SUSTAINABILITY, THREE GENERATIONS OF CONSUMER PSYCHE AND "FAST-HOMEWARE"

KATIE HAMMONDS

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ABSTRACT

Fast-homeware, akin to fast-fashion, is an emerging sector which this study argues is largely under-researched. Similar to other sectors of the textile industry, fast-homeware has a devastating impact on the environment and is in dire need of study. In turn, this would prevent fast-homeware from becoming normalised and entrenched into consumer psyche. "43% of consumers like their favourite fashion retailer to offer a wide range of products" (Mintel Group Ltd., 2018) and as seen in many UK fast-fashion stores, this now includes homeware. Consumers primarily care "about price, quality and value" (Bucic et al. 2012), above sustainability or ethicality, and coincides with the over-saturation of fast-homeware at cheap, affordable prices. Through focus groups, the intention of this study is to explore consumers understanding of ethicality and sustainability in relation to homeware. Moreover, this study explores consumer responses to other fast-homeware related areas, internet, social-media, and the housing market. In particular, the consumers who had taken part represent three different generations. This is fundamental as too much focus is given to younger generations creating problems such as fast-fashion or fast-homeware. Regardless of how the textiles industry conducted itself fifty or sixty years prior, all generations interact with its current form. All generations have a responsibility to ensure they are practicing sustainable/ethical consumerism.

This study is particularly pertinent as there are no found, comparable studies in this area. Further still, there was very little literature that alluded to fast-homeware, instead the majority of academic research concentrates on fast-fashion. In turn, this potentially makes this study the first to research into the sector of fast-homeware and identifying as a current and growing issue. The research highlighted many areas of further research, amongst those were some key findings that will be briefly established here. Participants did not consume homeware in accordance with how sustainable or ethical it was, instead 'value for money' was the central theme of consumer behaviour. Furthermore, there is a gap in consumer knowledge in all generations interviewed. Whilst literature has focused on the Millennial generation consumption, it has overlooked other generational consumer behaviour and attitude. Finally, this research discusses the link between fast-homeware and social media influence, finding an inherent connection through both their target demographics.

Short term beneficiaries of this research include be other academics who wish to research into an untapped, unexplored, and current field. In the long term, benefits of this research extend to consumers of homeware and the environmental state of the planet.

CONTENTS

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

The two industries of fast-fashion and homeware are merging, with trends unifying both areas, resulting in the troubling emergence of 'fast-homeware'. Fast-homeware is fast-fashion's equivalent, where products are being produced, marketed, consumed, and disposed of in a similar manner. In response, the consumer psyche (the logical, emotional, and existential reasoning for purchase) is led to believe that the two sectors are synonymous with each other. Then follows an incessant cycle where industry supplies more to consumers who demand more from the industry. However, industry is driven by profit and is unlikely to alter its habits without good reason. Moreover, the lack of ethical and sustainable production/manufacturing of homeware amplifies and contributes to the already devastating impact the fast-fashion industry has unequivocally caused. Thus, an oversaturation of 'fast-homeware' would result in increased consumer purchase, increased unnecessary waste and increased exertion and strain on the planets' resources.

Whilst recent research has begun to recognise the escalation of homeware included in fast-fashion companies, there is very little academic literature that has explicitly stated this and possibly none that professes and investigates the resulting environmental impact. Most literature appears to focus on fashion, which has been in the forefront of eco-campaigns and has culminated in multiple documentaries reporting on the downfalls of the fashion industry. Consequently, the issue of fast-fashion has successfully been scrutinised by academics and has successfully reached the public via accessible media platforms. Very little literature or media, in comparison, has explored homeware to the same extent. This study disagrees completely with this 'trend' in academic research, hence why it has undertaken an exploratory study into fast-homeware.

Although fast-homeware does target a demographic of consumers in their teens and twenties, the participants in this study will be of two older generations also. This research believes that all age-groups interact with fast-homeware and, despite its target consumer, should undertake research that is inclusive and will reflect this. The aim of this paper is to explore the attitudes, opinions, and behaviours of three different generations of consumers from the UK. This is achieved by using informal focus groups. Furthermore, this will also highlight the large quantity of academic literature that too focuses on a younger demographic, a lost opportunity to compare attitudes and behaviour of consumers from different generations. During the informal group interviews, participants will discuss not only fast-homeware, but areas that have potentially impact its growth, for example social media, internet use, and the current UK housing market. The resulting outcomes are analysed and elaborated upon within the "Findings & Discussion" section of this thesis.

In addition, this study undertook a phasal approach to literature, using the traditional review initially and then researching into further, corresponding literature during the analysis of the informal group

interviews. Due to the lack of research to draw upon, the first phase literature examined any areas that were deemed to connect or impact fast-homeware. Whereas the second phase literature was cultivated from the interview stage. Discussion with the participants illuminated other potential areas that could have an impact on fast-homeware and were important to include within this study. Phasal literature became essential as it enabled this study to remain exploratory and to illustrate the broad depth of areas that should be researched in further studies.

The aims and objectives of this study explores the impacts of fast-homeware, and to establish any existing areas that connect with fast-homeware. In accordance with this, the study will also aim to ascertain connections between fast-homeware and consumer psyche.

<u>2.0 | LITERATURE REVIEW</u>

The following chapter is referred to as First Phase Literature (see 3.2.2, p25), and encompasses the initial areas that draw connections with fast-homeware.

<u>2.1 | TEXTILE INDUSTRY IMPACT</u>

There is no illusion that the majority of literature encompassing the textile industries impact on the environment and its inhabitants is largely focused on fashion. Subsequently, finding literature that specifically addressed the environmental impact from the homeware industry proved especially problematic. Due to the dominance of fashion, the literature noted in this research will refer to just that. Furthermore, comparisons will be drawn between fast-fashion and fast-homeware so as to discern the latter's possible negative impact. This research believes that there are parallels between the two, in both unsustainability, unethicality, and consumer psyche. All things considered, the prevalence of fashion literature as opposed to homeware literature highlights the importance of research such as this. In order to truly understand and anticipate the effects of fast-homeware, exploratory research must be undertaken. Not only will it illuminate the complexity of the issue but will also clarify a wide spectrum of potential further research.

2.1.1 | NEWS MEDIA

In contradiction however, it seems that literature pertaining to the negative impact of the textile industry narrows into its own trends. Online news articles such as Challa (2007) and Perry (2018), though spaced a decade apart, seem to convey exactly the same message. After some hard-hitting facts regarding the current effects, such as water pollution, excess waste chemicals, and non-biodegradable fibres, the authors conclude with how the reader can improve their consumerist behaviour.

The notable aspect of these two pieces is the similarities. Both are lengthy to digest, posing the dilemma of how accessible they are to the average consumer. In particular, a topic that can seem overwhelming and catastrophic, could result in an aversion of wanting to read such a vast amount of bleak news. Although a lightness of reading is sensed by the end of both articles, when the lifestyle improvements are suggested, a possible dilemma appears once more. Not in the suggestions themselves, but rather the amount of years suggestions such as these have been conveyed to the consumer, with seemingly no lasting impact. An evident, immense, eleven years of attempting to communicate to consumers how to shop and be more sustainable and ethical arguably may have fallen short. Despite the important message of sustainable textile consumerism being told, questions should be asked of how effectively it has impacted modern day society.

2.1.2 | ACADEMIC LITERATURE

However, modern academic literature seems to have conveyed the environmental impact of the textile industry well. Although, this study has found that the majority of research in this area is specific to water pollution and the farming and processing of cotton. Madhav et.al (2018) identifies contaminants from seven different wet-processes used within textile manufacturing. Contaminants such as insecticide residue, hydrogen peroxide and heavy metals can all re-enter the water supply and can have serious and disastrous consequences to the environment. Not only can it damage the aquatic eco-system in the waters themselves, but these waters are also used to supply crops and cattle. All of which could be consumed by humans and can lead to illness and disease. Not only is water pollution such as this a result from fashion products, but undoubtedly also homeware products.

Other literature also reiterates the immense issue of water pollution, "During the dyeing process approximately 10-15% of the dyes used are released into the waste water", pollution "decreases oxygen concentration in water", and "Azo dyes have toxic effects, especially carcinogenic and mutagenic" (Gita et.al, 2017, p.2349-2351). Obviously, a huge repercussion of wet-processing is the colossal damage it causes to its immediate surrounding water environment. Current literature also focuses on water usage alongside water pollution. A report from Mistra (2019) explains that cotton uses an extreme amount of water and "requires large amounts of toxic pesticides and eutrophying fertilisers". Ergo, any consumer notion of 'clean', 'wholesome' cotton is disturbed by the actuality of how it is processed and manufactured from fibre to product. Furthermore, it is not only t-shirts that include cotton, bedsheets, cushion covers and blankets also may use the cotton fibre. However, it is difficult to find literature that explains the impact of homeware products on the environment.

On parallel with the news literature, modern academic literature also seems to reflect a trend. Whilst there are many ramifications from the unsustainability and unethicality of the textile industry, the overwhelming focus found by this study, is on just two elements. There seems an abundance of academic research into the cause and effects surrounding water pollution and cotton farming. Admittedly, these may equate to the perceivably larger, more eminent issues, however, there should be easily available research on all negative impacts. Surely, this would encourage yet further research and possibly conclude with potential solutions to some of the environmental damage caused. At the very least, more knowledge and understanding would be shared amongst academics, researchers, the textile industry, and the consumers.

This study found that the literature that did have a well-rounded discussion regarding the negative environmental impact of the textile industry were few and far between. Similarly, to the online news article, both pieces of literature find each other almost a decade apart. You et.al (2009) mentions a plethora of damage including, mass energy consumption, noise pollution, dust particles, air quality for

workers, air pollution, irritants to human skin, irritants to the human respiratory system, transportation of products, and production leading to excess solid waste i.e. selvage trimmings.

An extensive insight into the devastation that manufacturing can cause, homeware production is also predicted by this study to cause the majority, if not all, of this damage to the environment also. The drawback of this literature is the year in which it was conducted. Though extensive, this particular study was conducted eleven years ago. Whilst offering a range of interesting and important avenues of research, for some reason only two (water pollution and cotton farming) were deemed shocking enough to mainstream to the general public. It is proposed that literature such as this should be revisited often in order to mine all of the valuable research avenues. Thus, resulting in a richer, more comprehensive foundation of which to build solutions from.

2.1.3 | POSITIVE STEPS

A positive step towards this was found in a recent report from the Ellen Macarthur Foundation (2017). This report is refreshing as it gives some 'big picture' statistics, which feel more engaging to the reader. For instance, the production of clothing has almost doubled since 2005, potentially due to the rise of fast-fashion, perhaps eventually fast-homeware. The report also alarming figures stating that half of fast-fashion consumed is disposed of within a year, and "less than 1% of material used to produce clothing is recycled into new clothing" (Ellen Macarthur Foundation, 2017). Clearly indicating the over-consumption of fast-fashion, the flagrant disregard for that consumption, and the obvious unwillingness to create products that are, or can be recycled into something new.

These three notions could be readily transferred to the sector of fast-homeware as it shares many of the same tropes as fast-fashion. In essence, fast-homeware could be interpreted as a resulting financial venture that has formulated due to the immense financial success of fast-fashion. Although, this would indicate that any negative environmental and ethical damage that fast-fashion causes, fast-homeware is likely to cause also. Therefore, this study has identified this potential and understands the importance of exploratory research, in order to establish a foundation of sector knowledge.

2.2 | THE PHENOMENA OF 'TRENDS'

2.2.1 | MINOR AND MAJOR TRENDS

For the purposes of this research, a 'trend' refers to an aesthetic or mood-based concept that consumers obtain from the homeware and fashion industries. Trends are a major part of homeware and fashion, and are living, synonymously, alongside each other within a single store. In particular, fast-fashion stores such as Primark, New Look, Zara, ASOS, and H&M have all incorporated homeware

either into their current fashion stores or established a dedicated 'Home' division of their existing fashion brand. As a result, trends from the fashion products diffuse into the homeware products. An obvious example of this trend translation is articulated by Marie Claire (2019), who illustrate how Primark have used Disney's Lion King as a minor trend, and allocated associated imagery, text and print to clothing, beauty, and homeware. Alongside demonstrating how trends can flow from one textile sector to the next, examples such as this also demonstrate how brands can facilitate consumers to become truly immersed and engulfed within a trend. The concept can be applied to every aspect of their life and as they discover similar products, this may encourage them to purchase more in order to create a cohesive lifestyle aesthetic. Though it should be noted that a trend such as the one mentioned is not considered, by this research, as a major fashion or homeware trend, more so a minor trend.

A major trend that transcended not just homeware and fashion but beauty and accessories too, was the colour combination of rose gold and millennial pink. Russon (2018) reported that both colours were also found throughout the automotive, technology, and food industry. Furthermore, colour combinations such as the aforementioned are often derived from the company Pantone, afterwards "fashion designers, High Street clothing retailers, home furnishing experts and the wedding industry" take inspiration (Russon, 2018). As this literature states, a major trend such as the rose gold and millennial pink combination, although at its peak around 2018, still has much reverence with today's consumers.

Coinciding with this literature is a report that state "43% of consumer would like their favourite fashion retailers to offer a wider range of products, such as beauty and homeware" (MINTEL, 2018) and this report specifies this wish is the most prevalent with consumers under 35. Ergo, there is synonymity between trends, potentially both major and minor, and consumers demanding more variety from the use of those trends. Although, it ought to be stipulated here that the report from MINTEL did highlight those under 35 in particular. This study believes that although there may be a higher percentage of younger consumers who prefer trends to cover multiple sectors, older generations should not be discarded so readily. In part, because they do make up the overall percentage, their reasoning should be researched and understood also. Alongside this, if consumerism continues to evolve into entities such as fast-fashion and fast-homeware, surely older generations of consumers will have no choice but to also consume in that manner? They too will have to evolve and are also likely to be impacted by major and minor trends.

Major trends, such as a simple colour combination can be translated throughout multiple industries. Saravanan & Nithyaprakash (2015) express in their research that a trends' primary function is to offer the consumer a way in which to express themselves and their identity through non-verbal communication. This literature does little to produce an alternative purpose for a trend, quoting the WGSN Executive Vice President in conjunction with their notion. This study disagrees that trends are simply for consumer expression. Significantly, this study finds it obvious that a trend forecasting

company (WGSN) may indeed want to perpetuate that trends are there for the benefit of consumers as opposed to themselves. For the purposes of this research, modern day trends serve purpose for the industry, as well as the consumer.

2.2.2 | TRENDS AND INDUSTRY

After all, the textile industry as a whole cannot continue to bare profit if a consumer identifies with just a single trend for an extended period of time. To counter this "retailers will encourage a more rapid cycle of spending by continuing to bring in new styling and colour schemes" (MINTEL, 2019). This study concurs with this notion. Evidently, retailers of fast-fashion have already established a "rapid cycle" of trends for consumers to keep up with. Moreover, it is in these same stores that fast-homeware is also sold. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that this sector of homeware will also meet this accelerated, oversaturated, and depreciated state. The simplicity of it is, brands continually introduce new trends to replace old trends, and encourage consumers to purchase the "new". Without a combination of major, longer-lasting, and minor, impulsive trends, the homeware, fashion and beauty industries would not turn the phenomenal profits that they are accumulating today. Though this, in itself, questions whether the trends are important for the industry that produce them, or for the people that consume them.

To establish context, regarding whether the consumer or industry benefits from trends in the long-term, this study believes that the industry favours more financial benefit. In essence, this study finds the purpose of trends to be less about the innovation and pushing of societal boundaries (as they may have been). For instance, the Punk and Hippie movements are referred to as trends today, yet at their peak were underpinned by social, political and lifestyle ideologies. Ideologies of the punk movement were anti-conformist and rebelled against the pressure of societal norms (Lewin & Patrick Williams, 2009); the hippie movement offered counter-culture ideology, moving for liberation, peace, and a minimalistic way of life (Moretta, 2017). These ideologies generated aesthetics that represented the movement and have been regenerated and identifiable in today's trends.

However, literature indicates that today's trends serve more of a purpose of financial gain and profit turnover for industry. This is supported by the Retail Insight Network (2018) who report that fast-fashion have included homeware into their stores as it enables them to take "advantage of footfall from their clothing ranges". Fast-fashion retailers can gain the upper-hand against typically thought of homeware retailers such as Dunelm. Primarily, the term "footfall" gives no indication of the industry wanting to provide innovative, sustainable, and ethical homeware to consumers. If anything, it evokes the notion of the industry wanting to generate more consumer purchase, resulting in larger profit. A cursory internet search of 2019 trends unearth a multitude of aesthetics, covering spring/summer and autumn/winter (Edwards, 2019) (Nims, 2019) which reports almost 30 trends over the course of the year. This is a

huge number of aesthetic concepts for a consumer to keep up with and these were just two articles out of countless more which are likely to pinpoint more trends. With such an oversaturation of fashion products, and potentially now homeware products, the consumer may find it confusing to understand which aesthetic truly adheres to their own self-image and will convey their personality 'correctly' to others.

2.2.3 | CONSUMER PSYCHE AND TREND IMPACT

This study believes that homeware trends will impact how a consumer considers their self as a concept and their self as presentation; in the similar way that fashion trends have. Solomon & Robolt (2004) describe self-concept as the way in which an individual determines who they are via various methods including comparison to others, feedback from others, interactions with others, and what is needed from themselves in order to define them as the individual they wish to be. It is immediately apparent, through this literature, that how an individual may aesthetically identify is in accordance with their surrounding peers, and not found within themselves.

In particular, this study will broaden and modernise Solomon and Robolt's comparative methods to social environment, social media, and industry marketing. In 2004 for example, social media will not have had the immense and dominating presence that it has today. Previous literature has already ascertained that photos of others on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram lower the users self-esteem and make them dissatisfied with their appearance (Fardouly et.al, 2014) (Livingston, Holland & Fardouly, 2019). The latter study even found that an 'edited image' disclaimer did little to lessen the negative impact onto the viewer. Therefore, if images of people can make individuals question their own appearance, then this could also be translated to home/homeware images that are posted by a sponsored influencer. As the aforementioned literature finds, the individual compares themselves to the influencers, and perceive a need for the trending products seen. With this in mind, it can be easily deduced how trends can impact on a person's self-concept.

Furthermore, if a consumer is urged to identify with a certain trend concept, then they are also urged to present that trend. Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation has potential to be similarly reviewed and updated in order to be relatable to modern day culture. Goffman refers much of his theory of self-presentation to work roles dating back over 60 years. Although not wholly relevant today, his understanding of how individuals have to adapt and modify themselves in order to fit in with the extent of society is relevant and transferable. Furthermore, this literature also marks the importance of studying multiple generations of consumers. If behaviour (potentially consumer psyche related) is clearly seen to be transcendent across six decades, then it can be argued that all current generations will have similar consumer habits. The notions of self-presentation described by Goffman compared to this studies comparison are remarkably similar at their foundations. Therefore, it is important to understand

that whilst generational consumerism may look different on the surface, in essence the behaviour can be the same. The theory additionally draws upon notions such as the individual wanting to present only the aspirational (unattainable) versions of themselves, and that individual put on a performance display of who they need to be in order to be correct. All of which are extremely relatable to platforms such as social media and the fashion industry; both, it could be argued are founded off of self-presentation.

Homeware trends have a place in theories like the two aforementioned. In current society, not only can the consumer choose to purchase fashion to help describe who they are but can now purchase homeware too. The industry is facilitating this notion by affiliating homeware with the vast number of trends that saturate the fashion market. However, there is not readily available literature that relates theories such as self-concept and self-presentation with homeware, much less with fast-homeware. However, the promising aspect is that many theories such as this are easy, ready-made, transferable foundations of which to work from. Some hold all the elements that are required yet need to be updated and expanded to fit in with the present. To understand the consumer psyche of fast-homeware consumption, there needs to be current and relative literature that studies the psychological and emotional impact that homeware has on current consumers of all ages. This study believes that while trends may vary amongst generations, the way in which they are marketed and consumed are largely the same.

2.3 | FAST-HOMEWARE VS FAST-FASHION

Although the majority of literature focus of fast-fashion, there are a few pieces of literature that have specified into homeware. Although ethics and sustainability have not been focused on, statistics indicating sector growth have been explored. Several reports from Mintel (2015) (2019) highlight not only the growth of the homeware industry but also the attitude towards homeware consumerism. According to this literature, consumerism of 'decorating' has the largest growth within the home-improvement sector with 41%. This is incredibly significant and fast-homeware, by its own definition, produces decorative and accessory based products. To reiterate this studies definition of fast-homeware, the products attributed are created with superficial form at the forefront, rather than function.

Though a tiny statistic amongst a substantial report, this study believes that its statistics such as this that indicate the prevalence and incredible potential of fast-homeware. Decorative products are arguably the simplest to update via trends, and therefore encourage consumers to repeatedly purchase. In addition, fast-homeware is indicative of being low-cost for consumers to purchase and thus low-cost for the industry to consume. Yet another factor that gives cause to how easy it is to dispose and replace these decorative and accessory led homeware products.

Moreover, Mintel (2015) found that 74% of the 682 consumers (aged 16+) agreed that when buying decorative homeware, it was to ensure that they could create an aesthetic that they were satisfied with. Furthermore, just over half of the same group agreed there was important to them for homeware to co-ordinate. Both of these statistics highlight very subjective, personal reasonings for purchasing homeware. However, this would be enhanced if the report could break down the age groups of the consumers further.

Considering there was a vast number of participants, the information gathered would be worth more if it were to specify how much of that percentage was designated to a specific generational age-group. As a result, this could indicate a pattern or allude to how preferences change as the consumer moves through their life. Here, again, there is little importance placed on age, and this study believes that age plays a part towards attitude, behaviour and reasonings behind the consumer psyche. The statistics simply show emotional reasoning, which can be influenced by a variety of factors including industry advertising, physical store layout, sensory experience, social media, discounts or offers, society or cultural trends, and influence from friends and family. Each one of these influences can be experienced differently by each generation, for example due to nostalgic life experiences or how much that individual interacts with technology like social media. Therefore, this study feels there is an oversight by reports, such as the aforementioned, that do not define the generational ages of their participants. More knowledge could be gained pertaining to why certain generations consume in a specific way, and whether there is a pattern that occurs as the generations age.

2.4 | NOT ALL MILLENNIALS…

Millennials (anyone born early 1980s-mid 1990s) are the most common generation associated with the bad habits of the fast-fashion (by proxy fast-homeware) industry. This study approximates that these two sectors of the textile industry both commonly target consumers who range from mid-teens to late-twenties. It is the Millennial generation that were the first to grow up with the phenomena of fast-fashion as a sector of the market, and it is therefore Millennials who are widely associated with fast-fashion and fast-homeware.

2.4.1 | REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

Magazines and newspapers must take responsibility for misrepresenting Millennials as the "generation that's fun to hate" (Widdicombe, 2016) and there is a history of this notion spanning at least seven years. Widdicombe (2016) goes further to acknowledge attitudes that stereotype the Millennial generation to be "lazy", "narcissistic" and "addicted to social media". These are powerful terminology which seem to now be automatically associated with this younger generation. In particular, it seems that the use of technology to negatively distance oneself from Millennials is appropriate and justifiable. Though, this study would argue that comments such as these develop into wider separations and

conflicts between generations, leading to hierarchical thought and petty 'blame-gaming'. It ought to be considered that an article such as this is an opinion piece, not fact. However, can be incredibly influential and persuasive; its targeted audience (arguably older generations) would be left feeling smug and superior. An attitude from multiple older generations that are penned to look down at the younger generation, appalled by how entitled and self-obsessed they supposedly are.

Similarly, TIME (2013) possesses an article that could be considered as baiting much the same reader "Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation", the title alone indicates a bias opinion piece, again emoting a feeling of pettiness and triviality. Both articles denote the same attitude towards a single generation and were written when individuals of that generation would be in their early-teens to early-twenties. Arguably too young in order to understand this type of attitude that was being developed against them. Furthermore, too young to form any sort of well-rounded and informed response to articles such as these. This study would suggest that blaming and focusing on younger generations such as Millennials do not progress societal attitudes and may even give precedence to ignore other, older generations. To keep a fair and balanced foundation of knowledge all generations, regardless of life experience, should be studied and researched.

2.4.2 | MILLENNIALS IN STUDIES

However, opinion-based pieces like these evidently seem to have an impact on academic research and market-research reports. This study has found that the majority of academic literature focus on younger age-groups often of or surrounding the Millennial generation. Many Mintel Reports from the past five years have looked exclusively at the younger generation, apparent alone from titles such as "Marketing to Young Adults" (Mintel Ltd, 2016), "Marketing to Older and Younger Millennials" (Mintel Ltd, 2017), and "The Millennial BPC Consumer" (Mintel Ltd. 2018). All these reports present statistics and data on Millennial consumerism, and how to market to them in order to yield greater results. It does provide an insight into how reports such as these support and aid sectors such as fast-homeware and fast-fashion. Further reinforcing the notion that it is in fact, Millennials that are the sole audience for current, modern consumerism, and ignores other generations that almost definitely will utilise the 'fast' sectors of consumerism also.

To date, there is little evidence to suggest that, certainly in the past five years, the same amount of research has been carried out focusing on older generations. As explored above it seems that it is 'trendy' to research this generation in particular. In this study's' opinion, there is little doubt that 'Millennial tunnel-vision' has influenced academic research. For instance, Naderi & Van Steenberg's (2018) study focused on this age group also. They determined that Millennials who display altruistic behaviours are subsequently unlikely to prefer ethical products. Again, this study targeted a single specific generation that, due to the age-range, is on the precipice between childhood and adulthood.

Therefore, how can any study or report say for certain that the data found is categorically the definitive attitude of a young person? There is no adjacent research, that this study could find, that explored any relationship of altruistic tendencies and ethical morals. After all, the Millennial generation is of an age where the individual is prone to fluctuating attitudes and opinions and who are at a crucial point of understanding the wider world.

2.5 | CONSUMERS SIMPLY DO NOT CARE:

Due to the lack of public knowledge and understanding, previous literature also states that consumers do not care about buying ethically or sustainably, instead they are in favour of weighing up price and quality (Bucic et al., 2012). It seems that these standards of consumerism are incredibly consumer-centric and display anti-altruistic tendencies. This literature highlights the individuals high interest in themselves, and not the wider population, environment, and planet. This study predicts that this attitude will also be present with the participants interviewed. Furthermore, as discussed before, this attitude ultimately seems a stereotypical correlation and therefore:

> *it is of primary importance for marketers to advertise why it is convenient to purchase green products and to change consumer perceptions in a positive way (Laroche et al., 2001, p. 513)*

However, should the primary responsibility be pinned on industry? Surely with the mass ability of consumers to communicate and inform one another via platforms such as social media or word of mouth, some responsibility regarding 'eco-consumerism' must fall to them. After all, being sustainable is constantly being reported and written about in popular newspapers and magazines, Cockett (2020), Brouwer (2020), Lein (2020), Barr (2020), Fox (2020), Moss (2020) and Murray (2020). Note how all of these articles are written in the same year, there is clear evidence that there is no shortage of articles such as these. And a cursory internet search will provide articles that date back for at least ten years. Though, as stated in the Textile Industry Impact section, articles such as these may be too much for an individual to digest, due to physical length or the overwhelming subject.

According to research however, when consumers are faced with an oversaturated, overwhelming market, they prefer to purchase for quality (Bertini et al., 2012). Ergo, when faced with countless identical products, consumers search for the best quality that they can afford. Arguably, by proxy, quality does not amount to ethical or sustainable products. Potentially, because the cost for products such as these do tend to be higher, simply because additional effort has been undertaken to ensure they meet ethical and sustainable standards. On the other hand, as aforementioned literature has stated, individuals do not understand the importance of these two factors. In essence, although there are copious amounts of articles that advocate sustainable and ethical consumerism, it is debated in practice as many consumers still appear to favour low-quality, cheap products.

<u>2.5.1 | CONSUMER GUILT?</u>

However, it ought to be questioned if consumers develop any guilt when purchasing in this manner. Despite a considered purchase, all told, most homeware products purchased on a 'quality for low-cost' state are arguably valued by personal preference, and ergo are correspondingly hedonistic. The idea of value will intrinsically differ between individuals. Therefore, without extensive qualitative data collection, it is nigh on impossible to identify the commonality of what 'value' means to the majority of consumers. Further still, this study believes that the 'majority of consumers' would still consider the meaning of 'value' to be different at different stages in life.

The most common association with hedonic products is the feeling of guilt as the consumer cannot quantify the justification of purchase (Lascu, 1991; Okada, 2005). This study would agree with this notion, for example fast-homeware is highly decorative and serves minimal functional purpose. Thus, the justification for consumption of fast-homeware may often fall back to, 'it looks nice'; un-quantifiable and problematic to explain in such a way. Lascu (1991) finds that guilty consumers naturally want to redeem themselves. It may be possible that this questionable, hedonistic justification does in fact lead to consumer guilt.

3.0 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | INTERVIEW

3.1.1 | PURPOSE OF INTERVIEW

Previous methods used by literature mainly use self-surveys or questionnaires to gather a high volume of quantitative data. Reports such as Mintel Group Ltd (2015), (2016) and (2018) use this method to demonstrate statistics. However, work that explore eco-friendly products, such as Heo & Muralidharan (2017) also use the same methods. The literature referenced in this section focuses on 'Millennials', 'Young People' or 'College Students'; therefore, only a single demographic. Quantitative data collection on single age-groups was unsuitable for this study as its aim was to explore the consumer psyche, amalgamating candid attitudes and opinions from various generations, in a real-life setting.

The preferred route was to generate qualitative data and the chosen method was multiple, informal focus group interviews. It was understood early on that data collected would not be representative of a wider population and the results could not be projected with certainty. Furthermore, focus group data can be demanding and lengthy when transcribing and analysing, something to consider regarding the limited timeframe of the research. Only a window of two months was available to carry out the interviews, transcribe and analyse the findings, limiting the number of groups to three; nine participants in total. Had there had been more time available, the ideal number of focus groups would be five or more. Despite this, using the focus group method was favourable regarding the limitation, as participants and interviewer were flexible with dates and times.

In addition, this method enabled this study to explore topics in depth with participants, accommodating additional impromptu questioning where further clarification was needed. Moreover, the purpose of this research was to compare opinions from different generations; three generations in a single focus group had a greater probability of comparison. Paramount to the study was that the three generations used were from the same family unit. Within this setting, unique dynamics could arise such as rebellious behaviours or strong family connections. Likewise, capturing real-life answers and interactions in a relaxed social setting would further assure the quality and candidness of the final data.

Alternative methods that were considered, were one-to-one interviews and a focus group including all 9 participants. The one-to-one interviewing method was deemed unsuitable as the participant may feel that they are in a formal environment and ergo have an added formality to their answers. It may have

also resulted in a structured 'question and answer' format as opposed to the desired relaxed discussion. Crucially, this method would not provide the generational interaction the research was aiming to achieve. Including all nine participants in a single focus group could easily lead to excessive and unmanageable crosstalk. Resulting in difficult transcribing, which would be counterintuitive considering the limitations of the research. Furthermore, participants were situated across the UK, and more time and effort would have been allocated to amassing them to a specific location, than it would to conduct the interview.

3.1.2 | THE INTERVIEW IN PRACTICE

For this research, participants were interviewed within three separate focus groups, divided according to family. As there were three families, there were three focus groups, A, B and C. Participants were chosen in accordance with which generation they belonged to within that family unit; grandparent, parent or child (referred to as youngest participant/generation etc.) To identify which generation the participant belonged to numbers were used; 1 for the youngest, 2 for the parent and 3 for the grandparent. For example, A1, would be the youngest participant from group A. The age range of each generation was 22 to 27 (young people), 45 to 53 (parents) and 66 to 75 (grandparents). To obtain participants for the focus groups, the youngest participant was contacted (either face-to-face, or telephone) as they were already known to the researcher but were not familiar with the research being undertaken. From there, both the parent and grandparent were contacted. As a matter of fact, it acted as an additional benefit that the participants were familiar with their interviewer. It resulted in participants feeling comfortable to state their honest opinions regarding moral judgements and attitudes.

For the focus groups to take place, it was paramount that all participants were relaxed and comfortable. Therefore, each interview was conducted at the home of one of the participants from that group and could get refreshments when needed. Ensuring a familiar environment for the participant's had added benefits of convenience also. All who were interviewed were encouraged to speak freely, and to be honest and open with answers and opinions. Moreover, they were encouraged to talk with each other, potentially giving indications of any similarities or conflict between them and providing a greater in-depth analysis of varying attitudes across generations.

When conducting each focus group, a structure was used to ensure that the same set of information was given, and the same questions asked. Beyond this, additional inquiries could be made by either interviewer or participant to create discussion. At the outset of an interview the participants would hear a definition of the term 'fast-homeware':

> *The term "fast fashion" means a company that renews their clothing collections really quickly, normally every 2 weeks. As a result, they are bought more quickly and then disposed and*

> *discarded of more quickly. "Fast homeware" is something that does the same thing except with homeware instead of clothing.*

The intention was to ensure the language used was accessible to all, this was essential because not all participants were familiar with the topic and its terms. For some, this might have been the first time they had discussed such a subject in depth. Assimilating fast-homeware with fast-fashion further increased the likelihood of understanding; examples of fast-fashion could be given; H&M, Primark or Topshop. Afterwards, they were asked if they could give a definition of 'sustainable'. Again, a definition that pertained to the research was provided so all participants understood:

> *If something is sustainable it means that all of it has been made from recycled materials and can then be recycled again. Sustainability is all about using what we've already got and recycling or fixing it over and over again. This would be instead of digging up the earth for more raw materials, which isn't sustainable.*

It was found helpful to use an object whilst explaining this term, which was often a pen the interviewer had to hand. It seemed participants understood to a greater extent when a visual aid was used. Similarly, to the fast-homeware definition, it was fundamental to use accessible language. Subsequently, focus groups were asked if they knew how any of the homeware they owned was manufactured or produced and would they want to know if this information was available? It should be noted that in all three focus groups, additional lines of inquiry were made into disposal of homeware, hence the addition to the 'Findings and Discussion' section. In hindsight, this could have initially been added to the interview structure as a question.

Furthermore, a 'picture-round' was used within the interview to help the participants gain a clearer understanding of the topic of the interview. This study felt a visual element to the interview would engage the participants straight away and encourage discussion. The visual element consisted of four A4 mood boards, each consisting of various homeware from a different brand. The brands chosen were Matalan, Ikea, H&M, and Next. These brands represented homeware for low, mid, and high-range budgets. Each brand either had homeware products as a focal point or had a parallel homeware range to their other products. Moreover, the participants were only told the brand names of each, after they had answered the initial questions from the interviewer, so as not to cause bias. (See Appendix for mood board images).

3.2 | FIRST PHASE LITERATURE & SECOND PHASE LITERATURE

3.2.1 | FIRST PHASE

Due to the nature of the study, additional consideration was undertaken regarding the literature found. The research for this study was of an exploratory nature, as the topic was felt to not have an existing foundation of knowledge which to draw upon. Therefore, literature was gathered in two main phases. The first phase of literature was explored before the interview stage and consisted of any literature that was anticipated to have links to the topic, which in this study was fast-homeware. Not only did this give context to the topic, but also helped to establish areas of questioning that would then be implemented during the interview stage. It was firmly understood that this phase would not necessarily capture all of the literature that pertained to the fast-homeware topic. In fact, there would be the potential to discover further literature during the second phase.

3.2.2 | SECOND PHASE

The second phase of literature was drawn upon during the analysis of the interview. Whilst interviewing the participants further avenues, that had not been previously anticipated, were conversed. This culminated in a second phase of literature that was identified during via the main method used in this research. The second phase literature was then discussed and evaluated within the analysis section.

This study has not found this two-phase literature method used in any of the literature that was referenced. However, this study would advocate this method when used in connection with exploratory studies, although further refinement would be needed in order to establish it as a methodological approach. Two-phase literature allowed for the expansion and inclusion of un-anticipated literature, not considered before the main body of a study was carried out. The method, in turn, strengthened the knowledge and understanding of otherwise unknown or unfamiliar topics.

3.3 | MIND MAPS

3.3.1 | ADVANTAGES IN PRACTICE

Mind maps were deemed the best way in which to connect multiple ideas, generating links with other areas of study. It was found to be a flexible, adaptable, and simple method.

The advantages to analysing literature and concepts through mind maps were found to be:

- The method provides an easy way to combine concepts and visualise connections, providing a platform to break down confusing or complex concepts.
- They are simple to edit and add further information to.

- Moreover, the visual structure of a mind map can enhance the user's memory of the topic in question, thus is turn, encouraging better focus.
- Colour can also be used throughout the mind map to further aid in its visual appeal.

All of these advantages served excellently in this study.

3.3.2 | DISADVANTAGES IN LITERATURE

On the other hand, some of the disadvantages of mind maps were also acknowledged, though not all affected this study in particular. For instance, this study did not use specific software to generate the diagrams. Due to the restrictive nature of mind mapping software, it was felt that being confined to pre-determined rules would limit the freeing nature of a hand-drawn mind map (Leeds Beckett University, 2018) and therefore a mind map using pen and paper was preferred for this study. Although this study found that there was one disadvantage to hand-drawn mind maps. By using pen and paper, it took time to ensure that each mind map was legible and easy to refer back to. After all, it was imperative for each mind map produced to be clear to read, and easy to make sense of. Therefore, care was taken to ensure that the mind map was not over-complicated and was clear and presentable. If a mind map did appear confusing, then time would be set aside to re-draw the mind-map again.

Overall, the mind map was used as a method tool primarily for the researcher of this study. Due to the complex and multi-faceted nature of fast-homeware, mind maps became essential to aid the researcher understand the literature (of both phases), to analysis the interview discussion and find any connections to the literature, and to develop the structure and order of the thesis.

3.4 | MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONNAIRE

3.4.1 | PURPOSE FOR MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONNAIRE

Although a qualitative data method was used for the main body of this research, it was felt that a comparison of using a quantitative data method would highlight the difference in results that can be yielded. In addition, there were not any multiple-choice questionnaires from found literature, that included and specified participants from multiple generations. Consequently, it was important for this study to demonstrate a quantitative data method that did specify participant generations, as it was an essential element of this research. For this study, a multiple-choice questionnaire was felt to be the most appropriate. Following the examples from the Mintel reports (as explored in the Literature Review) it was found that there were many advantages of having the addition of a multiple-choice questionnaire. For instance, they generate fast results which can be easily analysed by the researcher. Furthermore, questionnaires can be scaled up to include more participants and thus will yield a more reliable result. In comparison to an interview for instance, the results from a multiple-choice questionnaire can be easily

interpreted by other researchers, due to their numerical presentation. In addition, quantitative results will take other researchers less time to interpret and understand.

However, there are drawbacks to using a multiple-choice questionnaire. Whilst results can be easily compared and understood, researchers gain limited learned knowledge; the knowledge will be specific to that question only. Furthermore, that learned information will not be in depth or complex, such as the type of results that could be yielded from qualitative methods (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010). However, this disadvantage would be countered in this study due to the qualitative group interview method being used. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative are used in conjunction with each other.

Another drawback to a multiple-choice questionnaire is that there can be difficulty ensuring that the question is interpreted as intended. Nevertheless, this study felt this could be avoided by giving the questionnaire to the participants after their group interview, so they had the opportunity to ask the interviewer/researcher for clarification. In addition, this would also prevent another possible disadvantage from occurring; the participants selecting answers that were not wholly true or selecting answers they believe to be the most morally or ethically appropriate. However, this study did overlook the potential situation that participants may converse amongst themselves and thus influence one another's answers. Subsequently, feeling the need to choose answers that were indeed more morally or ethically sound, another disadvantage specified by the aforementioned report (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010). The occurrence of this may have tainted the answers given (as seen in the next chapter), and if the time and participants could be reorganised, an updated version of the questionnaire would have been retaken; ensuring that each participant was separated from external influences. In hindsight, this should have been implemented initially.

Other quantitative methods were taken into consideration, such as a lengthier, traditional questionnaire or survey given to the participants after the interview had taken place. However, this was deemed unsuitable to due several differing factors. Primarily, because both alternative methods would have increased the amount of data analysis, which simply would have not been achievable in the time allocated for this study. Additionally, consideration of the participants had to be thought of also. The interview would already take a fair proportion of their time and concentration; therefore, it was felt that it would be asking too much of them to complete both an interview and full questionnaire or survey.

3.4.2 | MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESSTIONNAIRE IN PRACTICE

As discussed, due to time constraints only one question was devised, "Why Do You Buy Homeware?". The questionnaire was developed to be given at the end of the interview and would summarise the topic and the conversation had. Participants were given ten options to choose from:

- "Make it a more enjoyable place to live"
- "Replace old/worn out homeware"
- "Improving Storage"
- "Update to latest styles in shops"
- "Boost value of property"
- "Improve accessibility"
- "Purchasing homeware makes me feel happier"
- "Put my own stamp on my home"
- "I've seen something in someone else's house"
- "Other"

They were then asked to choose two or three answers that they felt applied to themselves the most and place a tick next to these answers. The intention of this was to force the participants to really consider which answers were the most important to them, as there was a variety of practical and emotional answers to choose from. However, this proved difficult, as some participants chose four answers, thus making the results unreliable. Furthermore, on reflection the answer "Other" would be removed. It contradicted with the notion of forcing the participants to reflect upon their own purchasing habits and make a choice. Four out of nine chose 'Other', resulting in an option that would have to be interpreted by the researcher. Ultimately, rendering it void numerically. Once all of the multiple-choice questionnaires were completed, the results were then interpreted into bar charts (see in next chapter), with colour coding to represent generational proportion.

4.0 | FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

In this chapter, Second Phase Literature (see 3.2.3, p25), will be introduced. As analysis of the interviews were undertaken, more impacts and areas that connect to fast-homeware were established, and therefore it became necessary to research further into the appropriate literature.

4.1 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

4.1.1 | NUMERICAL DATA
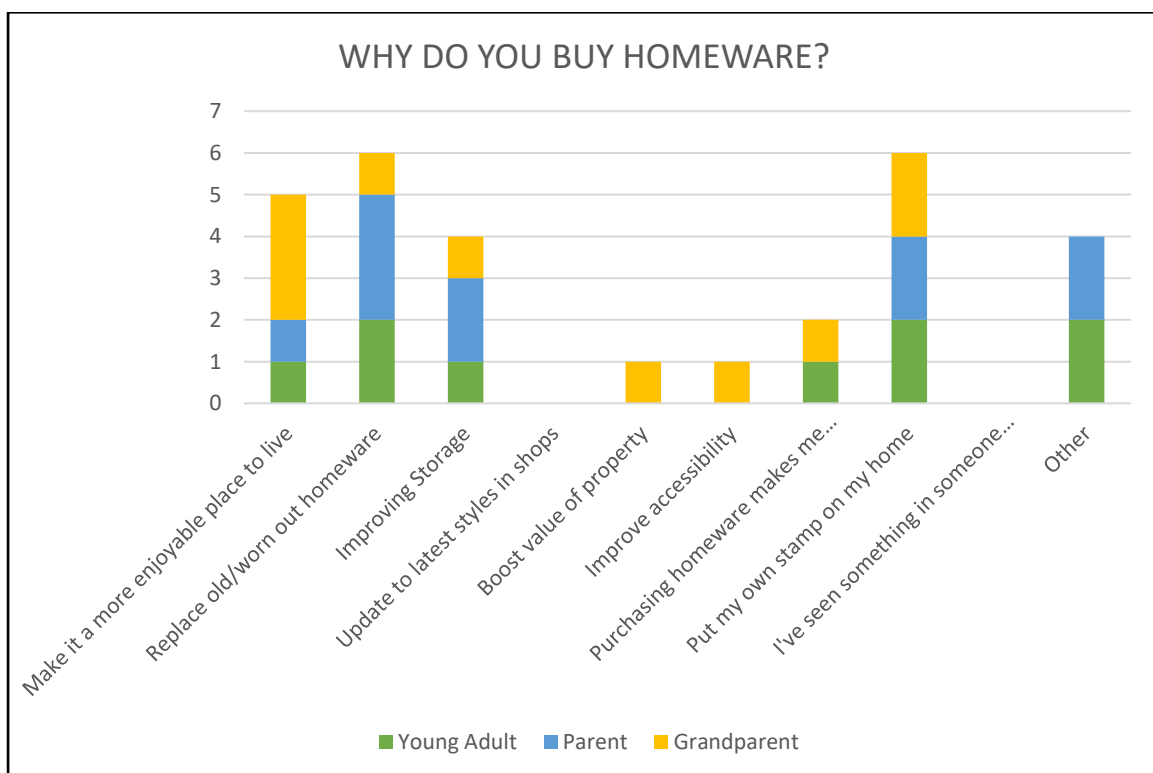
Figure 1

For further comparison, the results were also shown on individual graphs that specifically illustrated either Group A, B, or C.
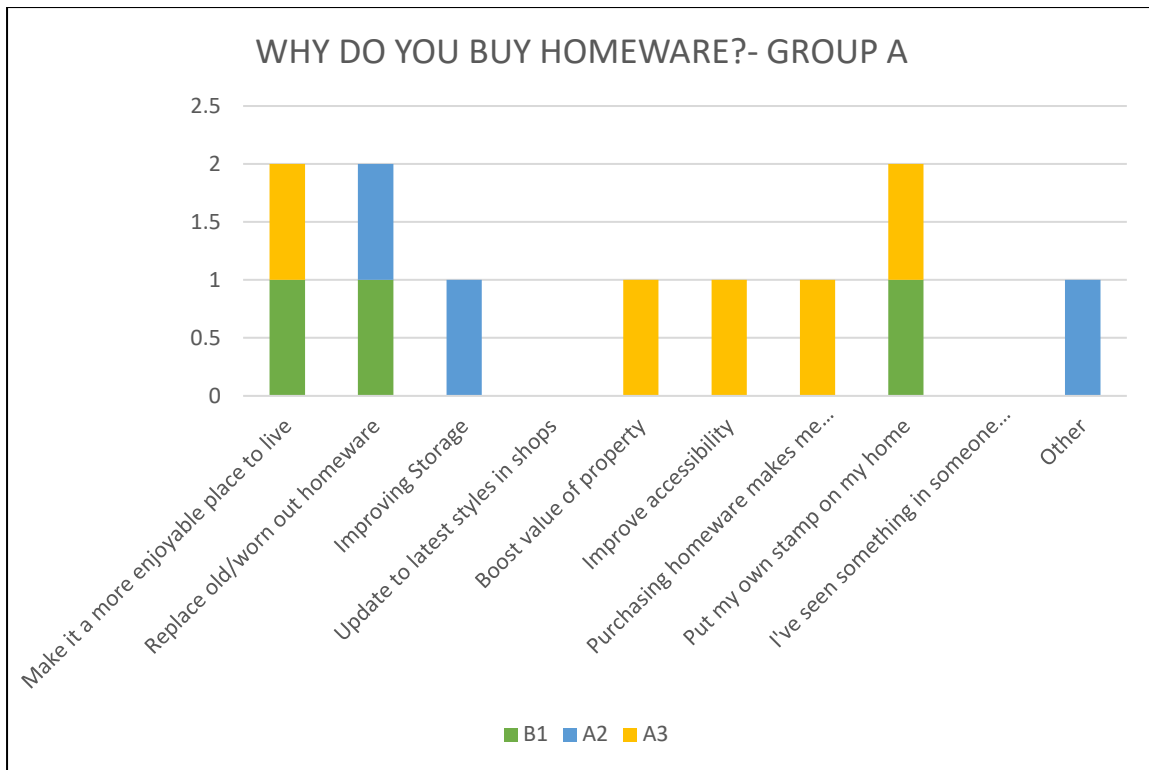
Figure 2
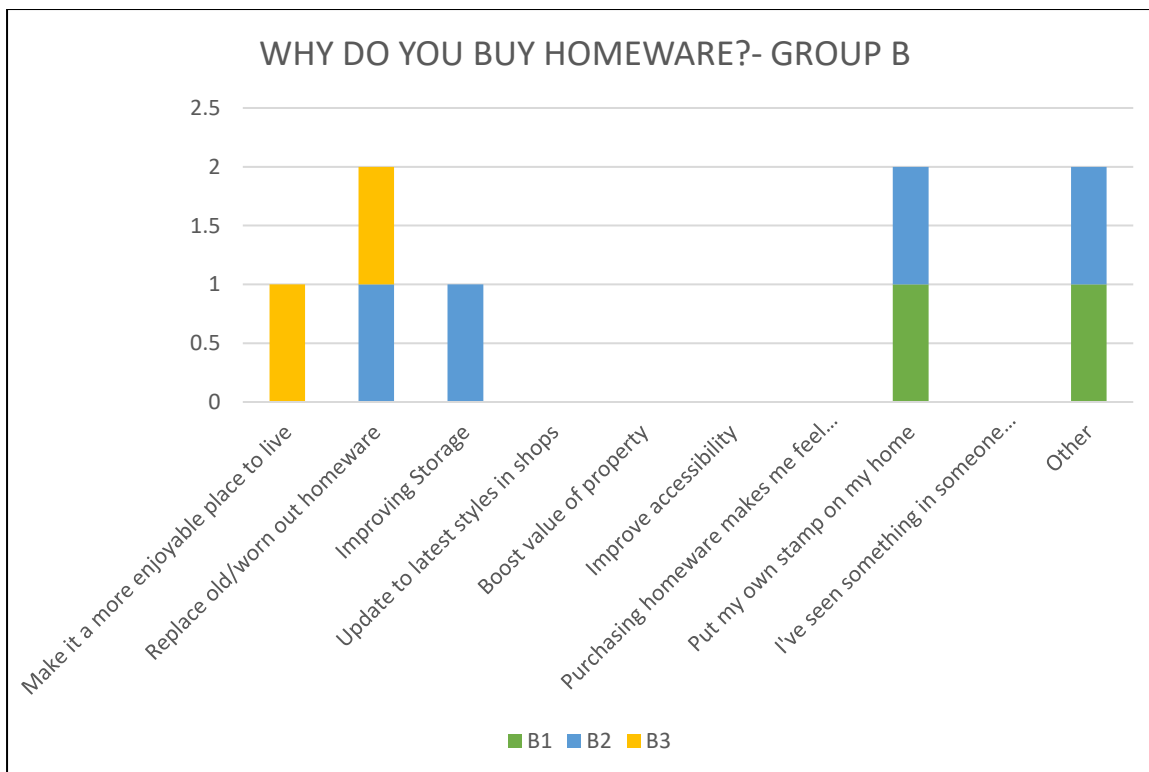
Figure 3
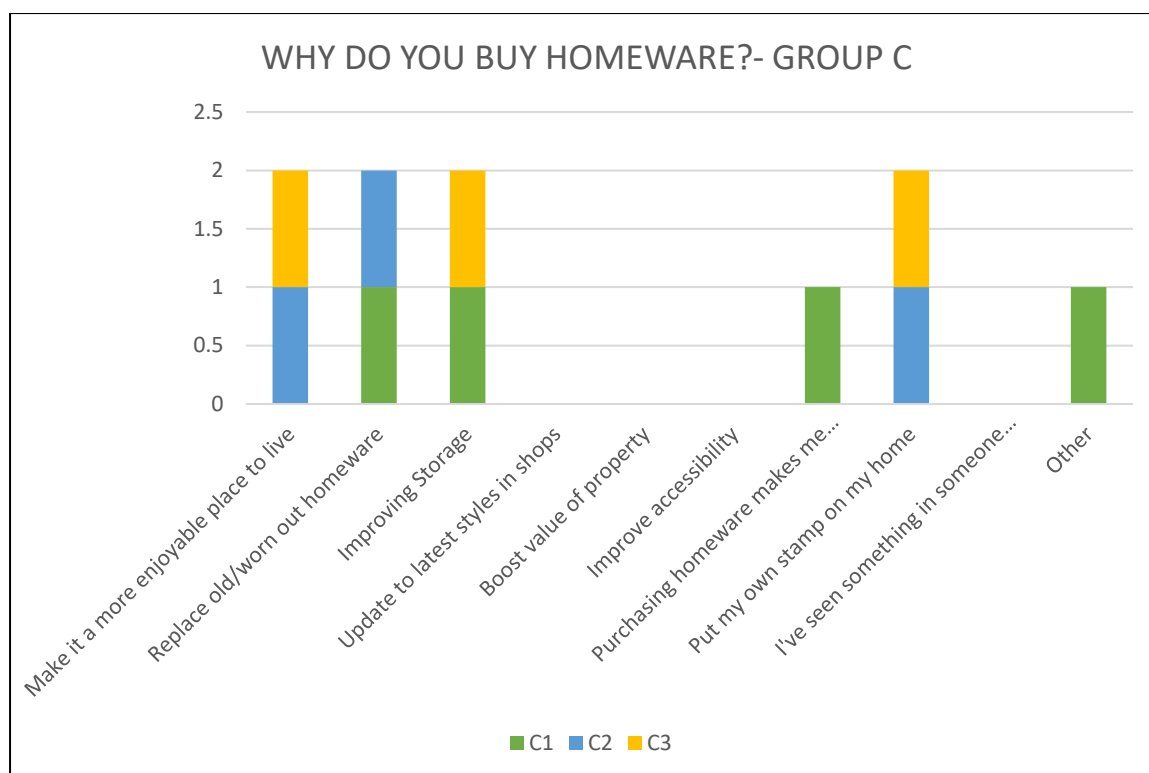
Figure 4

4.1.2 | ANALYSIS

The findings from the multiple-choice questionnaire were not conclusive, as there was no strong pattern to the results. The only results that can be drawn upon is that the two, most popular answers amongst all nine participants were to "Put my own stamp on my home" and to "Replace old/worn out homeware". The notion of the consumer adding their own personality to their property is undoubtedly subjective to that individual. The reasoning is purely based on their own personal taste, and therefore falls into 'emotional reasoning'. The second reasoning, of replacing either 'old' or 'worn out' homeware can be argued as both 'emotional' and 'logical'. On reflection, the answer may have been more effective, had it been split into two. For instance, an individual's definition of 'old' could differ. Homeware may be old due to the physical age of the piece or may be seen as old as its aesthetic seems dated and no longer modern. As a result, whether homeware is defined as 'old' is variable; dependent on which individual is judging it. On the other hand, 'worn out' homeware seems comparably more logical to determine. Once the homeware in question is no longer functional, then it would be deemed as worn, and in need of replacement.

Despite this minor level of analysis, the remainder of the results generated cannot be sufficiently analysed. As this study was only able to arrange nine participants, it may have been too presumptuous to expect clear and defined results from the multiple-choice questionnaire. As can be seen from the graphs denoting the three individual groups, there is no correlation between results and therefore little

knowledge can be gained from them. In order to gain some clearer results, this method would need to be scaled up considerably. This study would recommend that there ought to be at least twenty participants, from each generation, sixty participants in total. Although, the more participants involved, the more reliable and accurate the results will be.

4.2 | PICTURE ROUND

All of the participants agreed there was a strong similarity across all four homeware collections shown. B3, a grandparent, commented "It's the same old thing, you know?", yet it ought to be noted again that all generations agreed that the homeware presented looked similar. This is indicative of previous literature (Mintel, 2015) that states there is an over-saturation of cheap homeware in the marketplace. When a marketplace becomes over-saturated, with multiple companies trying to put their product at the forefront, it naturally leads to the repetition of colours, materials, iconography etc. According to the participants the homeware shown was different, but by only very fine margins. Hence, the blurring and melding of the aesthetics and styles presented.

4.2.1 | AGE AND TRADITION

In each of the three groups, the grandparents all preferred the homeware from Next. However, even this decision was made with hesitation, "That to me (INDICATES NEXT) is more my age. These (IKEA, H&M, MATALAN) are more contemporary" (C3). The hesitation derived from the opinion that all of the 'contemporary', or 'stylised', homeware was more suited to a younger consumer. One grandparent (B3) found even Next was too modern for their taste, "If you don't like any of it, you just say I don't like any of it?". Although later stated that if pushed, Next would be their preferred choice. There seemed a unanimous, implicit rule from all of the grandparents which imposed an 'age-range' on the homeware and this was reason enough for them to deem it unsuitable for themselves. Though they did admit, there were elements of the contemporary homeware that they did like. Overall, however, Next was the only homeware that offered the more traditional and homely aesthetic that the grandparents preferred. Naturally, a reason for this may be because it is closest to the aesthetic from the decade that they grew up in. These participants could be nostalgic for what they had when they were in their youth. For example, the eldest participants would have grown up in the 1940/50's and UK homeware aesthetic was, what is considered now to be, very classic and traditional. Ergo, the three grandparents may be fond of this childhood homeware and want to maintain elements of it in the present day.

Although, nostalgia cannot be appointed the sole reason for the aesthetical preference made. On the other hand, the eldest participants will have experienced and seen decades which birthed radical, alternative homeware aesthetics, all of which will have influenced opinion in one way or another. As a result, their taste in homeware could have evolved just as the styles did, and in particular, this does support why they have more traditional tastes at the average age of 71. An alternative possibility is that

when someone reaches the same age as the grandparent participants, that their homeware should too be more traditional, more conventional, and less likely to divide due to a bold aesthetic. Cultural and societal conformity could account for this 'unanimous, implicit rule' being accepted amongst the majority of the older generation. However, this rule is in no way enforced. Infact, Goffman (1959), expressed that individuals use "sign-equipment", in this instance homeware, in order to adhere to a widely accepted "social style". Unquestioned and unchallenged by the participants, the notion of having only age-appropriate homeware, when one is of a certain age, could be something done simply because previous generations before did it. Subsequently, as the eldest generation witnessed their parents and grandparents 'mature' in homeware aesthetic, they themselves must also. It is simply the 'done' thing. The general attitude felt by each grandparent was that 'you grow out of it [stylised homeware]'. It would be reasonable to presume that, according to A3, B3 and C3, the homeware aesthetic you consume should mature as the individual ages. However, this was not a stage that all the participants had reached.

4.2.2 | THE DIFFERENCE OF YOUTH

In contradiction, the description used to describe the preference of the youngest generation surmised of "unique", "different", "stand-out" and "quirky"; a far cry from 'traditional' and 'conventional'. C1 went even further to state that "nothing really stands out" and that, although they did like some elements such as the colours, the pieces themselves were not remarkable enough to warrant purchase. It ought to be noted, the pieces chosen were more stylised, having emerged from current or very recent industry trends. The notion that C1 might have already been bored of the contemporary homeware shown, suggests a relentless appetite for 'new'. The novelty of a new homeware collection seems to have worn off quickly, and this consumer is already wanting something 'better'. Juxtaposing two different aesthetic preferences, demonstrates a clear indication that the opposing generations consume for different reasons. The oldest generation feel that they want to fit in with their age-group, limiting consumerism due to 'age-appropriateness'. On the other hand, the youngest generation are discovering their personal aesthetic, who they are, and what they like and do not like. The average age of the three youngest participants was 23, and it is around this age where individuals tend to establish who they are as a person. Pertinent to this research, individuals discern 'their style'. According to previous research,

> *Individualistic societies emphasize independent self-construals motivated to express themselves, which are separated from social context*

> *millennials from ethnically diverse and individualistic contexts may edge towards outcomes… to manifest unique and differentiated identities (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019, p.175)*

It was established in the research by Gonzalez-Fuentes that on the whole the UK is a heterogeneous society, resulting in young consumers having an appetite for the 'unique' and the 'new', giving them the edge amongst their peers. Moreover, the young people interviewed were all at a similar stage in life.

They all were just being able to afford homeware and have sufficient reason to consume homeware in a greater capacity. It is reasonable to assume the appeal of a new market, in this sense, would be exciting. However, homeware used to be thought of as a long-term purchase, the formality, nay ritual, of gift giving at weddings for example. In particular to the UK, homeware was traditionally given via 'gift registries' ensuring the couple gain exactly what they want, and the gifts are therefore symbolic of their milestone achievement (Solomon & Robolt, 2004). Thus, homeware consumed in this manner would be likely kept and used for a long time because of its symbolic significance. However currently, homeware is no longer remaining a long-term, symbolic consumption. Statistics indicate that the average age of marriage between heterosexual couples has risen to between 35 and 38 (Bowcott, 2020). Obviously, consumers are not waiting till then to own homeware, often homeware needs to be purchased years prior due to job relocation, university etc. Arguably, this homeware has less symbolic meaning in comparison. Milestones, such as weddings, are being 'achieved' at different stages in life nowadays. Evidently, there has been a shift in priorities and attitudes, resulting in a shift of these typical milestones. As a consequence, consumers also have altered the reason of why they make these purchases.

The youngest participants in this study were not purchasing homeware for long-term purposes, simply, because they had no long-term plans or commitments that they needed to take responsibility for. Homeware consumed in this particular way is where the rise in fast-homeware emerges. There is a lucrative gap in the homeware market for products that are of low cost, yet still maintain an on-trend aesthetic so as to appeal to consumers who are in their late teens to mid-twenties. Moreover, as society and consumer norms evolve, as does the market and its industry. Gaps open up, and industry can take advantage of this in order to generate additional profit. Fast-homeware is and was such a gap in the market. Although fast-homeware targets a younger market, this research found that its consumer impact spanned generations.

4.2.3 | 'BRIDGING THE GAP'

As one might be inclined to predict, this study found that the parental generation 'bridged the gap' amongst the oldest and youngest generation. However, it would be more accurate to describe the parents as being in a status of limbo between these opposing generations. While the parents utilise characteristics from both, they also oppose characteristics from both. On one hand was their opinions and thoughts on the homeware images they were presented, on the other was what they would actually prefer to consume.

When initially presented with the picture-round images the parents' generation seemed to agree and echo the same views as the grandparents generation. A2, comments that the homeware shows "different tastes for different age groups", indicating an acknowledgement of 'age-appropriate

homeware'. Here, it seems to be acknowledged that a consumer will buy specific aesthetics in accordance with their age. All three parents distinguish the Next homeware as being more traditional and therefore for older consumers. The remaining three, Ikea, H&M and Matalan were constantly referred to as 'modern' and by proxy, for younger consumers. Although groups were distinguished, this did not prevent all of the parents from agreeing that the homeware shown was 'reasonably similar'. A further opinion that is shared with the eldest generation. The reason for this could be the distinct differences in societal access to knowledge throughout each of the generations interviewed. For example, the parents here grew up with no internet or social media influence. The three youngest participants have access and can make easy use of the internet and social media (see "Online and Social Media"). This vast network of knowledge culminates in the youngest participants being able form opinions using a literal world of influence. In comparison, the parents pool of influence would have been significantly smaller and therefore more likely localised to family and friends. As a result, the parents thoughts and opinions are likely to be similar to the grandparents thoughts and opinions (their parents).

Despite these views, all of the parents showed a preference for the more 'stylised' and modern homeware from the picture round. Both A2 and B2 chose Matalan because it seemed modern and unique, similar vocabulary used by the youngest participants when describing desirable homeware. In particular, A2 commented that they would purchase more modern homeware if they could afford to. This demonstrates, again, the consumer demand for modern homeware at affordable prices does not just fall to young consumers, but their parents also. C2 preferred H&M, for the exact same reasoning of the homeware being modern. It is clear to see that, despite the parents voicing the opinion that the homeware all looked the same, they would still rather buy the newer styles and thus coincide with the younger generation. The parents in this study expressed a clear desire for the cheap, modern homeware that was shown to them, whilst juxtaposing that it all looked the same and had varying suitability depending on the consumers age. It seems that they are at odds with the frustration of seeing the same trends churned out by industry, against their desire for those trends when they become cheap enough to purchase. This contradiction was similarly replicated when the company names were revealed to the participants, the most significant reactions were towards Ikea and Matalan.

4.2.4 | BRAND LOYALTY, VALUE, AND STATUS

The reaction to Ikea seemed to fluctuate, with the participants not being able to definitively decide whether they liked the brand and its homeware. Prior to knowing the brand name, five participants (A1, A2, A3, B1 and B2) actively disliked the homeware they were shown. Both A2 and A3 found Ikea's homeware the 'least appealing' and went further to agree with A1 and state that it looked the cheapest. Moreover, B1 and B2 were similar in their response, however determined that the reason why they felt it the cheapest was because they did not like the aesthetic. It seemed natural to these two participants to associate cheap homeware with homeware that does not appeal to them. Though, it should be noted that this determination is completely subjective to individual preference. B1 and B2 also felt that they

had expensive taste. Collectively, this may suggest an element of them wanting to consume homeware that they believe looks expensive, in order to convey status. Though, it was not clear whether the status was for the benefit of others, or to appease their own standards.

Contrary to the five aforementioned participants, C1 was the only participant to express that they liked the Ikea homeware shown. When the brand name was revealed both group A, B1 and B2 were audibly surprised that the brand they had disliked was an international company they were all fond of and familiar with. Infact, in recent reports Ikea has been cited as the "world's largest furniture retailer" with its global revenue accumulating to €41.3 billion in 2019 (O'Connell, 2019). Further still, the UK is within the top five selling countries of Ikea products (O'Connell, 2019). It is safe to state the brand is exceptionally popular and has a wide appeal and there is and extremely high likelihood of finding an Ikea product in most houses. As a matter of fact, B3 felt as much, stating that "I could walk into everybody's home and…they've all got the same". Of course, B3 belongs to the oldest generation in this study and therefore, through years lived, will have seen countless homeware styles, trends and aesthetics. Due to this, it is reasonable to assume that current homeware does not excite them, as it would a participant from the younger generation. To go further, B3 may feel as if the homeware shown is simply a recycling of what they had grown up with. This demonstrates a consumer awareness of the popularity of Ikea and the resulting ubiquitous effect. This would increase the probability of owning Ikea homeware that is not "unique" or "different", two preferential qualities that were expressed by the younger generation in particular. Despite this, C1 stated that they would still purchase Ikea products, whilst fully acknowledging the notion that Ikea homeware looks "the same". Though, the youngest participant of group C goes further saying that some of the larger items from Ikea are bad quality and therefore should not be bought. However, this opinion does not change C1 from maintaining that they are more than happy to consume Ikea homeware.

Similarly, A3 felt the quality of Ikea had declined significantly over the years, whilst also contradicting themselves by expressing "I love Ikea!". Both C1 and A3 show an incredible display of brand loyalty. Furthermore, they belong to the opposing generations included in this study, yet both were willing to overlook bad quality in order to consume a brand that they "love". Contrary to the previous literature, this study found that the issue of settling for low-quality/high-aesthetic products does not fall exclusively to the "Millennial" generation and younger. It spans to generations in their 70s also. Clearly, both generations are susceptible to brand notoriety even when it precedes the quality of the product.

The second significant reaction came from Matalan. In comparison with Ikea, participants were more unanimous in their collective response towards Matalan. A1, A2 and C1 expressed that they liked the homeware. Finding it to look modern, A1 felt that certain pieces stood out to them and A2 stated they would buy the homeware if they could afford it. In particular, this suggests that A2 believed the homeware was more expensive, possibly because they liked the homeware. If so, alongside the earlier

opinions of B1 and B2, this research suggests a link between a consumers homeware preference and what they feel is more expensive. However, the crux of this notion is that the preferred homeware does not need to be numerically expensive. The consumer places a 'metaphorical high value' on the product simply because they like it. Both B1 and B2 were immediately taken by the Matalan homeware, expressing one of the first statements of "If I like it, I like it!", a phrase that would continue to be prevalent throughout the interview with group B. Again, both participants reiterated that they tended to prefer homeware that was more expensive, though the irony was that both preferred the cheapest homeware shown.

In the UK, Matalan is thought to be a budget homeware and clothing retailer. According to literature, that was not initially considered, retailers who have overall low prices and extreme promotions are more likely to be judged to have low quality products and questionable reputation, respectively (Deval et al., 2013). Thus, Matalan low priced have generated the naïve judgement of low quality. The contradiction between believing the homeware to be expensive and learning that it belonged to Matalan surprised every participant. B1 and B2 maintained they would still purchase from the brand regardless, whereas A1 stipulated they would also, providing the quality was to their standard. A2 expressed that they had mistaken Matalan for producing homeware that was not "stylish", which suggests that this consumer equates low cost with a decline in aesthetic and by naïve proxy, possibly a decline in quality also. This research shows that consumers could not distinguish cheap homeware from expensive homeware when the brand information is not known. Clearly, the homeware market is over saturated with "the same old thing". Therefore, the focus of ascertaining a consumers homeware preference, is more likely to derive from the loyalty to a brands identity and concept, rather than the actual homeware itself.

4.3 | ONLINE SHOPPING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

4.3.1 | ONLINE OR INSTORE?

All nine participants interviewed stated that they preferred to purchase homeware instore as opposed to online. Moreover, the reasoning for this was consistent across each group. They felt that only instore could you gauge fabric quality, the size of an item and determine whether the manufacture quality was acceptable.

The initial literature researched indicated a significant increase in online homeware consumerism. According to MINTEL (2018), there was an increase of 15% from 2017 to 2018, and it predicted a further increase between 2019 and 2020. Although online homeware consumerism is growing in popularity, it only equates to 20% of all homeware consumerism (MINTEL, 2018). At first, it was felt that this percentage would be much higher due to typical 'online culture', however when considering the participants response, they seem to concur with this (MINTEL, 2018) previous research. Thus, despite online homeware consumerism increasing, there will always be a place for a physical store. This also

adheres to many clothing brands recently establishing and opening separate homeware stores. For instance, as of 2019 the brand Zara has 2850 stores open globally and just over 20% are dedicated Zara HOME stores (O'Connell, 2019). These figures do not include Zara homeware that is sold within clothing stores and therefore does not represent the total number of instore homeware products across the brand. A brand known for clothing apparel, despite online consumerism increasing, still recognises the need for consumers to see and judge homeware in person. It would seem that physically seeing homeware before purchase is much more important to the participants, in contrast to physically seeing clothing before purchase. As a result, physical homeware stores will continue to be in demand.

4.3.2 | THE 'TECH SAVVY'

All three youngest participants did admit that they would be more likely to buy homeware online, without seeing the product beforehand, providing there was an established familiarity with that brand. This demonstrates that the youngest consumers in this study have built trust and loyalty with specific brands, on condition the brand continued to meet their quality standards and hold their aesthetic interest. Mintel (2018) previously reported that Millennials, quoted as ages 19-38, were more likely to purchase homeware online, in comparison with any other generation and this research found consistency with Mintel's notion. When being interviewed regarding the use of technology, it was clear that the youngest generation utilised it more. During conversation, the three youngest participants were more familiar with online and social media and had a better understanding in comparison to their parents and grandparents. This is not to say that the older generations were not at all 'tech savvy', however this research found the vast difference between even the youngest participants and the parent participants to be undeniably evident. The general consensus of why the three youngest participants drew the advantage was that they simply grew up and aged alongside the technology used today. Therefore, the constant development of online and social media was rarely an issue to these participants. For all three, this became ingrained into current culture and society, as a result they had no hardened or perpetual experience of life without it. In spite of the two older generations professing to dislike purchasing homeware online, they did eventually agree to utilising the internet as a tool when consuming.

4.3.3 | 'PRE-SEARCHING'

All of the youngest participants, parents and a single grandparent said they would undertake a 'pre-search' online, to ascertain the cheapest prices or offers, before going instore and purchasing. The definition of an online pre-search in this study's context is when a consumer actively or passively browses for an item to purchase (in this case homeware). When pre-searching, consumers may take note of various considerations such as price, value, and aesthetic, a culmination of utilitarian and hedonistic factors. In particular, the consumer is likely to be mindful of these factors when pre-searching for homeware. Typically, the consumer would want to get the best value for money, but they would surely like their homeware to fulfil their aesthetical desire also. This study suggests that passively pre-searching for homeware is more likely to engage a hedonistic, aesthetic-led approach. Passively pre-

searching is likely to be undertaken by consumers when they are 'bored' or 'killing-time', often browsing brand websites or various social media platforms. This culmination means that the consumer is being influenced by what they see, and this can have a resulting, causal effect if they transition into actively pre-searching or purchasing. An actively pre-searching consumer is more likely to be considering price and value, utilitarian factors. These consumers are looking to purchase homeware, due to a supposed need or want. Therefore, at some point they will have established the aesthetic of the product, possibly during a previous passive pre-search. This, of course, is something that warrants studying further.

Specifically, A3 stated that pre-searching allowed more ease of access, allowing them to remain in comfortability, instead of expending energy travelling to numerous stores. Whilst this concludes to a logical convenience, the youngest participants and the parents seemed to use this method more as a leisurely convenience. Here illustrates the differing needs between generations. Whilst the grandparent generation have to turn to online out of necessity, the parents and youngest generation have little need of this. Instead, the method of online consumerism is there for lethargic consumption. All six had the energy and means to physically visit different stores and had expressed that they preferred to do so. This research feels that online shopping is offering a clear convenient alternative to these participants. Research (Maggioni et al., 2019) has shown that price-conscious consumers, similar to the participants in this study, prefer to have a range of physical stores in which to compare products. Not only does this increase the circumstances for comparative shopping, but the consumer can physically see, touch, and gauge the item they wish to purchase; something that was important to the participants here as well. Furthermore, Kesari & Atulkar (2016) state that consumers adopt utilitarian values when comparative shopping such as "monetary saving, selection" and "convenience"; again, these are all things that the participants valued. This study finds that all of the aforementioned values are transferable to online shopping. As an alternative, consumers can still browse all of their preferred stores, discover additional and exclusive offers and deals, with no location or time restraints. The findings from the aforementioned previous research, transfer well into online shopping. The only compromise to endure is not having the products physically in front of them. Thus, online shopping does provide a time-cutting and convenient method of consumerism, which clearly the parents and younger generation were happy to utilise. However, it was evident that the eldest generation were reluctant and hesitant to admit they used online shopping.

4.3.4 | SOCIAL MEDIA DIS/ENGAGEMENT

Moreover, the eldest generation interviewed were equally, if not more distant from social media. All three expressed extremely little or no interest in the technology, and it was clear that throughout the interview they also had minimal knowledge of any social media platforms. As a result, the eldest participants were hindered from any form of utilisation. Interestingly, this also impeded them from being able to participate fully in this section of the interview. Although they naturally retain a hierarchical

dominance in the family dynamic, through age and experience, this had no bearing or impact when the topic discussed was social media.

Faring comparatively better, the parents were found more likely to use social media yet were particularly vocal in expressing that they did not use it regularly. All three parents were keen to emphasise this point, conveying an indirect disapproval. It seemed their way of distancing themselves from social media and the younger generation. In particular, when the topic of social media was broached initially during the interview, all six of the oldest participant found it amusing and instantly referenced the youngest participant in the group. It seemed as if the gesture were to mock the youngest generation's age-group and their stereotypical connection to social media. Despite this the parental generation did convey some knowledge and skill of how to use various social media platforms, though there was a distinct absence of education surrounding the more intricate and deceptive aspects of social media. These include dubious website links, suspiciously cheap advertisements appearing on social feeds and other general spam. Due to this, both the grandparent and parent generations admitted to often seeking help and guidance from the youngest generation. Thus, despite their disparaging attitude towards social media, and by proxy the younger generation on the whole, it was in fact the younger generation they had to rely upon. Unsurprisingly, during the study, it was the youngest participants who demonstrated themselves as the most engaged, active, and avid users of social media.

The three youngest participants expressed that they were fully engaged users of social media, participating in multiple platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Furthermore, they acknowledged that they had a high use of social media, using it every day and for a considerable number of hours. Moreover, the majority of the time spent on social media was passive rather than active. Again, notions of 'being bored', using it to 'kill time', or to not appear 'awkward' in public were mentioned by all when pressed for reasoning of use. Nash (2019, p. 95) notes that the "influence these [social media] platforms unconsciously have on consumer behaviour is vast". In essence, the more a consumer engages with social media, the more they project, assimilate, and align their self-concept with the influencers, products and brands seen. In relation to this study, homeware trends or products seen via social media could be having more of a lasting impact on the viewer, as opposed to stereotypical street advertising. Specifically, regarding brand, Nash finds that the better a brand appears on social media, the more that brand can emotionally connect with its target consumer, "attachment is perpetuated through connecting brand's personality with consumer's ideal self" (Nash, 2019, p. 96). These findings are similarly echoed in another study (Oliveira et al., 2019) that finds influencers to be more relatable and trustworthy to consumers, compared to traditional celebrity endorsement, resulting in a deeper connection. They find it to elicit a "higher purchase intention" due to a believed affiliation with the influencer from the consumer. Moreover, the consumer can develop what is described as a "benign envy", in which they feel compelled to want the items marketed to them by the influencer.

These findings seemed to fit the overall attitude from the youngest participants and therefore this study proposes that further research is needed to conclude whether homeware is also perceived like this via social media. For all three participants, passively using social media in this manner felt instinctive to them and was simply the 'done' thing in modern society. However, this extensive time spent on social media was completely contradicted when B1 stated that they would prefer to not have it at all. B1 expressed that they were aware of how much they relied upon social media and wished that it was not such a substantial and significant part of their life. Social media was discerned to play a more important role amongst A1 and C1, as they felt it necessary in order for their chosen profession; current and aspirational. These two participants found it to be expected of them, to grow their online presence in order to become more appealing to a future employer. It seemed that they both understood how competitive and exacting the current job market can be. Particularly in their generation and at their age, which can be perceived to define and determine one's life. Furthermore, all three of the youngest participants understood that an extension of how they are perceived can also be determined from their online social media profiles,

> *consumers have become more aware that they have a digital persona to nurture and grow as much as they have a physical self…photos and images are the most shared content on social media (MINTEL, 2018).*

4.3.5 | HOMEWARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

This study feels there is a parallel to be drawn upon, regarding a consumers virtual, 'digital persona' and Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation that suggests an element of theatricality when performing a routine in front of an 'audience'. Whilst Goffman adheres this to occupation and profession, this can also be transferred to the phenomena of social media, especially as being a social media influencer has become itself, a profession. Each user is allowed to consider, censor, and edit their self-presentation on social media, and this is significant. An influencer is able to target and market to specific consumers and, as aforementioned studies have found, present themselves to be more friendly, relatable, and fun that they might be away from social media. Even literature dating back one hundred years depicts people as having an "impulse to show the world a better or idealized aspect of [themselves]" (Cooley, 1922, p. 325-3). Through the span of a century, it seems there has always been the practice of exaggerating certain aspects of one's personality or social status to gain favour with others. The only difference being is world and society in which this practice takes place. In the modern day this has translated seamlessly into social media and in particular, social media influencers. They only need to portray the very best of their own reality in order to gain an adoring following of consumers. This study believes that it is not unreasonable to assume that consumers will also feel the need to portray the very best of their reality in order to fit in with the trend-following majority. This is where homeware consumption can be passively influenced, without the influencer needing to endorse any products.

As quoted above, (MINTEL, 2018) images are the most prolific content shared and therefore backgrounds of homes are frequently shared also, these too have to be considered when presenting one's self. If a consumer does not have the finances similar to that of a sponsored and endorsed influencer, they can utilise the offerings of fast-homeware, a cheap, on-trend but potentially low-quality alternative for high-end or sustainably sourced, ethical homeware. This study found evidence of social media platforms expanding into the homeware market, as C1 remarked that they had noticed various influencers creating separate, homeware-specific accounts. These accounts would share their homes and products and subsequently market in exactly the same way that has already been established in the fashion and beauty industries.

4.3.6 | PASSIVE INTERNET INFLUENCE

All of the participants in this study who used social media and the internet said that their usage had increased over the years. This could be because of how ingrained both have become into modern day society, most areas of western life can be accessed or accomplished via either of these methods. However, it should be noted that the increased use was not unanimous across each generation. The eldest generation were considerably less, in comparison to the youngest generation. The three eldest participants gave the impression that they would rather abstain from becoming deeply engaged in online shopping or social media, which is reasonable given it is a fairly recent and complicated development that they have not grown up with. Whereas the youngest three participants have grown up with both of these technologies, which could explain the higher usage increase. In essence, their lives become more entwined with developing technology every day. On the other hand, another factor could be due to an increase in 'boredom' or spare time felt by these participants and scrolling through their phone can help to eliminate this. It does feel as if they have little choice as to whether to engage with the internet and social media or not, in western society it seems an essential. Despite this, with an increase in general use, comes an inevitable increase in passive use such as pre-searching. Consequently, leading to the aforementioned passive influencing, whether the user is actively aware of this or not.

On the other hand, all of the participants were actively aware of targeted advertising when using the internet or social media. However, it was the youngest generation that had the most in depth knowledge of how companies were able to tailor particular marketing towards individuals. Both A1 and C1 gave an accurate description, using technical language referencing 'cookies', 'browser history' and 'third party information sharing', which was encouraging from a knowledge standpoint. Despite this, there was a noticeable contradiction as to whether targeted advertising was useful or not. While all of the participants agreed that it was 'annoying' as the content was often not relevant to the user, all three parents did admit to following the links in order to find a cheaper product that was value for money. Even B1 and C1 stated that if the advertisement was from a trusted and familiar brand, they may too follow the link for similar reasoning. In particular, this demonstrates that despite a reasonable knowledge of what marketing ploys to avoid, the lure of a bargain in conjunction with passive-engagement can

prove too much for some consumers. Though, the youngest participants did have a greater awareness of the dangers of the internet and social media, as a result they would not be very susceptible to the pitfalls of targeted advertising. Overall, it was the parents that were more likely to click on targeted advertisements that they were unfamiliar with, specifically in search for offers and deals. This demonstrates a lack of awareness of the harmful and negative outcomes, such and viruses, scams, and fake websites.

4.4 | HOMEWARE IN THE HOUSING MARKET

4.4.1 | CONCEDING TO RENT

At the first mention of the housing market, all of the participants across the three groups instantaneously agreed that the current UK housing market is extremely difficult for young people to break into. All of the older participants felt that getting into the housing market was much more expensive for young people nowadays, in comparison to when they, themselves wanted to get onto the property ladder. Specifically, all of the participants felt that the lack of money was the main culprit for this, unanimously agreeing that the majority of young people do not have the finances for an initial deposit on a property. In turn, this can force them into renting, particularly if they are craving their own space and independence. However, the general consensus from all three groups was that the alternative of renting was "throwing money away" (C3), as the property would never be theirs to own, would have a lack of residential security, and would offer minimal decorative freedom to the tenant.

Despite this, A1, B1, and C1 all felt that they would be more likely to rent their first property, even though the adamantly would prefer to own their first property. Unprompted, many of them found it is frustrating to live in rented property as they would almost always need to ask permission to make it more likeable and comfortable for them. The three youngest participants in particular, expressed that the lack of being able to make a rented property 'their own' was something that did discourage them.

4.4.2 | INTERIOR EMOTION

There was significant importance placed on being able to decorate a property with homeware that appealed to them. This encompassed a range of homeware, from big items such as sofas, bedframes, and cabinets, to smaller ornamental and decorative pieces. The youngest participants were adamant in voicing that being able to decorate a property would help them to feel more comfortable and give them a greater sense of belonging. In a 1995 study (Durgee & O'Connor, 1995, p. 100), that included property rental, a participant also expressed the sense of not feeling comfortable in a rental, and alternatively feeling more like themselves if living in a property that they owned. It seems a continual notion that a person will feel more secure and happy if living in an owned property, and not a rental. For example, there seems to be a significant amount of emotional reasoning and attachment regarding the

aesthetic of one's own home. Being able to control the way in which a property was decorated was extremely important to A1, B1 and C1. In effect, it can be ascertained that buying homeware would be a new and exciting experience for a first-time consumer. Moreover, at the age of this event (this research will average early to mid-twenties) the consumer would already have pre-supposed preferences regarding colours, textures, symbols, and styles. The freedom of a first-time consumerist venture would be severely limited, were that person to be moving into a rented property. Consumers may have to opt for smaller, more decorative pieces that exude a greater aesthetic impact, in order to depict that individuals personality to others. Previous research also adheres to this notion of younger consumers preferring form over function,

> *The growing population of renters, particularly among the under-35's, has had a significant impact on the homewares market, with this group increasingly looking for design-led products that enable them to put a stamp on a property they don't actually own (MINTEL, 2018).*

The literature above parallels the three youngest participants qualms regarding home decoration within a rented property, as opposed to a bought property. It seems that the only way to make a rented home your own is to be a consumer of decorative/accessory based homeware. This study believes that a shift into the renting market has not only had an impact on the homeware industry but may give a strong indication as to why there has been an increase in fast-homeware. If this trend of renting does increase, as it has been predicted to do so, then it is reasonable to assume that the linking unethical, unsustainable industry of fast-homeware will continue to expand also. Clearly, homeware has a significant bearing on feeling comfortable, content and relaxed in one's surroundings. Ergo, being restricted from exploring your own home aesthetic, due to residing in a rented property, could lead to a lack of belonging and unhappiness with one's home. It was felt, by the youngest participants, 'pointless' to decorate a rented property when they may have to alter it back to its original state upon their leave. Furthermore, it should be noted that any additional homeware bought into a rented property may need to be moved out of a rented property at some point. As a result, the tenant may not wish to purchase expensive items of homeware when the property itself is not a permanent dwelling. Fast-homeware would serve as an excellent option in which consumers could furnish their rented property cheaply, possibly resulting in less guilt if they ever needed to dispose and replace of that fast-homeware if they moved.

4.4.3 | FAST-HOMEWARE AND UNIVERSITY LIVING

Despite the notion of renting being 'frivolous' and the lesser alternative to buying a property, literature suggests that renting has increased between 2013 and 2016, and has likely continued to increase into the present year and "almost a third of 25-34s are in private rented property" (MINTEL, 2019). These statistics represent a vast proportion of the age group mentioned. The youngest participants interviewed in this study range from 22 to 27, thus it would be reasonable to assume they would also have a high likelihood of renting their first property. Additionally, this could indicate a reason for the growing market

of fast-homeware. As more consumers imbed into short-term properties, they may also be looking for homeware that they can treat as short-term. For many of the youngest generation, the first time that they rent a property is whilst studying away from home, at university. A report from the UK House of Commons (Bolton, 2020, p.7) indicated there has been an increased number of university applicants between 1994 and 2019; from 0.4 million to 0.7 million. Therefore, the percentage of 25-34's renting property, derived from MINTEL (2019), may have increased due to the link between the high number of university applicants and the need to rent properties whilst in university. Typically, an undergraduate university student will rent either university accredited accommodation or student housing. Perhaps their first sense of independence, consumers at such a young age (18) may possibly be looking for homeware that reflects themselves and illustrates something of their personality. Surely, if they have already learnt how to do with fashion via their preferred high-street stores, they can also learn to use the same high-street stores in order to reflect themselves in homeware too? Likely to be aesthetically current only for a short amount of time, young people can present themselves to have the latest, on-trend homeware.

 Furthermore, whilst the first purchase of fast-homeware can be considerably cheap, if the consumer feels pressure to 'update' their self and their aesthetic, consequential purchases will accumulate into a considerable expense. This was the experience of participant C1 who had attended university in this manner. It would be reasonable to assume that once someone has entered the renting market, it may prove difficult to leave and purchase a property instead; their finances having already been used for rent as opposed to a deposit, and that leaves even less to buy sustainable or ethical homeware. Moreover, saving a large sum of money such as a deposit can prove costly for students particularly as tuition fees rise and more dept is accrued. Previous literature (Coughlan, 2010), shows that despite the tuition fee increase from £3290 to £9000 in 2012, there was still an increase of applicants in subsequent years. In contrast, to a deposit, an initial payment of rent can be remarkably lower and easier to achieve. In essence, from the age of 18, a young person is already acclimatised to the renting market having potentially rented numerous properties for a total of three years, and moreover they may be complacent and unquestioning towards the market sector of fast-homeware.

4.4.4 | GENERATIONAL CONTRADICTIONS

Overall, the literature shows that young people today, are looking to attend university and possibly gain their first insight of independent living, regardless of the increase in cost. Moreover, they choose to further their education as opposed to going straight into work and supporting themselves financially. This, as Bolton (2020, p.7) suggests, is in stark contrast with what older generations chose to do at that point in their lives. This was also reflected with the parent and grandparent participants who did not give any indication to attending further or higher education. Infact, the majority of older participants felt they were expected to go into work after leaving secondary school and were then able to purchase their first property in their twenties. It seems that in current society this contrast between the generations is

synonymous with why young people nowadays find themselves stalling to purchase their own first properties. Instead of being able to step onto the property ladder, like their parents and grandparents were able to, it seems that younger generations are increasingly more likely to start renting. Furthermore, as participant C1 had experienced, renting accommodation whilst attending university often leaves the individual with not enough finances to fund a deposit, should they wish to purchase a property after finishing university.

When taking into consideration the aforementioned points of discussion:

- The emotional response regarding the need to decorate one's own space

- An increasing number of young people renting property

- And those young people wishing to express themselves through their homeware

It is clear to see that these circumstances have created a need for on-trend, easily available, and low-cost homeware. Fast-homeware meets those needs. Renting a property is by no means a permanent fixture and allows the individual to maintain a 'temporary lifestyle'. Ergo, when that individual wants to relocate, they can do with relative ease and without much thought to their homeware. Particularly if their homeware is no longer on-trend, can be readily replaced and not cost much to replace. Fast-homeware, due to its low-cost and easy availability, has a higher likelihood of holding less emotional or nostalgic value to the consumer, thus perfect for a temporary lifestyle. Drawing again upon Durgee and O'Connor's research (1995, p. 90-101), in particular their vocabulary describing renting as a "quick fix", consumers looking for the "here and now", and an "intensifying demand for convenience", a clear parallel can be drawn to fast-homeware and other 'fast' sectors. Although, they predicted that these perceptions would be attributed to renting, in the modern day these are all attributed to cheap, unsustainable, and in contradiction, bought consumer goods. Instead of consumers renting low-cost homeware, they can simply buy low-cost homeware instead, that has the added psychological impact of being theirs to own. This study suggests that the industry has been particularly successful with ownership as opposed to rental items as they can continually market the latest trend by manufacturing and introducing a new product to the consumer. Thus, transpiring in an abundance of, in this case, affordable and trend-leading fast-homeware. This transpires in less guilt when disposing of fast-homeware.

The youngest generations' emerging lifestyle, as found and discussed in this study, seems to comfortably include the consumption of fast-homeware. As demonstrated and believed by all of those interviewed, the current pace of life for the youngest participants is considerably faster and more intense in comparison to the two eldest generations. There is a stark contrast between the two generations, specifically regarding what are considered typical 'life-markers' in the UK. The typical ages of leaving education, embarking on a career, purchasing a house, and getting married (considered by this research as 'long-term life-markers) have been altered by the youngest participants' generation. The

markers are either 'achieved' later in life or are simply deemed not as important and pivotal as they once were.

As a consequence, young people nowadays are unable to achieve the long-term life-markers at the same age as their predecessors. It seems a short-term effect and causation cycle is establishing itself amongst the youngest in society. Whereas the parents and grandparents interviewed looked to 'settle down', the youngest participants felt unable to do that due to a perceived increase in pressure from society to succeed financially. In order to succeed, their lifestyle needed to be flexible and comparably more successful to their peers. There came across a defined sense of needing to 'keep up' with their peers and the ever-evolving society that the young people inhabited. An intangible concept, the behaviour of chasing an undefined aspiration seems impossible to do. Yet, social media and industries such as fast-homeware will continue to generate these ambiguous 'life-goals' in order to maintain a high number of followers and consumers. This study predicts that this will continue as so, providing that culture shifts away from holding traditional values and rituals as essential, nay paramount to judging one's success in society.

4.4.5 | GENERATIONAL CONFLICT

Nevertheless, as discussed in the 'Online Shopping & Social Media' chapter, self-presentation is still a crucial part of society as it would have been when the grandparents and parents were between the ages of 20 and 30. However, the difference in behaviour culminated in a very noticeable 'blame game' during the interviews. The two eldest generations in all three groups would often refer to the youngest generation as the "youngsters" and it was solely these youngsters who were constantly creating a need for unhealthy, new, and instantaneous consumerism. As mentioned previously, the parents and grandparents looked to distance themselves from the youngest generation again. In this instance however, it was in order to express their own attitudes as better and their own behaviour as superior. In particular, A2 felt that young people would not want to settle for second-hand homeware, reiterating that they would happily use second-hand themselves and thus practice sustainability. Interestingly, the youngsters were always grouped in this behaviour blaming, as if they must be the cause of new, unsustainable sectors such as fast-homeware. As a matter of fact, this was not true at all. A1 and C1 both had no qualms with second-hand homeware at all, stating that pre-used homeware would be financially cheaper. B1 went even further as to point out some pieces that they already owned that was sourced through Facebook, friends, and family. Although, they did specify that the homeware pieces, whilst bought due to their low-cost, would eventually be replaced with items they preferred aesthetically once they could afford to do so. Whilst this does adhere to A2's hypothesis, the difference is that there is not a total aversion to second-hand homeware from the youngest generation.

Echoing's of the same attitude have been identified throughout the analysis of this study. Specifically, the attitude is to distance oneself from the younger, Millennial generation. A metaphorical age-range was defined during the picture-round, though all generations did admit to purchasing and liking fast-homeware in some form. An 'us' and 'them' mentality was formed regarding the use of online shopping and social media. However, the older generations acknowledged they would often ask the younger generation for any help with the aforementioned technology; thus, admitting use. Renting was deemed frivolous and wasteful, yet the six eldest participants were accepting that it was an inevitability nowadays and it was easier for them to purchase a property decades previous.

As discussed in the "Not All Millennials" chapter, there seems to be a consistent pattern of behaviour of placing a disproportionate amount of blame onto the Millennial generation. The distancing element is seemingly in place, for the parent and grandparent generations, to emphasise the pitfalls of modern culture and society. Their responses seemed habitual in manner, spoken freely without complete consideration of what the comment truly meant; 'throw-away-remarks' if you will. Understandably, society will always evolve and be 'updated', which can culminate in a divide between generations. The older of two, perhaps are not as enthusiastic and accepting of how the younger generation navigate the current world, and vice versa. This will inevitably be a phenomena that will happen with every new generation, as the preceding generation fondly prefers the culture and society that they grew up in. However, it is the relationship and response from the younger generation which could offer an insight as to how the homeware (and fashion) industry can benefit as a result.

4.4.6 | CAPITALISING ON CONFLICT

This research proposes that disparaging comments and generalising attitudes towards a younger generation could evoke a defiant, individualist, and self-defining response from that young generation. The clash between the older and younger generations' experiences and cultures could result in this 'distancing' response that has been highlighted in previous literature and was apparent throughout all the interviews. Therefore, if the reaction is to distance oneself, then the consequential affect could be to define oneself, in order to reaffirm and emphasise the distancing. Immediately, this is evident with a cursory search through fast-fashion websites (the target audiences of which have been estimated to be 18-28, which includes the youngest participants from this research). The language used constantly highlights and engages with the consumer personally and informally; "curated for you" (Zara, 2020), "experimental designs as unique as you" (ASOS, 2020), and "find something to suit your style" (Primark, 2020). Furthermore, the word "new" is consistently used throughout (New Look, 2020), (boohoo, 2020), (PrettyLittleThing, 2020). Clearly, these fast-fashion websites encourage the consumer to decide and define their self-presentation and boldly promote that, to do this, the consumer must engage with the latest (newest) products and trends that the website has to offer.

Fast-fashion has facilitated the consumer desire to define themselves amongst their own generation of peers and to distance themselves from older generations. As hypothesised, the industry has already capitalised enormously from this 'define and distance' behaviour through fast-fashion, though it is also apparent in the beauty industry also. Predictably, fast-homeware will also facilitate the consumer need to define oneself through their immediate environment, their home. Consumers have already been led to believe that it is important to express themselves through aesthetically-focused platforms such as fashion and beauty. Homeware seems to be the next gap in the market that industry can, and have begun to, capitalise on. 'Fast' market sectors saturate consumers with low-cost trends and aesthetics that define and distance the younger, target generations from the older generations. Though, whether these trends and aesthetics are demanded by the consumer or are fed to the consumer by the industry is a notion that requires further research.

4.5 | SUSTAINABILITY:

When asked questions surrounding sustainability, participants voiced a broad spectrum of attitudes, specifically with regards to unethical/unsustainable industry practice (also referred to here as industry malpractice).

4.5.1 | DEFINING ISSUE

Most participants, specifically parents and grandparents, could not give a correct or competent definition of 'sustainable'. When questioned, it was widely agreed that it was a term they had heard of but had never fully understood. Whilst they understood it to be a positive selling point for a product, they did not understand why.

In comparison, the younger generation gave a more succinct definition. Overall, their definitions were more accurate than their older family members counterparts', illustrating a clear gap in consumer knowledge, particularly amongst the two older generations. Perhaps because being 'sustainable' is a current trend, it is reasonable to ascertain the younger generation would have better awareness of it. A cursory online search for "sustainable trend" unearths a multitude of recent newspaper and magazine articles reporting on sustainability; Cockett (2020), Brouwer (2020), Lein (2020), Barr (2020), Fox (2020), Moss (2020) and Murray (2020) to name a few. A clear indication of how 'newsworthy' being sustainable is, however whether it is a passing trend or not is debatable. Although, what cannot be debated is that all articles gathered pertain to the fashion and homeware industry, an industry that is undoubtedly driven by trends. Nevertheless, a lack of understanding of common words used to promote and set products apart from their competitors, marks another gap in consumer knowledge. It could be further assumed that this extends to many other marketing terms and phrases also, leaving the consumer at a disadvantage. Alongside being unclear about advertising jargon, participants knew very little regarding homeware production.

4.5.2 | ORIGINS UNKNOWN

None of the participants could describe where, by whom, or how any of their homeware was produced. Two participants, C3 and B1 joked and commented "Made in China" whilst the rest had simply "no idea". As before, this demonstrates another gap in consumer education regarding the production of homeware. It also suggests lazy stereotyping regarding product manufacturing, combined with the jovial attitude may result in little guilt when purchasing. In essence, this question also generated a dissociative undertone between the consumers and producers. Geographically, most fast-homeware is assumed to be produced in countries far away from the UK (stereotypically China and India), therefore the consumer can choose to emotionally distance themselves from it; avoiding any responsibility they may have via ignorance and alienation. It could be argued that this vast distance between the two counterparts provides the consumer with a lazy excuse for their lack of concern.

This assumption is easily disputed though, for example H&M Group (2020) list their homeware supplying countries as; Czech Republic, France, Poland, Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden, to name a few. Therefore, it can be conjectured that participants are unaware of other countries geographically closer to the UK, are also suppliers of homeware. This beckons the question of whether this could have any impact on the relationship and current dissociation between consumer and producer? Would consumer question a homeware product more, if it were manufactured in a country that was geographically closer to their own? It would appear that consumers align their beliefs with knowledge that is only partially true. They do not fully understand where their homeware products originate from, however are happy to base their judgement and opinion from this incomplete picture. This study, whilst acknowledging that this may be the case with the majority of consumers, finds it worrying that this is common, accepted practice. It may be concluded that the consumer understanding of how homeware is manufactured and produced should be radically addressed.

4.5.3 | IGNORANCE IS VARIED

In addition, this study felt it important to discuss the manufacturing and production information that consumers may or may not know about their homeware. For example, if consumers wish to know which country a branded product came from, they would have to do their own search. Typically, brand-websites are riddled with laborious drop-down links, which are off-putting for the user. While some brands set themselves apart from their fast-fashion/fast-homeware counterparts by having such information, it is often difficult to find, exhausting to read through and rarely user-friendly. Akin to these characteristics, is the "Interim Report on the Sustainability of the Fashion Industry" (House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, 2019). This report provides extensive information, including the top five retailers who were the most engaged with various sustainability actions and initiatives; ASOS, Burberry, Marks and Spencer, Tesco and Primark. Additionally, it comments on companies that illegally dispose of surplus product by burning, and brands that illegally pay their workers significantly less than the UK minimum wage. Any of this information could have impact on consumer behaviour and

purchasing, yet the report is almost impossible to encounter and is highly unlikely to be read by the average UK consumer. This study believes that information such as this should be made easily available to the consumer.

Therefore, participants were asked if they would want to know how homeware was manufactured and produced. The first was from the youngest participant (C1) who was very keen to know and expected it would be feasible to include this information, adding that it would help the consumer to make a more informed decision regarding purchase. C1 even went onto state they had noticed one fast-fashion store, Primark, had begun to identify products made with recycled fabric, "they've started to flag it. It would be nice if more places did". It should be noted that this participant had demonstrated a good understanding about unethical and unsustainable industry (mal)practices, which is likely to be a result of being a fashion student. Distinguishing this participant from the rest, was a formal education of the fashion and textile industry, which allowed them to understand the importance of knowing where homeware is manufactures. Intuitively, this could indicate that a greater understanding is likely to lead to a morally informed choice, as opposed to a financially informed choice. However, current literature states differently:

> *despite consumers' willingness to make ethical purchases, ethical product attributes are not the most dominant criteria in their consumption decisions because they care more about price, quality and value (Bucic et.al, 2012, p. 127)*

Contradictory to initial intuition, there is strong research suggesting that consuming ethically or sustainably is a far-reaching aspiration for most. Constrictions of current living costs is enough to dictate purchasing behaviour, with preference always falling to the 'best deal' that can be found. It seems there is predilection by the consumer towards a short-term achievement of preserving a healthy bank-balance, rather than a long-term achievement of supporting a healthy environment. There is direct correlation to the 'Homeware in the Housing Market' chapter pertaining to short-term lifestyles. A link can be clearly seen between short-term practices such as renting property, competitive, modern culture, and low-cost, readily available homeware. Consumer behaviour seems to emanate and mimic the general pace of society. If it is deemed to be fast, competitive, and individualistic, then consumerism will parallel those same qualities. The second response came from a majority (A1, A2, A3, C2, C3) of participants. They showed a basic, surface-level understanding of industry malpractice. Whilst agreeing consumers ought to know production information, they did not feel it was possible. Furthermore, there was a distinct lack of trust from participants towards industry.

A1 expressed that, aside from knowing the shop from where it was bought, tracing where a product ultimately came from can get "a bit murky". Other participants agreed, feeling the labelled information could not always be relied upon. According to Bucic, Harris & Arli "many consumers still do not

understand the ethical dimensions of products that they purchase," (2012, p. 128) and this finding is echoed within this research. However, these views from the participants are in complete contradiction with their consumption of these "murky" products. As if, due to the easy availability of products such as fast-homeware, they will overlook the negative. The overarching attitude, 'what can we do about it?' is incredibly a-typical of the average consumer, shifting ethical accountability from consumer to industry. Unable to fully ascertain their own role in unethical/unsustainable consumption, participants reverted to blaming industry and lack of governmental regulations. It was deemed acceptable to absolve themselves of responsibility, regarding unethical and unsustainable homeware, so long as they showed that they did have the 'correct' moral standing on the issue. In essence, it was a peculiar scenario of not needing to follow through with action, so long as you expressed the right attitude. Additionally, Bucic, Harris & Arli found that regardless of whether a product was ethical/sustainable or not, it had no bearing on a substantial number of consumers (2012).

The remaining three participants (all from group B, therefore the same family) had no desire to know where, who, or how their homeware was made; B2 voicing that if a product was available to purchase, they had every right to purchase it. This attitude completely contradicts the singular participant, as does the level of understanding and knowledge of industry malpractice. It ought to be noted there may be an explanation for the juxtaposing opinions between the two groups. As discussed, the single participant has had a formal education that covered the topic in question, whereas the three family members had not. Furthermore, there was a distinct similarity of attitude amongst all participants from group B. It could be speculated that a strong family connection has influenced the opinion of each generation, resulting in a unanimous response to the question. In fact, the three participants expressed that people who work in factories must be happy as they lived amongst others who did the same, believing that their wages were significantly higher than in actuality. By voicing these beliefs, it not only exhibits a lack of knowledge but also a level of misinformation. B3 believed that workers in countries such as India were payed £4 an hour and whilst it was fine for them, in the UK this wage would not be tolerated. According to the House of Commons Environmental audit committee (2019), the average wage for a garment worker in Leicester is £4 an hour, even £3.50. This factory supplied a fast-fashion retailer and amplifies the misinformation consumers believe. The three participants justified their consumerism by using information that is not wholly true. The family of group B seemed more than content with the information they already knew and were not actively questioning whether this information was accurate.

This research determines that these participants were unlikely to engage in independent research in order to establish fact and fiction. On the contrary, it appeared that fact and fiction had been spread through conversation amongst family and friends and had potentially gotten mixed up. Therefore, further research should be carried out to ascertain how news (from any media platform) is disseminated throughout social groups such as group B and how this impacts on consumer knowledge and purchasing habits.

4.5.4 | HEDONIC CONSUMPTION VERSUS SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Furthermore, they repeatedly used the phrase "if I like it, I'll buy it", which is seemingly enough to warrant their purchasing habits; however, it is a weak, opinion-based justification. Nevertheless, it should be noted "if I like it, I'll buy it" or similar, "If I like it, I like it" were prevalent throughout all interviews conducted. Okada (2005) states that the 'consumer symptoms' of feeling guilt and not being able to quantify benefits are associated with hedonic consumption. While there was never a definitive admittance of guilt for buying frivolous, indulgent items, there was a consistent use of the same justifications. In accordance with previous research strongly suggesting hedonic purchasing generates guilt (Okada, 2005; Lascu, 1991), this research suggests that the participants in this study also felt that same sense of guilt. The additional findings here also suggest that the participants seemed satisfied with their justification for hedonic consumption; those small phrases were enough to prevent them holding onto any feeling of guilt. However, guilt did not only occur in consumption of homeware, but in the discarding of homeware as well.

4.5.5 | NEGOTIATING GUILT-FREE DISPOSAL

Regarding the disposal of homeware, there was a divide between the youngest generation and the two older generations. Overall, most parents and grandparents preferred to give unwanted homeware to family and friends or to charity and giving to charity was deemed easier and more convenient for themselves. Yet participants also indicated a moral reasoning; being able to help those who cannot afford 'brand new'. This moral reasoning seemed more to settle and satiate the participant; however, convenience seemed the primary driver for disposal. Strahilevitz & Myers' (1998) research indicated that altruistic behaviour, e.g. charity donations, were more likely to occur in conjunction when a hedonic purchase had been made; this research found a similar instance. Participants who preferred to dispose of homeware by giving to charity derived pleasure from helping others. Consequently, they could use this positive feeling to compensate for the guilt that may derive from their hedonistic, homeware replacement purchase. This notion also corresponds to additional previous research:

> The motivational aspect of guilt pertains to the fact that, when one feels guilty, one also feels the urge to make some form of reparation (Lascu, 1991, p. 5)

However, this research suggests that consumers are not just feeling guilt post-purchase but are also anticipating guilt pre-purchase. Furthermore, participants here have demonstrated they are active to ensure the effect is minimised; primarily to make them feel better. In contradiction to disposing via charity, the youngest generation showed a preference for selling unwanted products online, either via social media or applications such as 'Depop'. These discussions with the three youngest participants also reinforce the incorrect assumption that 'youngsters' would rather purchase brand new items, as noted in 'Homeware in the Housing Market' chapter. In reference to this paper's findings and discussion

regarding 'Online/Social Media' there is a likely reason why the older participants do not sell unwanted homeware. As discussed, the parents interviewed barely used either online or social media and the grandparents, not at all. It can be assumed that both generations may not have the skills to know how to use such applications or the understanding to do it confidently. However, this technology is also of a completely different generation and therefore it could be assumed there would be general disinterest from grandparents towards it. Although the younger generation expressed a similar moral reasoning to the parents and grandparents, they preferred to try and recover some money from the initial purchase. This could be because they are less financially stable as the older generations and are therefore more willing to go to extra lengths for any extra possible profit.

4.5.6 | IT'S ALL ABOUT VALUE FOR MONEY

Despite claims of moral reasoning for purchasing homeware, throughout all of the interviews, financial constriction was the ultimatum. In contrast, Bertini, Wathieu and Iyengar (2012) found that consumers were more likely to purchase for quality when faced with an over-saturated market; and this was in contradiction to their previous literature which argued purchase for price. This paper concurs with both literature viewpoints and concludes that in the modern-day, the consumer wants to purchase the best quality they can afford. The participants in this study coincided 'quality' with a conventional outlook, the longevity of the product. Though amongst participants in group C, a products longevity in accordance with its price was disputed. C1 argues that even though a product is "a higher price, doesn't necessarily mean [it is] a higher quality". Whereas the elder of group C (C3) claims that if "you buy something cheap, it doesn't last" and if the consumer pays more "it lasts longer". Here demonstrates a clear divide between the young person and grandparent. An explanation for the differing opinions could be from financial stability. The older participant was far more financially stable than the younger and could afford more expensive homeware. Thus, it could be assumed that they are stating opinions based on the market tier that they are able to afford, which is clearly different.

However, what each participant defined as 'quality' did not adhere to ethicality or sustainability. In conjunction, previous literature has expressed that a there is a "lack of a significant relationship between selfless altruism and pro-environmental consumption" (Naderi & Van Steenburg, 2018, p. 288). Whilst the premise coincides with the current research, Naderi & Van Steenburg only attributed this behaviour to Millennials. Findings here suggests this attitude can be found in all generations and is not localised to one. Consumption is there to provide a gain for the individual and this is judged through value of the product against financial savings. Participants here gave little thought to the ethicality/sustainability of a product, and even less so to the possibility of actively changing their spending habits. All interviewed, despite their contrasting opinions and attitudes, claimed they did not have enough money to purchase ethical or sustainable homeware, reverting to 'fast-homeware' because of cheapness and aesthetic.

Clearly, this indicates that although they do have some moral inclinations, it is not enough to persuade their consumerist habits and finance will always take precedence.

5.0 | CONCLUSION

The initial aim of this study was to explore the emerging sector of fast-homeware and to begin to research its impact on the consumer psyche. Specifically, it was fundamental to collect qualitative data from multiple generations of consumers as many previous studies have focused on quantitative data from young people only. By focusing importance on exploring consumer knowledge regarding homeware sustainability, this study has exposed gaps in consumer knowledge across generations.

A lack of knowledge across generations was clear, although younger participants had markedly more understanding than the two older generations, who were significantly inadequate. This deficiency resulted in a diminished value of ethical/sustainable products and a reluctance to purchase due to high price, reverting to fast-homeware as an affordable alternative. A clear example of this is the difference between the three youngest participants who attempted defining the term 'sustainable', and the six eldest participants who could not muster any definition. Furthermore, there was a disconcerting representation of participants that did not care about ethical/sustainable homeware. The significance being that it reflected a single family's views that were outdated, yet still, had been passed on through generations. This research also found parents and grandparents anticipated guilt from planned homeware purchases, combatting this by donating unwanted items to charity, friends, or family. Moreover, this finding was unexpected and demonstrates the advantageous nature of the main method chosen, informal group interviews.

The impacts of fast-homeware would be largely similar to those of fast-fashion. Those who would stand to gain from a sector like fast-homeware would primarily be the companies themselves. By diminishing the quality of homeware, they are able to cheapen the cost of production, accumulating more profit for themselves.   The   environment   has   undoubtedly   been   heavily   impacted   by homeware production, furthermore, homeware encompasses a vaster arrange of materials than apparel. Alongside fabric, woods, plastics, metals, electrics, glass, ceramics, rubber and stone must be sourced, manufactured and stocked instore within weeks. Thus, extra pressure is placed on more natural and man-made materials and consequently the earth's environment. Questions should be asked as to where all of these materials are sourced from. Adding further insult to this will be the over-saturation of the homeware market. The mass-production of homeware would inevitably result in a growing demand, and force prices down as companies compete with one another; something that has already been demonstrated and paralleled by fast-fashion. Whilst the consumer believes they are benefitting from cheaper products, they are in fact of lesser quality and thus less longevity. Over their lifetime, the consumer may have to replace that product more often, which could prove to be more costly in the long-term.

The significance of these findings supports and expands previous research, suggesting all generations of consumers have a lack of appreciation and understanding towards ethical and sustainable products. Moreover, this study argues qualitative data demonstrates that all generations contribute towards fast-homeware, despite some generations not being thought of as the typical target audience. Ultimately, if considering the long-term, this study is pushing to establish a new area of research into fast-homeware, its impacts and effects. This would then have further benefits for both the environment, the consumer, industry workers and independent homeware stores. Research into its undoubted impact on the environment could establish laws and procedures that must be followed by industry to ensure minimal harm. If updated quality regulations and guidelines (pertaining to ethicality and sustainability) had to be met by a product, consumers could purchase with little guilt and possibly gain knowledge on how a product can be produced with little harm to the environment. Health and safety laws could be established to ensure that industry workers were properly protected, and laws could be made to ensure they are paid a wage that supports a comfortable and decent lifestyle. Furthermore, if fast-homeware could be limited, to prevent over-saturation of the marketplace, then more local, independent homeware stores could have a better chance of turning profit. Not to mention that the more local a company and the materials they use are, the lesser the negative impact on the environment.

Nevertheless, there were limitations to this research. The timeframe was short due to the nature of the Masters by Research programme of study. Ideally more focus groups would have been conducted to gather a further and richer source of data. Furthermore, the reasoning behind the attitudes and opinions that were voiced could have been interrogated further within an extended focus group timeframe.

Recommendations for further research primarily includes fast-homeware. Specifically, its contributing factors and repercussions on the consumer psyche and the environment. Moreover, qualitative data should be considered as it provides a more accurate depiction of a consumer's reasonings. Conclusively, it is suggested here that further study should consider all generations of consumers, as all have the right to understand exactly what they are purchasing, in order to make an informed and educated choice.

Conclusion

5.1 | MOVING FORWARD

Pertaining to short-term progress for fast-homeware, further research must be undertaken in order to comprehensively understand all facets that impact and have been impacted. Below will suggest some additional areas of research, that were of particular interest to this research.

Education and awareness are paramount, this study highlighted that participants that did not hold this knowledge could not see the importance of sustainable or ethical products. They could not connect their own consumer behaviour with the environmental impact of fast-homeware, and this was simply because they had not been educated in this area. This study feels there is a dire need for educating consumers from a young age to ensure they are aware of what part they play in the fast-homeware cycle. This could potentially lead to more positive consumer behaviour and less consumer demand for cheap, low quality fast-homeware.

This study also feels that research must be undertaken into the link between the rise of homeware centred content on social media and the appearance and acceleration of the fast-homeware sector. Further research needs to be conducted to ascertain the effect of this homeware content on different generations of consumer psyche, and whether it encourages the purchase of on-trend homeware. If consumers became aware that they may be passively influenced by homeware on social media, in turn they could recognise and avoid the content in question. In essence, this gives more control back to the consumer.

The final area of research, which was not a consideration in the initial phase of literature, is the link between the increase of university applicants and the growing popularity of fast-homeware. The typical age of a university student adheres to fast-homeware's target demographic. Moreover, this study believes that university students may represent a large percentage of fast-homeware consumers. Crucially however, to include participants across multiple generations, this study feels it would be interesting to also get older generations' views on university homeware alongside the age-group attending university. This could shed light on who purchases homeware, in this instance, and produce richer, more comprehensive data.

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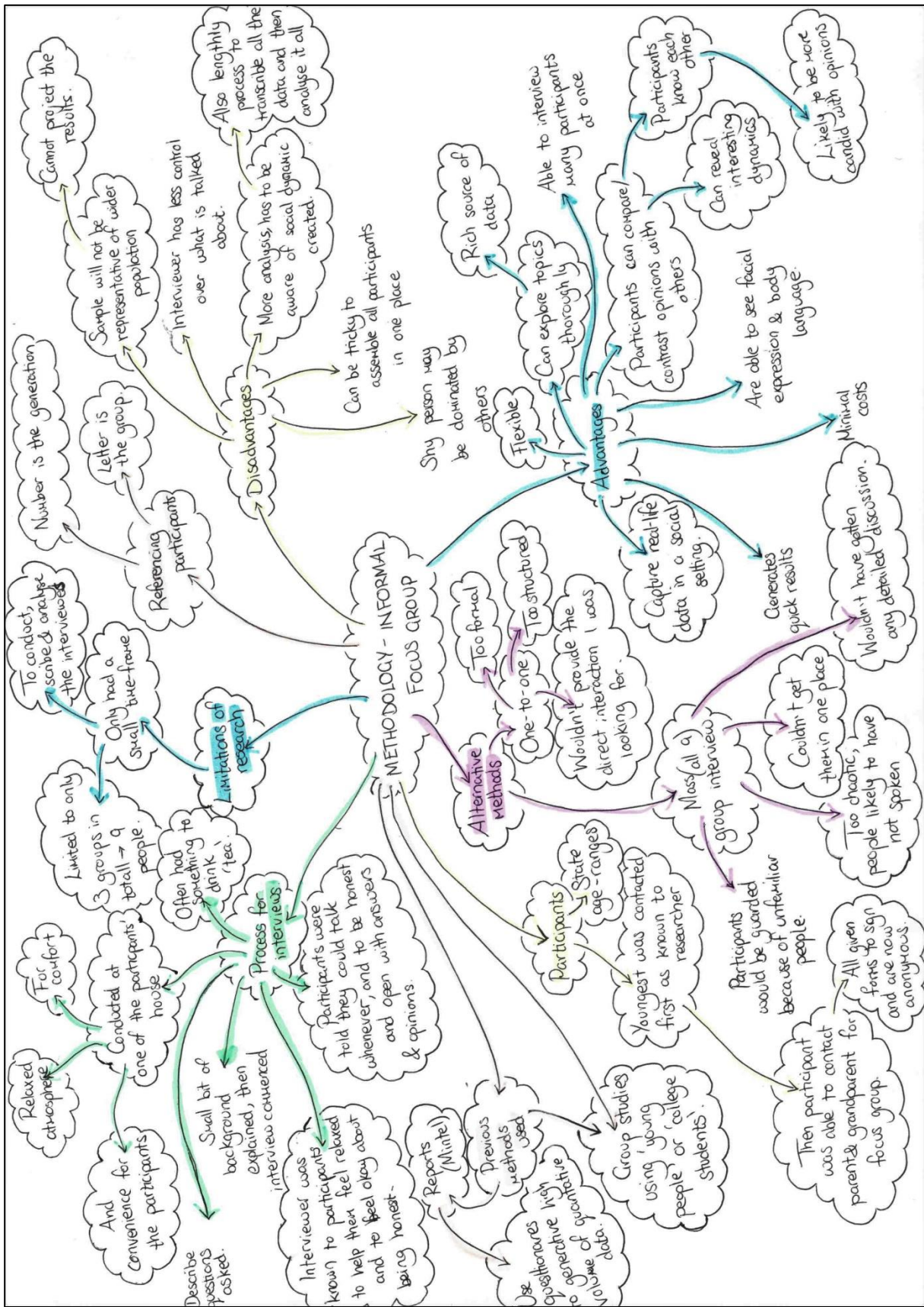
7.0 | APPENDIX

Figure 5 "Methodology Mind map" Katie Hammonds

Figure 6 "Self-Concept Mind map" Katie Hammonds

SUSTAINABILITY

PARALLEL REASONING

Also stating that sustainable/eco-friendly products were too expensive to buy, and clearly states that moral does not have a strong enough grip to sway consumerism.

Shows a lack of education amongst consumers about what they're actually buying, isn't a stretch to assume this extends to many other words and phrases aswell.

1 participant wanted to know, and expected that it should be feasible to let consumers know how a product was made in order to make a more informed decision.

And there was a distinct set of responses to whether they would want to know any of this information.

5 of the participants showed basic, stereotypical knowledge of industry conditions, 'bad working conditions, bad practice' etc. and agreed it would be better if we knew, however didn't see this as being possible, and therefore 'what can we do about it'.

Most specifically parents & grandparents couldn't give any or a correct definition of what sustainable meant. Felt that they had never been told it, but had heard of/used it/heard of it.

Showed a lot of knowledge about unethical & unsustainable practices.

Most said finance played a main part in whether they bought homeware or not. Most do not have enough money and therefore lean towards fast-homeware.

Eco showed some moral remorse, but absolved themselves of responsibility, saying the industry/government should do something about it.

None of the participants could describe where/how, or who any of their homeware made by. At least 2 participants said the phrase "Made in China" as a response.

3 participants didn't care where their products came from or who made them. If they product was available to buy then they have every right to buy them.

Regarding disposal, most claim to take things to charity shops etc and a few try and pass it onto family & friends.

Mostly grandparents who want to pass onto family & friends.

Interestingly a reoccurring reason and justifying reason was "if I like it, I'll buy it".

Had the added benefit of getting some money back from initial purchase.

The younger participants showed a preference for wanting to sell unwanted good online, via social media, or apps like 'Depop'.

Reasoning given is that it were convenient than trying to dispose etc. And it justifies their consuming more because charity is helping those less fortunate.

Arguably a very shallow justification, however is enough to convince themselves that they are correct.

Weren't suitably educated with the ethicality or bad practice of the industry. Thought workers were paid more than in reality & believe that they are happy to work because they're all in the same boat.

It seems that they genuinely believed what they said and this was good enough reason to consume as they want.
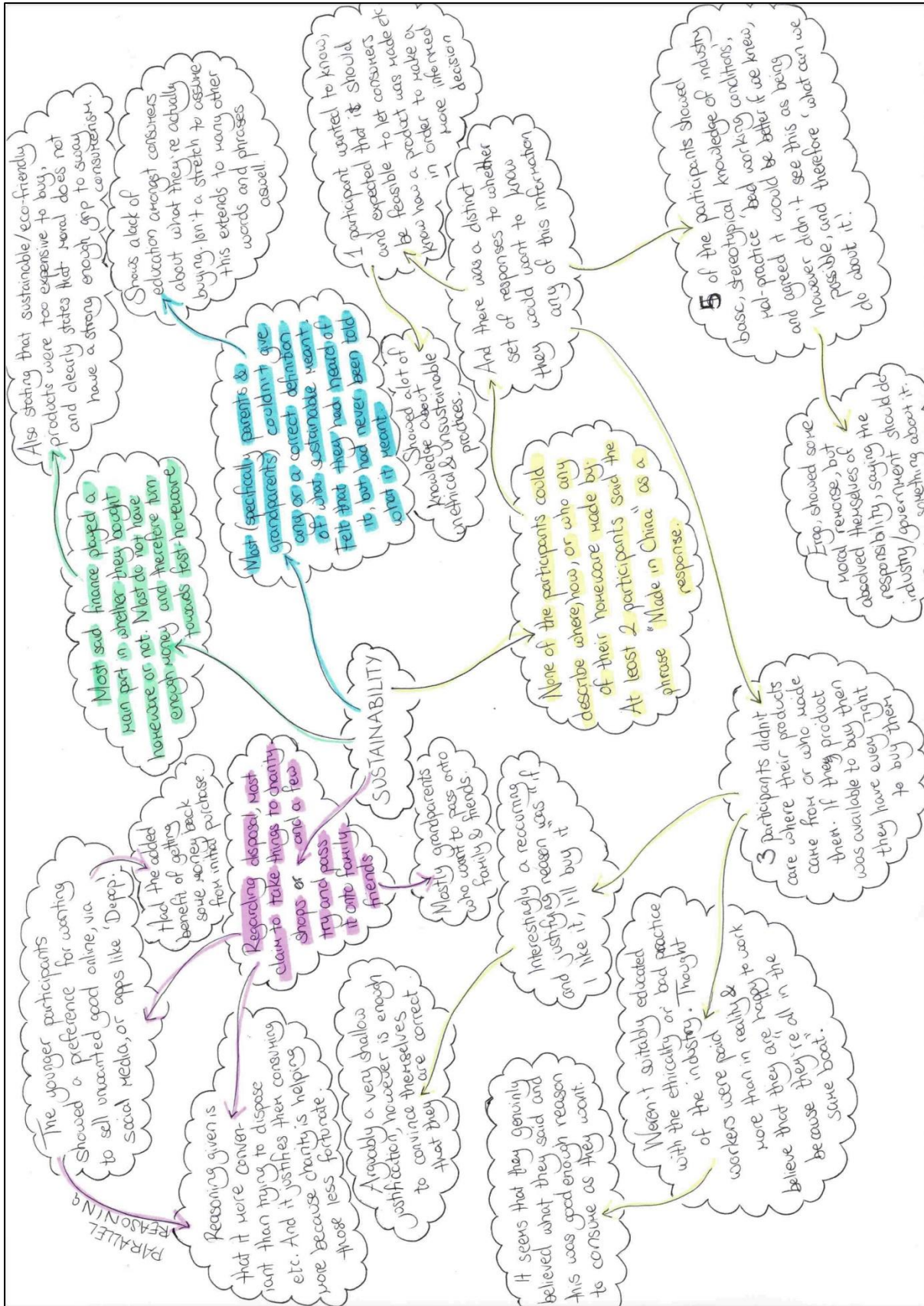
Figure 7 "Sustainability Mind map" Katie Hammonds

Figure 8 "H&M Mood board" Katie Hammonds

A p p e n d i x

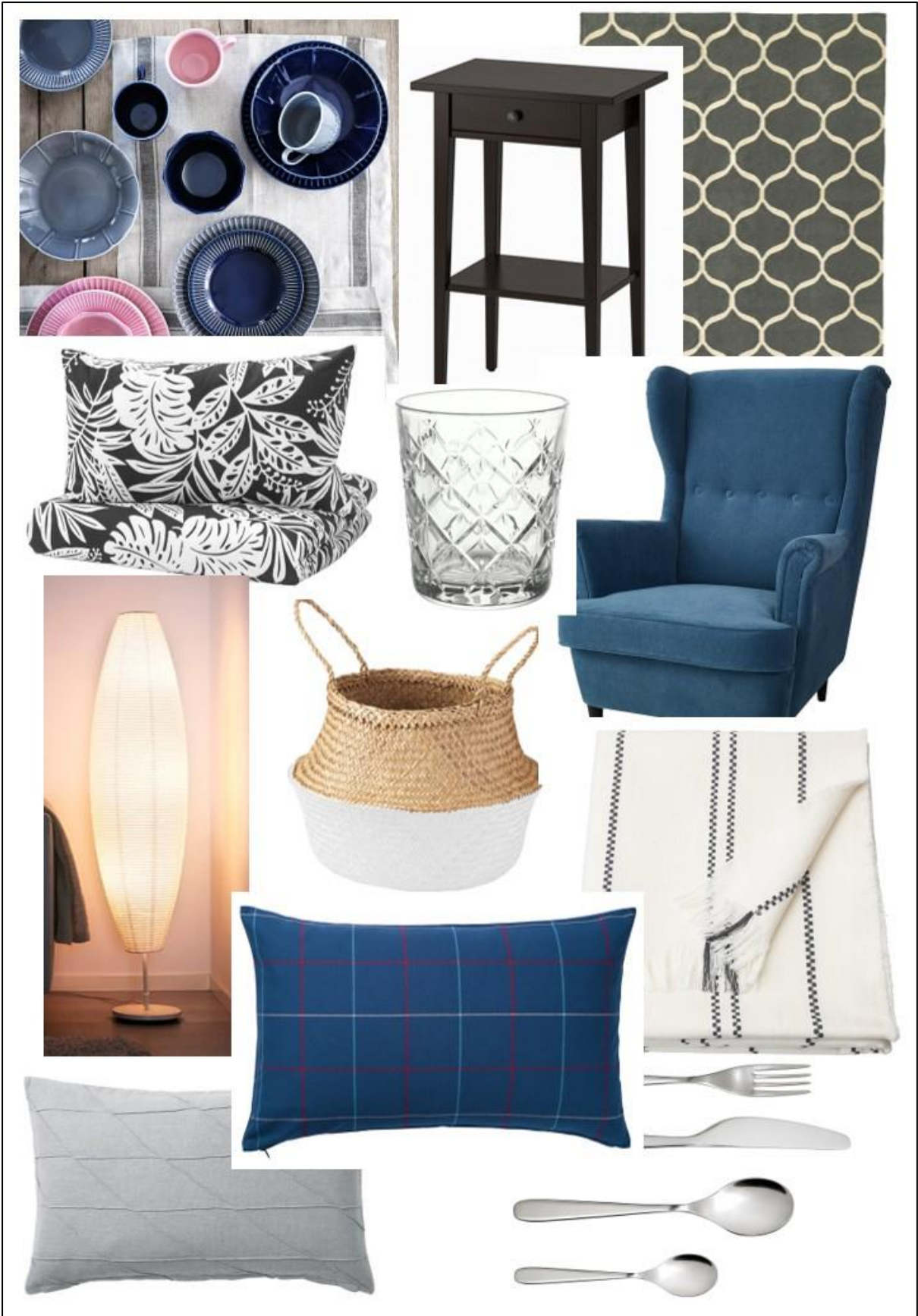*Figure 9 "Matalan Mood board" Katie Hammonds*

A p p e n d i x

Figure 10 "Ikea Mood board" Katie Hammonds

A p p e n d i x

Figure 11 "Next Moodboard" Katie Hammonds

A p p e n d i x