research design. The main purpose of the interviews was to identify motivators for sustainable fashion consumption from the fashion companies' points of view.

Quantitative research in the form of an online survey was created after the interviews. Prior to the survey a pre-test was conducted with the purpose to identify a proper scale to use in the survey. The purpose of the survey was to identify the division of fashion consumers into three types, and to determine whether a connection between a consumer type and a sustainable fashion practice exists.

3.2 Research Design

The following two sections go into further detail in explaining the design process of both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

3.2.1. Qualitative Research

The qualitative research was conducted in the form of two separate interviews with fashion companies that are known to operate with sustainability of key importance. The interview questions were the same in both interviews, excluding the detailed questions of sustainability practices, since the two companies practice sustainability in different ways.

The interviews consisted of six questions that are listed below:

Q1: How does your company practice sustainability?
Q2: What is the key purpose for your company to apply these practices?
Q3: In your company's point of view, what motivates consumers to buy sustainable fashion? What are the traits of a sustainable fashion consumer?
Q4: What are the traits and fashion preferences of your company's target consumer?
Q5: Which one of your company's sustainability practices attracts most consumers? / What about your company's sustainability practice attracts consumers?
Q6: What do you think is the future of sustainable fashion consumption?

The first two questions were created to identity the sustainability practice(s) of the interviewed company, as well as the motives for the company to apply these practices. The third and fourth question aimed to identify the motivators of sustainable fashion consumption and the traits and preferences of a sustainable fashion consumer from the interviewed company's point of view. The traits of the company's own target consumer were asked in order to further elaborate the consumer type potentially most inclined to buy sustainable fashion from this company, beyond the stereotypes. The fifth question was different in the two interviews. The company that was first interviewed had multiple different sustainability practices applied in their operations,

thus they were asked the first question of which sustainability practice attracted the most consumers. The second interviewed company based their activity on one sustainability practice, thus they were asked what about that specific practice attracted consumers. This question aimed to highlight what consumers find most attractive in selecting sustainable options in fashion. The last question of sustainable fashion's future was less relevant for the study. The question's goal was to identify the potential direction of the sustainable fashion industry, and the hopes and dreams regarding sustainable fashion consumption from companies' points of view. The answers of the last question were designed to be mostly applied to the discussion and suggestions for further research parts of this paper.

3.2.2. Quantitative Research

3.2.2.1. Pre-test

The quantitative research was conducted using a survey. When beginning the design process of the survey, there was a problem identified in designing the questions, as three parts of the survey introduced price points that the researcher didn't wish to affect research outcomes. Approximate price levels needed to be determined in order for the survey to work. For this purpose, a pre-test was conducted, and it was published on the researcher's Instagram account.

The pre-test had three scenario questions, each with four response alternatives. The purpose of these questions was to determine on average how much consumers were willing to pay for specific sustainable fashion items or practices. Euros (€) were used as currency in the pre-test, as most respondents were from Finland. A total of 322 people responded to the pre-test questions.

The first question measured the average price that consumers were willing to pay for a sustainably made shirt from a brand that offered repair services, over a non-sustainably made shirt that costs 100€. The answer options were 120€, 150€, 180€, and 210€. The most chosen answer option was 150€, gaining 151 votes, thus this price point was selected to be used in the survey for a sustainable brand that offers repair services.

The second question measured the average price that consumers were willing to pay for a sustainable shirt that's sold second hand, over a non-sustainably made shirt that costs 100€. The answer options were 20€, 40€, 60€, and 80€. Both 60€ and 40€ answer options were most chosen by respondents, each gaining 120 votes. Thus, the average between the two prices, 50€, was selected to be used as a price point in the survey for a sustainable second-hand product.

The third question measured the average price that consumers were willing to pay as rent price for a sustainable shirt that is rented out for four days, over a non-sustainable shirt that costs 100€. The answer options were 15€, 25€, 45€, and 60€. Both 15€ and 25€ answer options were most chosen by respondents, each gaining 110 votes. Thus, the average between the two prices, 20€, was selected to be used as a price point in the survey for a sustainable rental product.

3.2.2.2. Survey Design

A survey questionnaire was designed to test the research hypotheses introduced together with the conceptual framework. The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify the consumer types of respondents thus dividing them into three groups; self-consumers, social consumers and conscious consumers. Furthermore, the questionnaire aimed to introduce three different sustainable fashion practices, and find which consumer type preferred which sustainable fashion practice, and thus answer research questions 2 and 3 (RQ2 and RQ3). Webropol 3.0 (2022) was used for the purpose of designing and executing the questionnaire. The final survey consisted of eight questions divided into three pages. The full survey is located in Appendix A.

The survey aimed to first identify which consumer type the respondent was most closely classified as. A consumer type attribute scale (Figure 2) was created to identify the traits of each consumer type on the basis of fashion consumption motive, lifecycle of items, and most important quality in fashion items as recommended by earlier research of Niinimäki (2010) and McNeill and Moore (2015). In their research, McNeill and Moore (2015) introduced certain fashion item attributes and consumption habits that different consumer types are likely to possess. According to research the motive

for fashion consumption in self-consumers is style experimentation with multiple items, in social consumers staying up to date with trends and fitting in, and in conscious consumers buying sustainable pieces and consuming fashion in moderation (Niinimäki, 2010, McNeill & Moore, 2015). In addition to consumption motive, research indicates that self-consumers are likely to appreciate affordability in clothing items, social consumers are likely to appreciate trendiness, and conscious consumers are likely to appreciate quality (McNeill & Moore, 2015, Niinimäki, 2010). The lifecycles of clothing items for each fashion consumer type were derived from these studies by drawing conclusions that the lifecycle was shortest for self-consumers and longest for conscious consumers, as they prefer to purchase only a few items instead of many items.

On the basis of the consumer type scale 27 items were created, 9 items for each consumer type, in order to measure the respondents' consumer attributes. The 27 items were tested with a 5-item Likert-type scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree".

consumer type:	**Self-consumer**	**Social consumer**	**Conscious consumer**
fashion consumption motive:	clothing item experimentation, willingness to buy multiple pieces	staying up to date with trends, fitting in socially	owning only a few pieces, quality over quantity, emphasis on sustainability
lifecycle of items:	short lifecycles of clothing items	medium-length lifecycles of clothing items	long lifecycles of clothing items
most important quality in fashion items:	importance in affordability	importance in trendiness	importance in quality

Figure 2: Consumer type table (Lähdesmäki, 2022).

Following the consumer type segment the survey introduced three different scenarios of sustainable fashion consumption alternatives. The scenarios were invented by the

researcher, combining attributes of fashion repairing, reselling, and renting as defined by Niinimäki and Durrani (2020), Nellström and Saric (2019), Sandvik (2017), Strähle and Schnaidt (2017), and Nyfeler (2013). Each scenario introduced a different sustainable fashion practice offering a fashion item for the respondent to purchase in the place of a fashion chain item. The intention to purchase was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” recommended by Karahanna (1999), with modified wordings to the scale items due to difference in research topic.

The questionnaire additionally asked for the respondents’ demographics; their gender and their country of origin. These demographics were designed to be used in finding factors that possibly affect the behavior of different consumer types. After the demographic questions the survey ended with a thank you for the responses.

3.3. Sample selection

The sample utilized in the quantitative research questionnaire was a non-probability convenience sample. This sample model was chosen since the survey was shared on various online platforms such as different students’ WhatsApp groups and the researcher’s personal Instagram page. Thus, the convenience of choosing students and Instagram followers as respondents was of key importance, as they were most accessible. Additionally, responding to the survey was completely voluntary. This might have caused mostly people interested in fashion to take the survey, especially through sharing the link to the questionnaire on Instagram.

The questionnaire gathered 120 responses in total (n = 120). The survey was opened by respondents 314 times, and responding was initiated 135 times. A total of 89% of the respondents who initiated responding completed the survey and submitted their responses.

3.4. Data Analysis

The primary quantitative data gathered in the research was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The software was used to analyze participant consumer types regarding their

consumption habit responses and demographics, as well as find correlations between consumer types and preferred sustainable fashion practices. Paired t-test analyses and single-factor ANOVA analyses were used to test the original research hypotheses. In addition to hypothesis testing, further analysis was conducted with respondent demographics to identify differences between responses based on gender.

4. FINDINGS

This part will discuss the findings of both qualitative and quantitative primary research. Firstly, the qualitative research interview outcomes are summarized and discussed, connecting the interview outcomes with research hypotheses. Secondly, the primary research questionnaire respondent profiles and characteristics are analyzed and discussed. Thirdly, the results of statistical tests performed on the primary quantitative data are discussed. Lastly, connections between qualitative and quantitative research outcomes are examined and discussed.

4.1. Qualitative Research Outcomes

The next two parts will describe the outcomes of two separate interviews that the researcher conducted with fashion companies Nudie Jeans and The Ateljé Rental Studio. The responses of interviewees are summarized for the purpose of highlighting the key outcomes of this qualitative research. Full answers to both interviews can be seen in Appendix A.

4.1.1. Interview with Nudie Jeans

Nudie Jeans Co. is a fashion company specializing in denim garments that has implemented various sustainability practices in their operations, such as repairing and reselling ((Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020). The researcher interviewed Nudie Jeans' Sustainability Coordinator Kevin Gelsi. The interview was conducted via Zoom on video call.

Q1: How does Nudie Jeans practice sustainability?

A1: *That is a big question. We are careful with the term "sustainable", because if we were 100% sustainable we would be done, and there would be no more work to do. With our key product, which is denim, it all begins with the cotton fiber. We use organic cotton. In addition to using organic materials we acquire responsible management in each of the clothing production steps. We need to be very focused and responsible in all the steps of our supply chain, without compromising too much financial needs.*

Nudie Jeans aims, in conclusion, to reach the highest level of sustainability in their entire supply chain. The brand realizes and emphasizes that to this day there is no perfect level of sustainability reached, but it is a realistic goal. The brand does, however, consider the financial implications of fashion companies applying sustainable practices.

Q2: What is the key purpose for Nudie Jeans to apply these practices?

A2: *The founder of Nudie Jeans, Maria Eriksson, saw gaps withing the denim industry. I think, maybe Nudie Jeans is a bit ahead of its time, realizing the "no-brainer" of slow and steady development instead of high peaks. Our CEO Joakim often talks about the "three miles per day" -idea, where you do steady work and have slow growth over time. That's the entire concept of sustainability – how long we can sustain and what we need to do in order to reach the highest possible level (of sustainability).*

Nudie Jeans considers the goal of completely sustainable fashion to be one to reach gradually and step by step. Sustainability practices are not something fashion companies ought to necessarily 100% adopt overnight, but something to work towards.

Q3: In Nudie Jeans' point of view, what motivates consumers to buy sustainable fashion? What are the traits of a sustainable fashion consumer?

A3: *You could say it's a clean conscience, and that's the easy answer. Today we have access to a lot of information and consumers are more aware of the responsibility that they have.*

Nudie Jeans claims that a clean conscience and thus consumers' personal sustainable values are what mainly drives sustainable consumption. Transparency helps consumers be more aware of what they purchase, and knowledge, awareness, and awakening feelings of guilt and good conscience in consumers are motivating factors for sustainable consumption from Nudie Jeans' point of view. This implies that personal sustainable values motivate consumers to purchase sustainable fashion, in regards to repair and resell, which Nudie Jeans practices. Hypothesis 3 (H3) aligns with this, stating that a conscious consumer will likely prefer a sustainable fashion brand that offers repair services.

Q4: What are the traits and fashion preferences of your company's target consumer?

A4: *Nudie Jeans is a men's brand, but we've also started making women's collections. Nudie Jeans has been talked about being a unisex brand. The average Nudie Jeans consumer is a younger man who's a bit more conscious and possibly not that price sensitive due to higher prices. I think the young age has a lot to do with the consciousness, and of course identity building, which fashion is all about.*

Out of the three sustainability practices introduced in this study – repairing, reselling, and renting – Nudie Jeans' main sustainability practices are repair and resell. The interviewee states that their target consumer is conscious and not very price sensitive, thus implying that sustainability practices such as repair and resell require for consumers to have these traits in order to purchase from these types of sustainable fashion brands.

Q5: Which one of Nudie Jeans' sustainability practices attracts most consumers?

A5: *I think that the repairing services are most valued, since they're clear incentives. It's a great example of materializing sustainability within fashion – it's super simple and nothing new.*

Repairing services are most attractive to consumers within Nudie Jeans' practices, because they offer clear incentives to consumers to purchase products. The interviewee earlier stated that Nudie Jeans' target consumer is a conscious consumer.

Implying that repair is most attractive to this type of consumer supports hypothesis 3 (H3) of this study.

Q6: What do you think is the future of sustainable fashion consumption?
A6: *My hope is that the industry and experts can outline what exactly is sustainable fashion, and that we set goals that we also reach. I hope that the concept of sustainability won't be worn out, but will become applicable to the entire industry.*

The Nudie Jeans interviewee hopes the concept of sustainability won't "wear out", in the sense that it is not only a current fashion trend but a goal that is set for companies industry wide.

4.1.2. Interview with The Ateljé Rental Studio

The Ateljé Rental Studio is a relatively new Helsinki based clothing rental service. The researcher interviewed one of the company's co-founders Kaisa Härmälä via email. The interview was executed in Finnish due to it being the spoken language of both the researcher and the interviewee. The interview transcript has been translated into English.

Q1: How does The Ateljé practice sustainability?
A1: *The Ateljé aims to change people's consumption habits and through that decrease the greenhouse gas emissions of the fashion industry. We exist to make people question entirely their consumption. Often when talking about sustainable fashion consumers focus on what they're buying, instead of questioning whether they need to buy something new in the first place.*

The Ateljé Rental Studio aims to make consumers question their fashion consumption, shifting the attention from what to purchase to be sustainable to whether it is necessary to purchase something new in the first place.

Q2: What is the key purpose for The Ateljé to apply these practices?
A2: *We aim to make a clothing rental service appealing to consumers, so that we can actually compete with purchasing entirely new products.*

Hypothesis 1 (H1) of this study, introduced in the conceptual framework, predicts that self-consumers, who have a tendency to buy new clothing items often to try out new styles, is most likely to prefer a clothing rental service. The interviewee's statement of competing with purchasing new products could potentially align with the hypothesis, as the rental service offers an appealing alternative to those who continuously wish to purchase new.

Q3: In your company's point of view, what motivates consumers to buy sustainable fashion? What are the traits of a sustainable fashion consumer?
A3: *Sustainable fashion consumers increasingly consider their consumption habits and are beginning to realize that you indeed don't need to buy everything. Sustainable fashion consumers and our clients are also increasingly into garment care in a new way.*

The Ateljé interviewee highlights more conscious consumer traits and consumers' personal sustainable values in being motivators for sustainable fashion consumption. Additionally, they state that garment care and thus increasing the lifecycle of garments is increasingly important to sustainable fashion consumers. This might imply that conscious consumers prefer clothing rental services due to the sustainable consumption values they personally align with, thus counterarguing hypotheses 1 (H1) and 3 (H3).

Q4: What are the traits and fashion preferences of your company's target consumer?
A4: *Our target consumer is an employed urban citizen between the ages of 24 and 55. Our monthly subscribed customers rent clothing for everyday use, however many of our customers are only trying clothing rental for the first time ever (for special occasions).*

The Ateljé's target consumer can be divided into monthly subscribers and one-time customers. Monthly subscribers look for clothing for everyday use to avoid buying new items, whereas most one-time customers look for clothing for special occasions. A consumer's goal of looking for clothing for everyday use to switch styles monthly aligns

with hypothesis 1 (H1), indicating that a fashion consumer who wishes to try out different styles often would most prefer a clothing rental service.

Q5: What about clothing rental services attracts consumers?
A5: *A clothing rental service is attractive when it's made easy and appealing. Affordability is also an important quality of rental clothing – it makes the sustainable choice into a less of a compromise.*

The interviewee highlights a clothing rental service being a less of a compromise in the attempt to purchase sustainable alternatives in fashion, partly due to being more affordable.

Q6: What do you think is the future of sustainable fashion consumption?
A6: *The conversation of sustainable materials isn't enough. We need a big, industry-wide change of the entire fashion culture. We want to build this new culture and encourage consumers to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle.*

The Ateljé highlights that the shift towards a sustainable fashion industry is a matter of changing the entire culture of fashion.

4.2. Quantitative Research Outcomes

4.2.1. Survey Respondent Profile

This section goes into further detail of the survey respondents' profiles. Firstly, two demographics – gender and nationality – are introduced. Secondly, the respondent profiles in regards to consumer types and fashion sustainability practice preferences are introduced and discussed.

4.2.1.1. Respondent Demographics

The total number of respondents in the survey was 120 (n=120). The respondents were mostly women, with 92 respondents (77%) out of 120 identifying as female. 27 respondents (23%) identified as male, 4 respondents (3%) as non-binary, and 1

respondent (0.8%) as transgender. The respondents were additionally given the chance to choose not to report their gender, but no respondent chose to do so. The high number of female respondents can be considered to be an effect of the research sample being a convenience sample. The questionnaire was published on the researcher's personal Instagram page where the majority of followers are female. This resulted in a fairly uneven distribution among genders of respondents, which can potentially have influenced the research outcome.

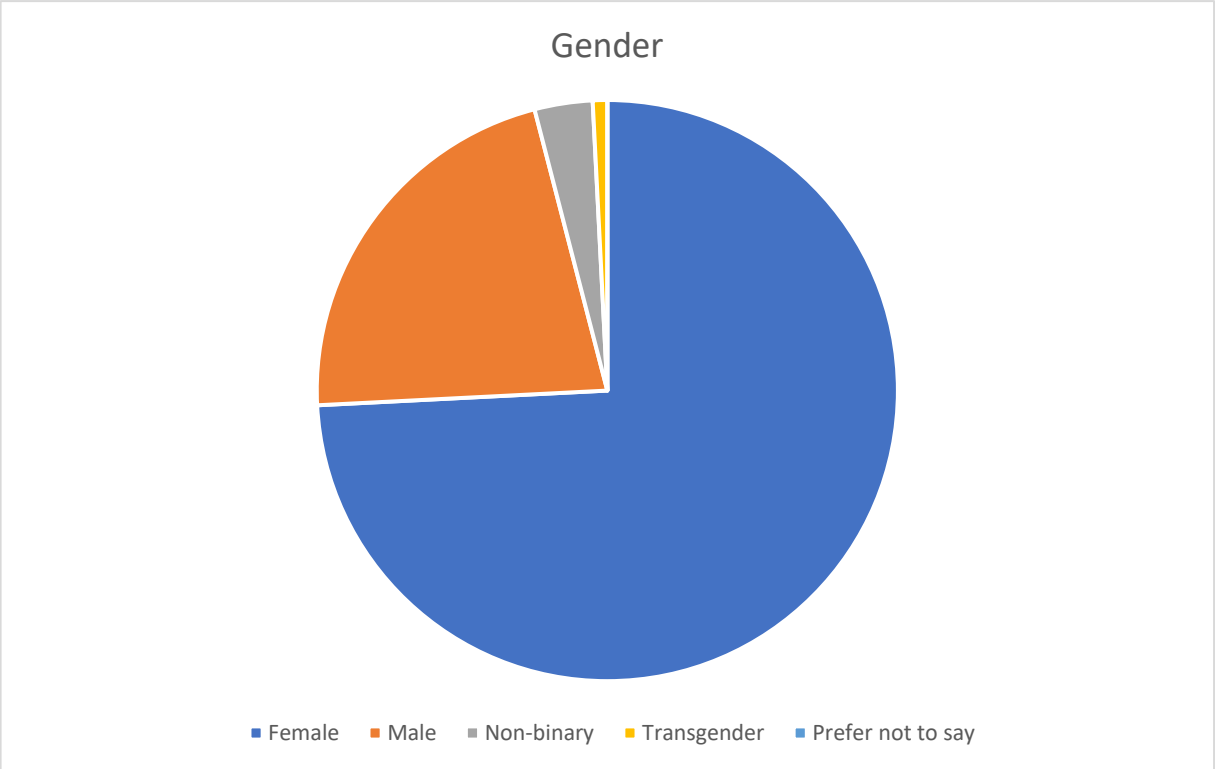

Figure 3: Respondents' gender distribution.

The nationality of respondents was asked in the third and final segment of the survey along with the respondent's gender(s). Nationality of respondents was considered to potentially have an effect on responses due to cultural differences that might effect fashion consumption habits and attitudes. Out of 120 participants 110 (92%) were Finnish and 10 (8%) non-Finnish. The non-Finnish respondents' nationalities were American (3), Australian (1), Faroese (1), Vietnamese (1), Costa Rican (1), Icelandic (1), and Italian (1). One respondent chose to not report their nationality.

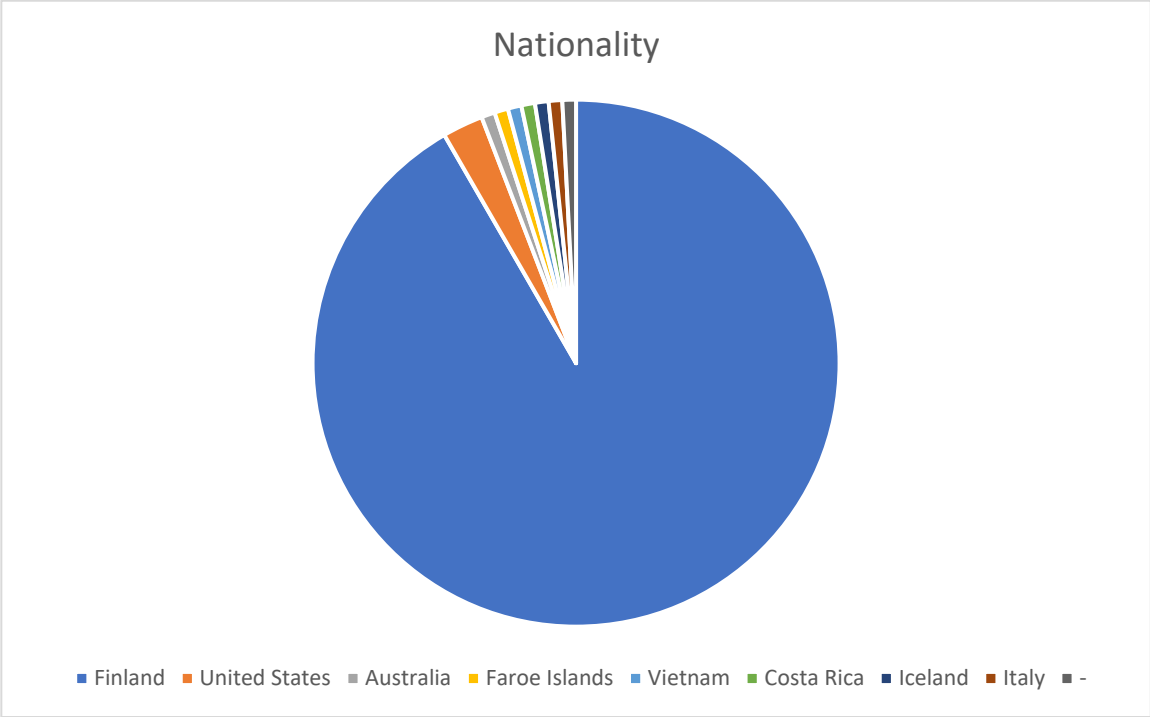

Figure 4: Respondents' nationality distribution.

The high percentage of Finnish respondents implies that the research sample being a convenience sample had an effect on the average respondent profile. The online questionnaire was distributed to the researcher's friends and family, most of whom are Finnish. The uneven distribution of nationalities can be considered to have affected research outcomes due to mostly only one culture being represented in average responses.

4.2.1.2. Consumer Types and Sustainability Practice Preferences

The respondents were divided into three groups based on their fashion consumer type. Each respondent was given a score on each consumer type, calculating the means of their responses to each set of 9 questions that measured consumer type. The minimum score was 1 and maximum was 5, as the answer options ranged from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). Using the means from the respondents' scores and finding which consumer type each respondent scored the highest on, the respondents were divided into three groups. Each respondent was put to the consumer group of which consumer type they scored the highest on. Most respondents had a clear difference in their consumer type scores, making it easy to

place them in groups. However, 7 out of 120 respondents received the top scores for more than one consumer category. In order to increase the statistical significance of the consumer groups, the respondents were placed in the consumer type group with the fewest persons out of the consumer types on which they scored the highest.

Despite the attempt to decrease the differences in consumer group sizes, the distribution of consumer types amongst respondents was highly uneven. 87 respondents (73%) were categorized as conscious consumers. 23 respondents (19%) were categorized as self-consumers, and 10 respondents (8%) as social consumers. The majority of respondents being categorized as conscious consumers by their own consumer type scores can be considered to be an effect of the survey sample being selected by convenience. People interested in sustainable fashion were likely to take the survey seeing the topic of the study, which potentially lead to the majority of respondents categorizing as conscious consumers.

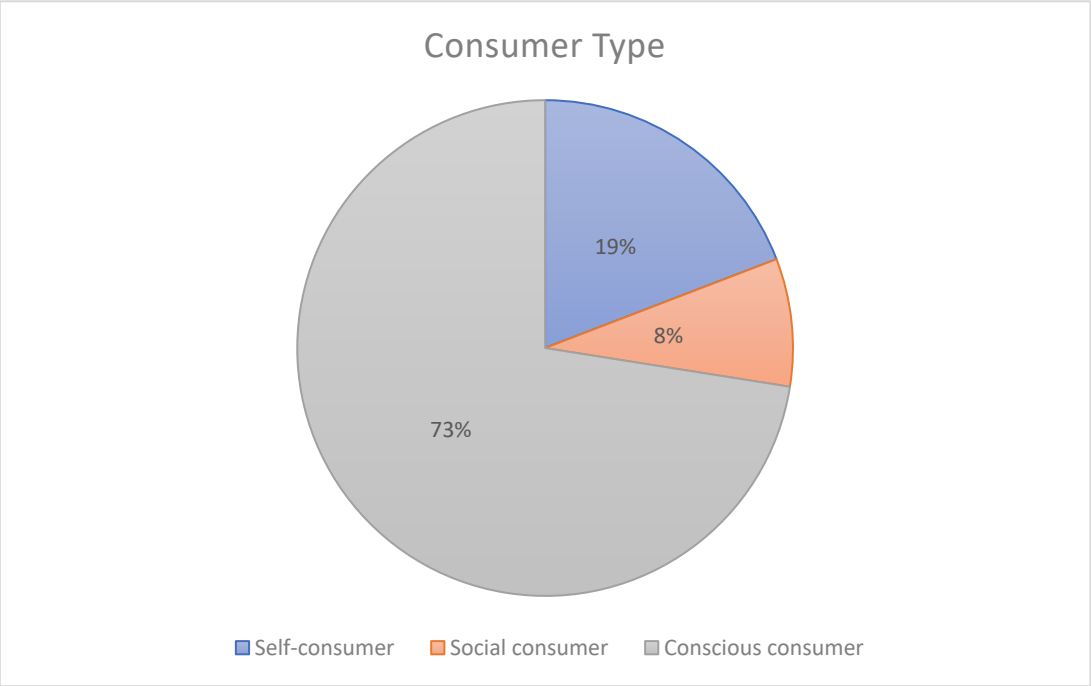

Figure 5: Consumer type distribution.

4.2.2. Single Factor ANOVA Analysis

The questionnaire was designed to present respondents with three different sustainable fashion practice scenarios in order to gather data on different consumer

types' sustainable fashion practice preferences. All the respondents were shown all three scenarios. This allowed for the research results to have better statistical significance since the survey results were based on the entire respondent sample. Additionally, it allowed for the sample to be divided into three groups based on consumer type after the data collection.

Single factor ANOVA analysis was used as the method of analyzing scenario results. Three separate ANOVA analyses were conducted; one for each consumer type, in order to identify the different consumer types' sustainable fashion practice preferences. The ANOVA aimed to identify the average sustainable practice preference scores of each consumer type, and thus rank the preferred sustainability practices of each consumer type from 1 to 3.

ANOVA (self-consumer)						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	***P-value***	*F crit*
Between Groups	10,28341	2	5,141707	5,39027	**0,006787**	3,135918
Within Groups	62,95652	66	0,953887			
Total	73,23994	68				

Table 1: Single factor ANOVA analysis: self-consumer

The single factor ANOVA analysis on the self-consumer's sustainable fashion practice preferences showed a P-value of less than 0,05 (0,006787<0,05) indicating that the results of the analysis were statistically significant. The self-consumer's preferred sustainability practices ranked as follows:

1. Resell (Mean=4,115942)
2. Repair (Mean=3,492754)
3. Rental (Mean=3,188406)

These results of self-consumer's preferred sustainability practice scores' means ranked indicates that the self-consumer is most likely to choose resell over the other two sustainable fashion practices. Thus, hypothesis 1 (H1) was rejected.

ANOVA (social consumer)						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	***P-value***	*F crit*
Between Groups	2,466667	2	1,233333	1,709641	**0,19994**	3,354131
Within Groups	19,47778	27	0,721399			
Total	21,94444	29				

Table 2: Single factor ANOVA analysis: social consumer

The single factor ANOVA analysis on the social consumer's sustainable fashion practice preferences showed a P-value higher than 0,05 (0,19994>0,05) indicating that the results of the analysis were not statistically significant. This can be considered to be a result of the small size of the sample. Only 10 respondents out of 120 were categorized as social consumers. Nevertheless, the preferred sustainable fashion practices of these 10 social consumers ranked as follows:

1. Resell (Mean=4,2)
2. Repair (Mean=3,8)
3. Rental (Mean=3,5)

These results indicate that the social consumer would choose resell over the two other sustainable fashion practices. This would lead to accepting hypothesis 2 (H2). However, the result is not statistically significant and thus is not highly reliable. In order to obtain statistical significance a larger sample would be necessary.

ANOVA (conscious consumer)						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	***P-value***	*F crit*
Between Groups	43,82375	2	21,91188	21,735	**1,89E-09**	3,030788
Within Groups	260,0996	258	1,008138			
Total	303,9234	260				

Table 3: Single factor ANOVA analysis: conscious consumer

The single factor ANOVA analysis on the conscious consumer's sustainable fashion practice preferences showed a P-value of less than 0,05 (1,89E-09<0,05) indicating that the results of the analysis were statistically significant. The conscious consumer's preferred sustainable fashion practices ranked as follows:

1. Resell (Mean=4,390805)

2. Repair (Mean=3,965517)
3. Rental (Mean=3,390805)

These results indicate that the conscious consumer is likely to choose resell over the other two sustainable fashion practices. Thus, hypothesis 3 (H3) was rejected.

The results of the single factor ANOVA analysis identified the sustainable fashion practices ranked first for all three consumer types. However, due to the uneven sample sizes of consumer type groups, the results of the social consumer's preference remained statistically non-significant.

4.2.3. Paired t-Test Analysis

The single factor ANOVA analysis was conducted in order to test the research hypotheses introduced in the literature review. To further elaborate on the relationship of the two main variables – consumer type and preferred sustainable fashion practice – paired t-test analysis was conducted. The entire sample was tested to identify correlations between respondents' consumer type scores and their sustainable fashion practice preferences. A total of 9 separate t-tests were executed to test how each consumer type correlated with each sustainability practice.

Self-consumer / Repair	
Pearson's Correlation	-0,232583
P-value	4,417E-13

Table 4: Self-consumer to repair correlation

The paired t-test analysis between respondents' average self-consumer scores and the average repair preference scores showed a P-value of less than 0,05 (4,417E-13<0,05) indicating that the t-test is statistically significant. As can be seen from the table above, the value for Pearson's Correlation coefficient is -0,232583 (r= -0,232583). The value is between -0,3 and 0 (-0,3<r<0), thus the correlation between the two variables is relatively low. The correlation coefficient is negative, indicating that a respondent's self-consumer score and repair preference score correlate

negatively. This result implies that the higher a person's self-consumer score is, the lower their repair preference score is.

Self-consumer / Resell	
Pearson's Correlation	-0,13213
P-value	7,611E-26

Table 5: Self-consumer to resell correlation

The paired t-test analysis between respondents' average self-consumer scores and their average resell preference scores showed a P-value of less than 0,05 (7,611E-26<0,05) indicating that the t-test is statistically significant. As can be seen from the table above, the value for Pearson's Correlation coefficient is -0,13213 (r= -0,13213). The value is between -0,3 and 0 (-0,3<r<0), thus the correlation between the two variables is relatively low. The correlation coefficient is negative, indicating that a respondent's self-consumer score and resell preference score correlate negatively. Just as with repair preference, the result implies that the higher a person's self-consumer score is, the lower their repair preference score is.

Self-consumer / Rental	
Pearson's Correlation	-0,10213
P-value	0,0011465

Table 6: Self-consumer to rental correlation

The paired t-test analysis between respondents' average self-consumer scores and their average rental preference scores showed a P-value of less than 0,05 (0,0011465<0,05) indicating that the t-test is statistically significant. As can be seen from the table above, the value for Pearson's Correlation coefficient is -0,10213 (r= -0,10213). The value is between -0,3 and 0 (-0,3<r<0), thus the correlation between the two variables is relatively low. The correlation coefficient is negative, indicating that a respondent's self-consumer score and rental preference score correlate negatively. Just as with repair as well as resell preference, the result implies that the higher a person's self-consumer score is, the lower their rental preference score is.

Social Consumer / Repair	
Pearson's Correlation	-0,06388
P-value	5,084E-20

Table 7: Social consumer to repair correlation

The paired t-test analysis between respondents' average social consumer scores and their average repair preference scores showed a P-value of less than 0,05 (5,084E-20<0,05) indicating that the t-test is statistically significant. As can be seen from the table above, the value for Pearson's Correlation coefficient is -0,06388 (r= -0,06388). The value is between -0,3 and 0 (-0,3<r<0), thus the correlation between the two variables is relatively low. The correlation coefficient is negative, indicating that a respondent's social consumer score and repair preference score correlate negatively. The result implies that the higher a person's social consumer score is, the lower their repair preference score is.

Social Consumer / Resell	
Pearson's Correlation	-0,238238
P-value	1,904E-30

Table 8: Social consumer to resell correlation

The paired t-test analysis between respondents' average social consumer scores and their average resell preference scores showed a P-value of less than 0,05 (1,904E-30<0,05) indicating that the t-test is statistically significant. As can be seen from the table above, the value for Pearson's Correlation coefficient is -0,23838 (r= -0,23838). The value is between -0,3 and 0 (-0,3<r<0), thus the correlation between the two variables is relatively low. The correlation coefficient is negative, indicating that a respondent's social consumer score and resell preference score correlate negatively. Just as in regards to repair preference, the result implies that the higher a person's social consumer score is, the lower their resell preference score is.

Social Consumer / Rental	
Pearson's Correlation	-0,206701
P-value	2,74E-06

Table 9: Social consumer to rental correlation

The paired t-test analysis between respondents' average social consumer scores and their average rental preference scores showed a P-value of less than 0,05 (2,74E-06<0,05) indicating that the t-test is statistically significant. As can be seen from the table above, the value for Pearson's Correlation coefficient is -0,206701 (r= -0,206701). The value is between -0,3 and 0 (-0,3<r<0), thus the correlation between the two variables is relatively low. The correlation coefficient is negative, indicating that a respondent's social consumer score and rental preference score correlate negatively. Just as in regards to repair as well as resell preferences, the result implies that the higher a person's social consumer score is, the lower their rental preference score is.

Conscious Consumer / Repair	
Pearson's Correlation	0,2943725
P-value	0,1924749

Table 10: Conscious consumer to repair correlation

The paired t-test analysis between the respondents' average conscious consumer scores and their average repair preference scores showed a P-value of higher than 0,05 (0,1924749>0,05) indicating that the t-test is not statistically significant. It can be concluded that there is no significant correlation between a respondent's conscious consumer score and their repair preference score.

Conscious Consumer / Resell	
Pearson's Correlation	0,2034011
P-value	2,427E-10

Table 11: Conscious consumer to resell correlation

The paired t-test analysis between the respondents' average conscious consumer scores and their average resell preference scores showed a P-value of less than 0,05 (2,427E-10<0,05) indicating that the t-test is statistically significant. As can be seen from the table above, the value for Pearson's Correlation coefficient is 0,2034011 (r=0,2034011). The value is between 0 and 0,3 (0<r<0,3), thus the correlation between

the two variables is relatively low. The result indicates that a person's conscious consumer score correlates positively with their resell preference score.

Conscious Consumer / Rental	
Pearson's Correlation	0,1922926
P-value	0,0005142

Table 12: Conscious consumer to rental correlation

The paired t-test analysis between the respondents' average conscious consumer scores and their average rental preference scores showed a P-value of less than 0,05 (0,0005142<0,05) indicating that the t-test is statistically significant. As can be seen from the table above, the value for Pearson's Correlation coefficient is 0,1922926 (r=0,1922926). The value is between 0 and 0,3 (0<r<0,3), thus the correlation between the two variables is relatively low. The result indicates that a person's conscious consumer score correlates positively with their rental preference score.

The results of the paired t-test analyses indicate that the conscious consumer is the only consumer type whose score has a positive correlation with sustainable fashion practice preference scores, whereas self-consumer as well as social consumer scores have negative correlations with sustainability practice preferences. This can be considered to be expected when using the consumer type score means of the entire survey sample, since the conscious consumer is the only fashion consumer type whose traits and values in regards to the survey statements drive sustainable fashion consumption.

4.2.4. Effect of Gender on Consumer Type and Sustainable Consumption

A further analysis of differences in responses amongst genders was conducted in order to identify potential sustainable fashion consumption attributes in genders. The analysis was conducted using only female and male respondents' data, as the number of non-binary and transgender respondents was too low to offer noteworthy results.

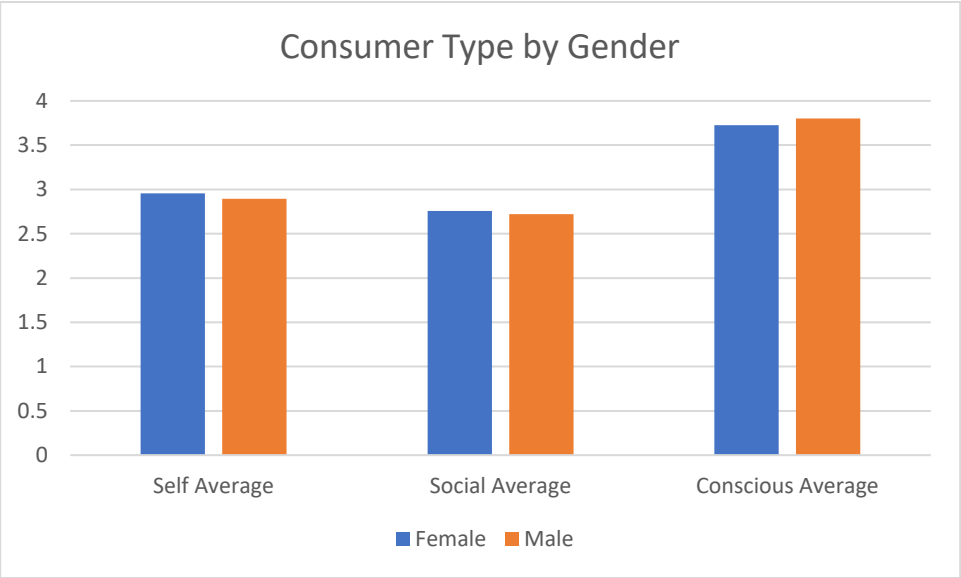

Figure 6: Consumer type by gender

The average consumer type scores between female and male respondents differed only by decimals. Female respondents scored an average of 2,96 on the self-consumer scale, and males scored an average of 2,89, thus it can be concluded that the sample's female and male respondents were relatively equal as self-consumers. The average social consumer score for female respondents was 2,75 and for male respondents 2,72, resulting in a nearly even social consumer score between the two genders. As stated earlier in the paper, conscious consumer was scored highest on by the entire sample. Both female and male respondents thus had the highest average score for the conscious consumer scale, female respondents with an average of 3,73 and male respondents with an average of 3,80. Thus, conscious consumer was the only consumer type scale where male respondents scored fractionally higher than female consumers. Altogether there was no outstanding difference between the average consumer type scores of these two genders represented in this sample.

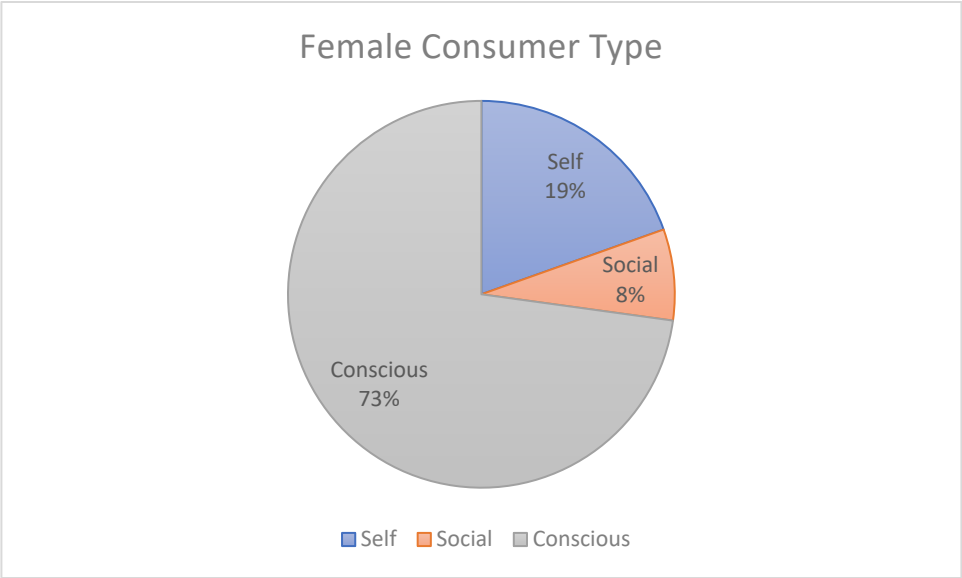

Figure 7: Female consumer type

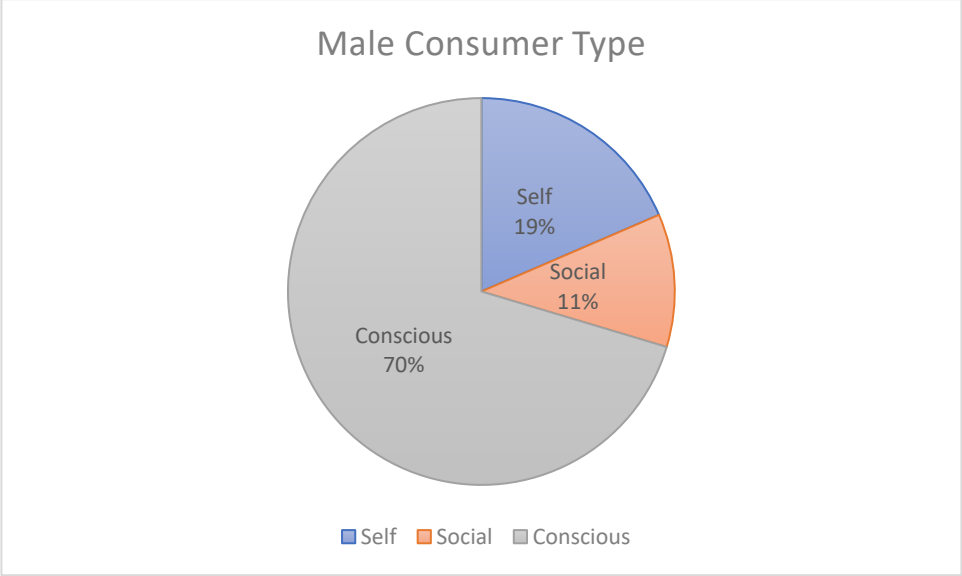

Figure 8: Male consumer type

The consumer types as which male and female respondents classified as were fairly equal between the two genders as well. All in all 18 females and 5 males classified as self-consumers, both being 19% of their gender's respondents. 7 females and 3 males were classified as social consumers, thus covering 8% of female respondents and 11% of male respondents. As conscious consumers, the largest consumer group represented by this sample, classified 67 females and 19 males, covering 73% of all female respondents and 70% of all male respondents.

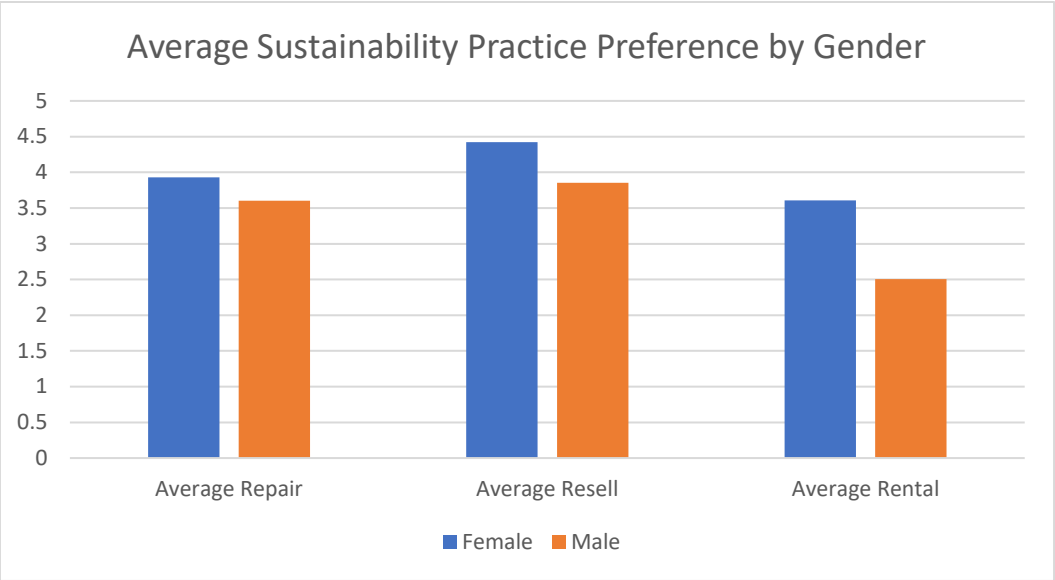

Figure 9: Average sustainability practice preference by gender

The average sustainability practice preference scores differed slightly more between female and male respondents in comparison to consumer type scores. Female respondents scored an average of 3,93 in repair preference and male respondents scored an average of 3,60, thus there was only a slight difference in preferring repair practices in fashion amongst the two genders. The average rental preference score of female respondents was noticeably higher than male respondents' rental score, females with an average score of 3,60 and males with an average score of 2,50. Female and male respondents also differed in average resell preference scores. The average female respondents' resell preference score was a higher score, in relation to the other two sustainable practice preference scores, of 4,42. The male respondents' average resell preference score was an average of 3,85.

Altogether there was no noticeable difference between female and male respondents in regards to consumer type. All consumer types – self-consumer, social consumer, and conscious consumer – were divided relatively equally, with conscious consumer being the distinctively largest represented consumer type in this sample. In regards to sustainable fashion practice preferences, however, the noticeable difference between the two genders was that males scored lower than females in preferring sustainable fashion practices in general.

4.3. Connections Between Interview and Survey Outcomes

The study aimed to find connections between the qualitative and quantitative research outcomes in order to further substantiate the research outcomes. Quantitative research results can be considered to have more significance due to a relatively large sample size in comparison to the qualitative research where only two (2) people were used as a sample. The interviewees do, however, represent the sustainable fashion industry, thus the interview results were mostly relied on as support for the hypotheses and to give direction for survey design. Both interview outcomes suggested that conscious consumer is the consumer type to most likely prefer any of the three sustainable fashion practices. The paired t-test analysis results supported these qualitative research findings, as a respondent's conscious consumer score was the only consumer type score to positively correlate with preferred sustainable fashion practices.

5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This part gathers together the findings of qualitative and quantitative research and discussed the connections of research results with existing literature introduced in the literature review. Firstly, the findings are discussed and analyzed in further detail. Secondly, the limitation to the research methods and the collected data are reviewed and discussed.

5.1. Discussion of Main Findings and Theoretical Implications

5.1.1. Conscious Traits Drive Sustainable Fashion Consumption

The main findings of this study regarding fashion consumer types' sustainable fashion practice preferences indicate that the conscious consumer is most likely to purchase sustainable fashion in general. Previous research states that conscious consumers' fashion consumption behavior is driven mostly by personal ethical values and sustainable attributes in clothing as defined by Niinimäki (2010) and Lundblad and Davies (2016). This study finds that fashion consumers' conscious traits and preferences thus drive the consumption of fashion items from brands that communicate sustainable values in their business practices. The primary research findings thus support the answer to research question 1 (RQ1) of this study which was originally found in the review of existing literature.

In regards to the sizes of the three different fashion consumer groups the findings of this study indicate that the conscious consumer group is the largest. This finding is however not supported with previous literature which states that the conscious consumer is the rarest consumer type amongst fashion consumers (Niinimäki, 2010, McNeill & Moore, 2015). The strong representation of conscious consumers in this sample can be considered to be due to the chosen convenience sample model, which is further discussed in limitations of research. Thus, from this finding no direct generalizations should be drawn.

5.1.2. Preference of Resell

This study found that resell was the most preferred sustainability practice for all three fashion consumer types. These findings led to rejecting both hypothesis 1 (H1) and hypothesis 3 (H3), and due to non-significant data analysis results hypothesis 2 (H2) was rejected as well. The findings indicate that while conscious consumers might make purchase decisions based on personal values and ethics, affordability and the option of buying a piece to have as their own is still favored higher than rental items or higher priced sustainable alternatives. A consumer could thus potentially treat resell as a more sustainable way of purchasing many items of clothing. From this can be concluded that even though the majority of consumers represented in the sample of this study classified as conscious consumers, the self-consumer traits such as experimenting with different styles and valuing affordability remain strong in fashion consumers. Self-consumer traits thus continue to drive clothing consumption, precisely as stated by McNeill and Moore (2015). Moreover, high pricing was therefore found to remain a barrier between fashion consumers and sustainable consumption, aligning with the previous research findings of Abdulrazak & Quoquab (2017), McNeill and Moore (2015), and Linh (2020).

The result of primary data analysis presenting resell as the most preferred sustainable fashion practice for all fashion consumer types provided an answer to both research questions 2 and 3 (RQ2 and RQ3). However, as is further discussed in limitations of research, no direct generalization ought to be derived from these findings due to a relatively uneven number of people classified as each consumer type. Resell can nevertheless be treated as a potential sustainability practice for fashion brands to implement in their practices, as it communicates clear sustainability goals to consumers in reusing fashion items.

5.1.3. Attitude-Behavior Gap Remains

The uneven number of respondents classified as each consumer type – resulting in conscious consumer being the largest group represented in the sample – can additionally be examined from the perspective that all consumer types might have the desire to be conscious. McNeill and Moore (2015) and Niinimäki (2010) found in their

research that self- as well as social consumer traits are extremely more common in fashion consumers. The consumers represented in this sample can possibly have scored high on conscious consumer traits, yet valuing affordability and other fashion item attributes characteristic to self- and social consumers when it came to choosing sustainable fashion practices. This finding addresses the attitude-behavior gap discussed by Young, Hwang, McDonald, and Oates (2009) and Niinimäki (2010). Fashion consumers might have the values and consumption attitudes of a conscious consumer, but engage in fashion consumer behavior that hardly might align with these values.

Analysis of gender affecting consumer types and consumers' preferred sustainable fashion practices showed no evident differences between the female and male genders. However, female consumers were found to be more likely than male consumers to purchase any kind of sustainable fashion in general. The attitude-behavior gap between sustainable consumer values and actual sustainable consumer behavior can thus be considered to be wider in male's fashion consumption.

5.1.4. Positive and Simple Objectives Attract Consumers

Previous research found that positive emotions are significantly stronger drivers of sustainable fashion consumption than negative emotions (Niinimäki 2010). Self-consumers and social consumers might feel pressured to purchase sustainable fashion through negative feelings such as guilt, whereas conscious consumers are driven by positive feelings of pride and desire in purchasing sustainable fashion (Niinimäki, 2010, McNeill & Moore, 2015). The existing findings are supported by this study, as conscious consumer score was found to be the only consumer type score to positively correlate with sustainable fashion consumption. The goal for fashion brands practicing sustainability would thus be to communicate their sustainable goals and values through positive attributes in order for self-consumers' and social consumers' motivation for sustainable fashion consumption to increase. Furthermore, the qualitative primary research findings of the interview with The Ateljé support this, as motivating consumers to make sustainable choices through positivity and pleasurable experiences is found to be effective.

The high preference of resell practices in fashion consumers as found by this study can also be considered to connect to the confusion between retailers and fashion consumers in regards to communicating sustainable values discussed in the review of literature. McNeill and Moore (2015) stated in their research that fashion consumers were potentially driven away from sustainable alternatives in fashion due to confusion and mistrust towards fashion brands. Resell can thus be considered to have been most preferred amongst fashion consumer types because it is likely the most familiar and states a simple sustainability goal of reusing a piece of clothing. The qualitative primary research findings of the interview with Nudie Jeans support this, as the results implied for the simple sustainability practices to be most attractive amongst consumers. This finding would thus further support the answer to research question 3 (RQ3) as resell being the best sustainability practice for all fashion brands regardless of their target consumer group.

5.2. Limitations of Research

This research had its limitations. The essential limitation affecting the results of data collection and the analyses performed was the uneven number of respondents that were classified as each consumer type. The fashion consumer type as which most survey respondents (n=87) were classified as was conscious consumer. The consumer type as which second most respondents (n=23) were classified as was self-consumer. Only 10 respondents (n=10) were classified as social consumers. Thus, the different consumer types were not equally represented. This limitation can be a result of the survey respondent sample model being a convenience sample, indicating that the questionnaire was shared with those who it was easiest to share with and participation was completely voluntary. The survey was shared on the researcher's own personal Instagram page as well as multiple student communication channels on social media, and it can be expected that most people who have decided to take part in the survey have been somewhat interested in sustainability issues in the fashion industry. The respondents have thus seen the topic of the survey and it has motivated them to take part, resulting in an uneven number of consumer types represented. Had the survey been shared on more diverse platforms and attracted more participants with different values, backgrounds, and fashion consumption preferences, the results of the study could have been found as more diverse in regards to consumer type as

well as statistically significant. In addition, the uneven number of people in consumer groups can potentially be a result of the strict division of respondents into three specific consumer groups. This strict division can possibly have resulted in overlooking other traits of respondents than the traits characteristic to their classified consumer type.

Regarding the survey's scenario design, the scenarios introduced a relatively limited version of each sustainability practice in order to keep the survey design simple and applicable to the majority of fashion consumers. This can be considered to have resulted in resell being the most preferred sustainable fashion practice amongst all consumer groups, leading to the rejection of hypotheses 1 and 3 (H1 and H3). To further elaborate, clothing rental services in their current form are a relatively new phenomenon in the fashion industry (Shrivastava et al., 2020). Additionally, the scenarios introduced repair services as the most expensive sustainable fashion practice alternative, and it can be considered to have affected respondents' lack of repair preference. Price points can therefore have affected the primary research outcomes, despite the performed pre-test to determine realistic price points for sustainable fashion practices. Not including price points in the scenarios the research could potentially have identified respondents' attitudes towards the three different sustainability practices without the effect of higher or lower pricing of products.

Another factor to have potentially affected research outcomes was that survey respondents were not able to ask for further elaborations on survey questions. Especially the low averages of social consumer scores can potentially be a result of confusion amongst respondents, since the literature review claims for social consumer traits to be ones that most fashion consumers possess (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Moreover, when answering the scenario questions respondents can have been confused or wished for an additional example to the sustainable fashion practice. Providing additional examples could potentially have led to more diverse and statistically significant results.

Lastly, the item of clothing used as an example in the sustainable fashion practice scenarios of the survey was a shirt. Even though the price points had been identified using a pre-test to the study, the clothing item can have had different meanings for different respondents, which can have resulted in the research results not aligning. A

shirt was chosen as the item of clothing due to its gender neutralism, however, in for instance the rental scenario, respondents could have been more likely to be willing to rent out a suit or an evening dress instead of a shirt. In order to maintain simplicity and statistical significance for the survey the clothing item in all three sustainable fashion practice scenarios had to be the same, thus a suit or an evening dress would potentially not have been as gender neutral as a shirt. In order for the results of data collection and analysis to have been more diverse and statistically significant, a longer time period for survey design as well as response collection could have had an effect.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This section aims to summarize the conclusions for the research. Firstly, the main findings of the research are summarized and discussed. Secondly, implications for international business are suggested. Lastly, suggestions for further research are offered based on the findings and limitations of this study.

6.1. Main Findings

The main objective for this research was to identify the right type of sustainable fashion practices for fashion brands to implement in their activity by studying three different fashion consumer types. Through defining the preferred sustainable fashion practices for each consumer type, fashion brands could choose which sustainability practice – repair, resell, or rent – to implement. This could furthermore drive the change of the fashion industry into a more sustainable direction.

The study found that while fashion consumers might have the values and attitudes of a conscious consumer such as valuing eco-friendliness and high quality in clothing items, the traits of self- and social consumers such as valuing low price and clothing item experimentation remain strong in actual fashion item purchasing behavior. Conscious consumers whose attitudes align with their behavior remain rare in fashion consumers.

The research additionally found that what motivates conscious consumers to purchase sustainable fashion are the positive emotions connected to consumption. Negative feelings such as pressure or guilt were found to be notably weaker motivators for sustainable consumption. In order to close the attitude-behavior gap between fashion consumers' sustainable values and sustainable fashion item consumption it ought to thus be important for fashion brands to communicate sustainable objectives through positive messages instead of awakening negative feelings in consumers such as guilt or pressure to purchase.

The findings of this research suggest that fashion brands' simple sustainability goals attract fashion consumers more effectively than detailed and perplexing objectives. This study identified resell as the most preferred sustainability practice for all three consumer types. Resell, in contrast to repair and rental in this research, can thus have been perceived as a simple sustainable fashion objective, as it offers a relatively uncomplicated way to practice sustainable fashion by reusing an item of clothing. This research therefore suggests that communicating sustainable fashion practices to consumers as explicit and apprehensible objectives can attract fashion consumers and thus drive sustainable fashion consumption.

This research concludes that while awareness of sustainability issues in the fashion industry has increased in the recent years amongst consumers, the attitude behavior gap continues to exist. The findings indicate that owning clothing items is still preferred over renting, and less expensive clothing items are preferred over higher priced ones. Fashion consumers continue to prefer experimenting with clothing items and would thus choose the affordable option of resell over repair or rental. Fashion companies ought to thus introduce sustainable fashion practices to consumers in the ways that this research further suggests in implications for international business. Small steps taken by fashion companies collectively towards a more sustainable fashion industry are key in changing the fashion culture from wasteful to wasteless; from unsustainable to sustainable.

6.2. Implications for International Business

The most relevant takeaways for international business are the suggestions for fashion brands that the research findings offer in deciding upon which sustainable fashion practice to implement in their activity. Resell is found to be the most attractive sustainability practice for all three types of fashion consumers. Fashion brands could therefore implement resell as a sustainable practice and attract all fashion consumes on the basis of the findings in this study.

Another applicable finding for the fashion industry is that sustainable consumption is driven by positive emotions in the place of negative emotions. Outcomes of the Ateljé

interview showcase an example, for fashion brands taking on sustainable fashion practices, of communicating sustainable goals through positivity. This finding can be considered especially applicable for smaller scale fashion companies, as personalization and positive purchase experiences play an important part in engaging in sustainable fashion consumption through positive emotions.

Despite resell being identified as the most attractive sustainable fashion practice to all consumer types, the findings suggest that presenting a fashion company's sustainability objectives as apprehensible and uncomplicated appeals to fashion consumers. Resell offers a simple sustainability objective, thus other sustainable fashion practices ought to be made just as clear and concise to consumers in order to attract on the same level as resell. This can be most relevant to larger fashion companies in addition to smaller fashion companies.

To provide an example, a large multinational fashion brand such as H&M could on the basis of this study implement second-hand resell practices in their stores' activity, collecting customers' old H&M garments in stores to be sold as second-hand, possibly in exchange for discounts in the brand's own products. Through positive communication on the sustainability objective of reselling old garments, with additional benefits to consumers who take their old clothing items back to the store, this sustainable fashion practice could be found attractive amongst all types of fashion consumers. A resell practice implemented in fashion companies' activity would be a relatively small change in business operations. However, if implemented collectively amongst numerous fashion brands, this change could have substantial impacts on the amounts of waste production and pollution brought on by the fashion industry.

The attitude-behavior gap between fashion consumers' sustainable attitudes and sustainable fashion consumer behavior plays a part in maintaining the unsustainability issues of the fashion industry. In order for this gap to be closed, sustainable purchase behavior ought to be motivated by fashion companies through positive and simple communication of sustainability objectives and sustainable fashion practices. Fashion companies whose target customer groups are primarily self- and social consumers can thus encourage conscious fashion consumption.

6.3. Suggestions for Further Research

In order for more relevant and substantial results of connections between consumer type and sustainable fashion practices to be identified, future research ought to take a more detailed approach in consumer group identification. Precise focus groups based on consumer type should be put together in order to identify more coherent responses amongst consumer types. Respondents could be divided into three separate groups based on the consumer type they primarily classify as. This could further result in a more equal number of respondents in each consumer group.

Another alternative for future research would be to allow for a respondent to classify as more than one consumer type, as research outcomes indicated that the majority of respondents possess traits that are characteristic to more than just one type of fashion consumer. Instead of dividing respondents into three types research could focus on specific traits and attributes of fashion consumers that result in certain type of consumer behavior. For example, style experimentation and price-sensitiveness in fashion consumers could be studied further, as they have significant effects of purchase decisions. This would allow for a more detailed insight to be gained in studying the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable consumption.

Additionally, the sustainable fashion practice scenarios introduced require a more applicable and detailed setting in regards to the clothing item and scenario background. The clothing item used in each scenario could be different – one that fits better into the sustainable practice introduced. For example instead of a shirt, a suit could be a better clothing item to rent, and a cashmere sweater a better clothing item to repair. Using three different clothing items in scenarios would however potentially require for the scenarios to be divided into three separate surveys in order for the data analysis results to be significant. Nonetheless, it might be necessary in order conduct more detailed research of consumers' sustainable fashion practice preferences. In addition to changing the clothing items in the scenarios, future research could consider eliminating price points from scenarios, as they affect consumers' perceptions of each sustainability practice.

Lastly, future research could find additional results from studying the effect of different nationalities on sustainable consumption behavior and preferred sustainable fashion practices. The sample used in this study mostly represented the consumer culture in Finland, and research results could potentially differ significantly in other countries. Future research could additionally conduct a study comparing the sustainable consumer behavior and attitudes between two or more nationalities. The traits and preferences of fashion consumers could have significant differences depending on culture. Additional research conducted on this topic internationally could have significant outcomes for the fashion industry and multinational fashion companies aiming to implement sustainable fashion practices in their activity.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

"Nudie Jeans" Interview Transcript

Q1: How does Nudie Jeans practice sustainability?

A1: *Big question… Even though we've claimed a somewhat pioneer position when it comes to sustainable business practices or more sustainable business practices, we're careful with the term "sustainable". Because if we were 100% sustainable we would be "done", there would be no more work to be done. We do think, however, that we've reached a pretty high level of sustainability compared to other brands in the textile industry.*

Looking at our key product, which is denim, or jeans in general, it all begins with the cotton fiber. We have choices in which type of cotton we can choose, and according to many studies it is best to use organic cotton. In addition to organic materials we need to acquire responsible management in each of the clothing production steps. It can be anything from choosing organic cotton to choosing laundry suppliers with closed water management systems with a high standard of social compliance when it comes to living wages, for example, and all these social standards.

So it is a big question, but in all of the steps of our supply chain we need to be very focused and responsible, and have a decent amount of respect in regards to the environment and people, without having to compromise too much with the financial needs, either, since that is also a big part of making the company go around.

Q2: What's the key purpose for Nudie Jeans to apply these practices?

A2: *The story behind it is that the founder of Nudie Jeans, Maria Eriksson, had been in the denim industry for a few years and just before she started Nudie together with the partners, she was head designer of Lee Jeans in Europe, thus she had insights to the denim industry and all the issues and gaps within it. It was that and her willingness to work constructively towards these issues combined with her passion for raw denim, etc. That set the direction for Nudie Jeans.*

The same mentality has been incorporated since day one in the brand's dna, although every single sustainability procurement that we have today was not part of the idea from the very beginning. It has, of course, developed over time. Private ownership of the company also makes us have more control.

I think, maybe Nudie Jeans is a bit ahead of its time, realizing the "no-brainer" of slow and steady development instead of high peaks. Our CEO Joakim often talks about this "three miles per day" -idea, where you do steady work and have slow growth over time. That's the entire concept of sustainability; how long can we sustain and what do we need to do in order to reach the highest possible level (of sustainability).

Q3: In Nudie Jeans' point of view, what motivates consumers to buy sustainable fashion? What are the traits of a sustainable fashion consumer?

A3: *It's a bunch of stuff of course. You could say that it's a clean conscience, and that's a part of it, that's the easy answer. People want to be able to sleep well at night and feel like they're getting through life without being a bad person. Today we have a lot more information about supply chains and news cover a lot of information about these topics, and it's all much more accessible thanks to digitalization – communication channels such as social media and all. So people are a bit more aware these days and they understand what their role is and what kind of responsibility the consumers have. I think it's important to underline the responsibility of the consumer but I also think that the major responsibility lies on the brand policy makers. The potential power of consumers is massive, but only if it's organized.*

Q4: What are the traits and fashion preferences of your company's target consumer?

A4*: Nudie Jeans is a men's brand since day one, but since a few years back we also do women's collections. Nudie Jeans has been talked about being a unisex brand, which is has been, even if maybe not officially stated by us. But maybe the average Nudie Jeans consumer is a younger man who's maybe a bit more conscious and possibly not a low income person due to the price points. I think that the young age of a consumer has a lot to do with the consciousness, and of course identity building, which a part of fashion is all about. It's like tying a knot when you're trying to answer this.*

Q5: Which one of Nudie Jeans' sustainability practices attracts most consumers?

A5: *I think that the repairing services are the most valued, since they are pretty clear incentives. It's a great example of how you can materialize sustainability within fashion – it's super simple and nothing new, it's been done for ages. But we're doing it in a new, modern way, trying to scale it up and include a lot of people, to set repairing into normalized behavior, where people see the benefits: financially and in sparing natural resources.*

Also living wages is a unique selling point – it shouldn't have to be – but as long as it is, it will be important to consumers.

Q6: What do you think is the future of sustainable fashion consumption?

A6: *My hope is that the industry and experts – scientists, whichever stakeholders that have an impact – can outline what exactly is sustainable for a fashion company or any company, and that we reach those goals. I hope that the concept of sustainability won't be worn out, but will become applicable to the entire industry.*

“The Ateljé” Interview Transcript (Translated from Finnish)

Q1: How does The Ateljé practice sustainability?

A1: *The textile industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world. Nowadays it takes up to 10% of all greenhouse gas emissions; if nothing is done, by the year 2050 textile industry will take up to 25%. The Ateljé aims to change people’s consumption habits and through that decrease the greenhouse gas emissions of the fashion industry.*

We exist to make people question entirely their consumption. Often when talking about sustainable fashion consumers focus on what they’re buying, instead of questioning whether they need to buy something new in the first place. Through a shared wardrobe our members don’t need to buy new in order to enjoy clothing.

When one item of clothing is used by tens of people, natural resources are preserved as there is no need to produce new items. The risk of a clothing rental service is attempting to scale up too quickly; suddenly importing clothing or badly optimized washing can decrease the positive environmental impact – The Ateljé aims to avoid this.

Q2: What is the key purpose for The Ateljé to apply these practices?

A2: *We aim to make a clothing rental service appealing to consumers, so that we can actually compete with purchasing entirely new products.*

Q3: In your company’s point of view, what motivates consumers to buy sustainable fashion? What are the traits of a sustainable fashion consumer?

A3: *Our rental service has made our customers gain interest in garment care in an entirely new way.*

Sustainable fashion consumers increasingly consider their consumption habits and are beginning to realize that you indeed don’t need to buy everything. Many of our

clients come back after only trying clothing rental once – many have become our monthly subscription customers.

Q4: What are the traits and fashion preferences of your company's target consumer?

A4: *We are happy to see what a large target customer base we have obtained in such little time. Of course our customer base is still mainly young urban citizens, but lately we have also reached an older customer group; many have brought their mother to rent clothing. Our main target group is still 24-55-year-olds.*

Q5: What about clothing rental services attracts consumers?

A5: *It all started from us realizing that clothing rental services are often not very appealing and it most definitely do not compete with regular retail – we wanted to solve this problem. A clothing rental service is attractive when it's made easy and appealing. Affordability is also an important quality of rental clothing – it makes the sustainable choice into a less of a compromise.*

Q6: What do you think is the future of sustainable fashion consumption?

A6: *The conversation of sustainable materials isn't enough. We need a big, industry-wide change of the entire fashion culture. We want to build this new culture and encourage consumers to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. Our key idea is that not everything needs to be owned.*

Why clothing rental? The modern day fast cycles of fashion production is intolerable; the textile industry creates as much greenhouse gas emissions annually as the world's air traffic and boat traffic combined. It is proven, however, that the emissions of the textile industry would decrease by 44% if clothing items were used twice as long as now – with clothing rental services we can make this a reality and thus minimize the emissions of the textile industry.

Appendix B

Survey Design made with Webropol 3.0 (2022)

Hi, my name is Noora and I'm currently writing my Bachelor's Thesis about fashion consumption. I put together this quick 5-minute survey to gather up some data for my own research. Your answers are a very important part of my Bachelor's Thesis. Thank you for taking part in this survey!

(This survey is anonymous and participation is completely voluntary.)

The first 27 quick and simple multiple choice questions are about your preferences as a fashion consumer:

1. Choose the answer option that most closely describes your opinion:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	I can't say	Agree	Strongly agree
I buy clothing to experiment with different styles. *	○	○	○	○	○
I buy new clothing items often to try different styles with them. *	○	○	○	○	○
I like to experiment styles with clothing items. *	○	○	○	○	○
I sometimes buy clothing that I end up not using. *	○	○	○	○	○
I like to update my closet quite often. *	○	○	○	○	○
I tend to get bored with my clothes and want to try new ones. *	○	○	○	○	○
The most important feature in clothing items for me is affordability. *	○	○	○	○	○
It is important for me that clothing items are affordable. *	○	○	○	○	○
Cheaper clothing for me is good, because it allows me to buy more. *	○	○	○	○	○

2. Choose the answer option that most closely describes your opinion:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	I can't say	Agree	Strongly agree
I buy clothing to keep up with trends. *	○	○	○	○	○
I like to buy clothing that is trendy. *	○	○	○	○	○
I like to buy clothing depending on what others are wearing. *	○	○	○	○	○
I buy clothing items that I use for a couple years. *	○	○	○	○	○
I wear clothing items for a couple years and then sell them or throw them away. *	○	○	○	○	○
I like to update my closet every few years. *	○	○	○	○	○
The most important feature in clothing items for me is trendiness. *	○	○	○	○	○
Social media fashion trends often affect my clothing purchases. *	○	○	○	○	○
Trendiness in clothing for me is good, because it helps me to fit in. *	○	○	○	○	○

3. Choose the answer option that most closely describes your opinion:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	I can't say	Agree	Strongly agree
I buy clothing items to wear them for a long time. *	○	○	○	○	○
I like to own only a few clothing pieces at a time. *	○	○	○	○	○
I buy clothing that I know I will wear for many years. *	○	○	○	○	○
I rarely buy new clothing items. *	○	○	○	○	○
When I buy a piece of clothing, I know I'll use it for a long time. *	○	○	○	○	○
The most important feature in clothing items for me is high quality. *	○	○	○	○	○
I value quality in clothing items over affordability or trendiness. *	○	○	○	○	○
I am willing to pay more for high quality clothing items that I know will last. *	○	○	○	○	○
I often prefer buying clothing items that are sustainably made. *	○	○	○	○	○

Now, imagine the following scenario: You have an important event coming up for which you need a new, presentable shirt. You have the option to either shop at a popular fashion chain store at your local mall, or to choose a brand called Hellä Clothing, whose clothing items are locally produced from organic materials. Below there are three different shirt purchase scenarios introduced. Each scenario will be followed by three multiple choice questions.

4. **You need a new shirt for an important event. A fashion chain store sells a shirt for $100. A brand called Hellä Clothing sells a locally produced organic cotton shirt for $150. Additionally, Hellä Clothing offers free repair services for their products to make them last in use for a longer time.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Can't say	Agree	Strongly agree
I am willing to buy the shirt from Hellä Clothing. *	○	○	○	○	○
I am likely to buy the shirt from Hellä Clothing. *	○	○	○	○	○
I am likely to recommend Hellä Clothing to a friend. *	○	○	○	○	○

5. **You need a shirt for an important event. A fashion chain store sells a shirt for $100. A brand called Hellä Clothing sells their locally produced clothing second hand in addition to as new. Hellä Clothing sells a second-hand organic cotton shirt for $50.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Can't say	Agree	Strongly agree
I am willing to buy the second-hand shirt from Hellä Clothing. *	○	○	○	○	○
I am likely to buy the second-hand shirt from Hellä Clothing. *	○	○	○	○	○
I am likely to recommend Hellä Clothing to a friend. *	○	○	○	○	○

6. **You need a new shirt for an important event. A fashion chain store sells a shirt for $100. A brand called Hellä Clothing has a clothing rental service that rents out their organic and locally produced items. Hellä Clothing is renting out a shirt for 4 days for $20.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Can't say	Agree	Strongly agree
I am willing to rent the shirt from Hellä Clothing. *	○	○	○	○	○
I am likely to rent the shirt from Hellä Clothing. *	○	○	○	○	○
I am likely to recommend Hellä Clothing to a friend. *	○	○	○	○	○

Lastly, dear respondent, I want to know a few facts about you:

7. **What's your gender identity? (select all that apply)**

- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Non-binary
- [ ] Transgender
- [ ] I prefer not to say

8. **What is your country of origin?**

   (blank to fill)