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Original Citation

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Consuming fast fashion and sustainability:

The role of self-concept, awareness and

financial soundness

Mohammad Sayeed Kabir

Thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
(Business School)
In partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
MA by Research

Student number: U1767373
Programme: MA by Research
Supervisor: Dr John Lever
Date: 17-01-2022

Acknowledgement:

I would like to begin by thanking Allah for being my strength and giving me with the physical capacity and knowledge to do so.

Following my God, I would like to offer my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr John Lever, for spending significant time on my support. I was on the verge of giving up at one point, but he led me like an angel and encouraged me to continue. Along with him, I would want to express my appreciation to the University of Huddersfield's Student Wellbeing staffs. They were very supportive of me at a time when I was suffering with my mental health.

Finally, I'd want to express my gratitude to my family, especially my parents, who have always encouraged me in what I have been doing. Their unwavering devotion and compassion have always motivated me to be a better human being and to strive for the greater good.

Abstract:

Purpose: To address the fashion industry's environmental sustainability, the study of the ideal social self-concept is a new notion. Social self-identification contributes to unsustainable consumption, and when it combines with consumers' awareness and consumers' purchasing power, provides a more comprehensive picture of the grounds for unsustainable fast-fashion purchase.

Design/methodology/approach: This research employs a lived experience method to understand the primary causes of fast-fashion consumption and the impediments to sustainable fashion. The research obtains its findings via semi-structured interviews with 21 fast-fashion customers and a qualitative content analysis.

Research limitations: This is an exploratory study with a small sample size and a small geographical area. However, the study provides several important findings and valuable recommendations for further research with a larger sample.

Practical implications: This study concludes that if the price differential between fast and sustainable fashion is reduced to a minimum, SF will be a huge success and more acceptable to mass customers. To compel fast-fashion merchants to raise their prices by focusing on quality and environmental security may significantly improve fashion's sustainability.

Theoretical implications/Originality/Value: This research is unique in its field since it examines customers' social, economic, and knowledge perspectives on fashion sustainability. Additionally, it develops the ideal social self-concept from a fashion sustainability viewpoint and contributes to the theory by extending the self-concept to an unsustainable consumption level.

Keywords: Sustainability, fashion, fast-fashion, sustainable-fashion, self-concept, social-self, consumer-awareness, purchasing-power.

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Chapter-1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

There is no certain information of when people first started to wear clothing; it may have been hundreds or thousands of years ago. There were no ready-to-wear garments available, and individuals were required to create their own until clothing companies began manufacturing garments for people in the mid-nineteenth century (Lancioni, 1973). The interest in fashion companies gained speed and appeal as late as the 1960s, when fashion designers and personalities (Halston, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren) became superstars. Later the global fashion business began operations in the early 2000s (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2009; Djelic and Ainamo, 1999). Historically, fashion apparel retailers competed by foreseeing customers' demands and new trends (referred to as ready-to-wear) well in advance of the actual time of consumption. Though, in recent decades, fashion retailers have competed by guaranteeing acceleration to market through their ability to quickly provide the latest fashions unveiled at red carpet events (Guercini, 2001). That is how "quick fashion," subsequently dubbed as Fast-Fashion (FF), developed, the result of an unanticipated process of reducing the time gap between production and consumption (Tapplin, 1999). Without a question, the FF sector has been a tremendous success, helping the fashion industry to reach the multi-trillion-dollar mark while also contributing to economic growth in many nations, and providing employment for millions of people (Ertekin and Atik, 2015).

While the sparkling fashion sector continues to contribute to the global economy, simultaneously, it established itself as the world's second most polluting industry by raising a number of environmental and ethical issues. Concerns about sustainability pervade the whole fashion supply chain, from raw material sourcing to product distribution. The extensive use of energy, water, chemicals and non-biodegradable fabrics leads to a rapid increase in hazardous plastic microfibers, contamination with toxic components, and massive amounts of waste. Additionally, low salary, use of child labour, abuse of workers, forced overtime, harassment of women, adverse work environments, and a lack of assurances about safety and health all directly affect those who work in this industry (Li and Zhao, 2021, P.1).

Figure 1: Fashion industry's impact on climate.

Source: Peters et al., (2021)

Figure 01 illustrates how the fashion sector has an environmental impact by increasing carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions. According to this figure, the fashion industry's CO_2 emission level rose by 30% from 1.0 to 1.3 Gt over the course of only 15 years (2000-2015). It is undeniable that the fashion industry harms the environment to a great extent, however, FF sector has the largest impact on climate change when it comes to clothes and footwear consumption. Besides, the number of jobs and income created by FF for the global economy is much smaller than its impact on climate change and water consumption (Peters et al., 2021, P.294). Thereby, Niinimaki et al., (2020, P.189) have criticised FF for their unethical business nature (creating a use-throw culture) and defined FF as "a business model based on offering consumers frequent novelty in the form of low-priced, trend-led products". They believe that the sector urgently needs a significant shift in its operations, including slower production, more sustainable supply chain practises, longer garment lifespans, and fewer purchases by the consumers.

While some academics are focusing on the sustainability of fast fashion, others advocate for the development of sustainable fashion (SF). SF is not a new idea; it originated in the 1960s as a component of the slow fashion movement in response to the industry's environmental effect (Jung and Jin, 2014). It is not a rival of FF but rather a sustainable business strategy that aims to ensure sustainability from source to final goods while maintaining fair labour conditions (Henninger et al., 2016, P. 401). People are consuming and discarding garments at a considerably quicker rate than our planet can sustain, thus it's essential to grow the SF in such a manner that it becomes a regular peoples' brand (Napier and Sanguineti, 2018). In

SF discussion, consumers are significant, because the long-term viability of clothing is heavily dependent on consumer behaviour. Consumers feel that by dressing differently, they may improve their self-identity in society, therefore they strive to seem distinctive and pleasant at all times (D'souza, 2015). Customers are unaware that their buying habits and ambitions to enhance their identity might lead to unsustainable behaviour. Therefore, analysing consumer behaviour in the purchasing of apparel is fundamental for fashion's long-term sustainability.

1.2 Research conducted to date on fashion's sustainability

Numerous academics have examined different segments of sustainability in the clothing industry. Sustainability in fashion (Li and Zhao, 2021, Fung et al., 2020, Niinimaki et al., 2020, Joy et al., 2015), sustainable product attributes (Grazzini et al., 2020), green marketing and green logos (Lee et al., 2020), sustainable consumption (Legere and Kang, 2020), organic materials (Ilaisaane, 2020), recycling-upcycling (Park and Lin, 2018), collaborative consumption (Henninger et al., 2021; Iran et al., 2019, Lang and Armstrong, 2018), sustainable design (Claxton and Kent, 2020), second-hand clothing (Hur, 2020). All of these studies have contributed significantly to the fashion industry's sustainability via their ideas and innovations.

When it comes to fashion's sustainability, FF is constantly at the forefront of discussion. Since FF is unsustainable, it destroys the environment (Peters et al., 2021; Niinimaki et al., 2020). Consumers are attracted to FF merchants because of their cheap prices (Moorhouse, 2020; Ekstrom and Salmonson, 2014) and appealing designs (Mrad et al., 2020; Joy et al., 2015; Li et al., 2014; Gabrielli, 2013). Instead of waiting for consumers to purchase when they need it, FF generates the demand (Napier and Sanguineti, 2018). Consequently, FF merchants benefit from large sales volumes (Napier and Sanguineti, 2018), resulting in higher and quicker production (Niinimaki et al., 2020; Remy et al., 2016). This vast sales volume exacerbates the stress created by post-consumer waste (Iran and Schrader, 2017; Weber et al., 2016; Ekstrom and Salmonson, 2014).

In comparison, SF is concerned with future generations, ensuring that they, too, may enjoy natural resources (Fung et al., 2021). As a result, SF manufacturers use extreme caution when sourcing materials to ensure that they are sourced responsibly and do the least amount of damage to the environment as possible (Claxton and Kent, 2020; Karaosman et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2009). Besides, to improve the fabric's longevity and adaptability, the designers in SF create modular and individualised designs (Early and Goldsworthy, 2018; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Furthermore, they establish a dependable supply chain with a high degree of traceability (Talay et al., 2020; Turker and Atluntas, 2014; Winter and Knemeyer, 2013).

Despite the significant benefits of SF, consumer ignorance and poor decision-making are preventing it from flourishing as it could. Since consideration of the social and ethical dimensions of sustainable purchasing is less important than expressing self-identity (McNeill & Venter; 2019, P. 368), customers are frequently observed skipping sustainable purchases in favour of non-sustainable spending such as FF (Joergens, 2006).

1.3 Gap in research

According to the studies above, it is evident that FF is unprincipled and detrimental to our environment and society, while SF is much more environmentally friendly and of higher quality than FF. However, it is very unfortunate that SF has less consumer acceptance and has been unable to establish a foothold in the global fashion business the way FF has (Wolfe. 2018). The principal question is why? Scholars have also investigated this question, but there is still some ambiguity in the existing literature.

1. Social-self's impact on clothing consumption: Self-concept in fashion (Niinimaki, 2010; D'Souza, 2015; D'Souza, 2006) is represented via self-identity (D'Souza, 2015; Peters et al., 2011) and is used to define the actual-self (Legere and Kang, 2020; Mcneill, 2018; Solomon and Schopler, 1982) and ideal-self (Anand and Kaur, 2018). Fashion consumers are more interested in their typical consumption to appear distinctive (McNeill and Venter; 2019) therefore the self-concept has a positive impact on the consumer lifestyle (Jeong and Ko, 2021). Consumers prioritise lifestyle or fashion to develop their social selves (McNeill and Venter, 2019), where fashion can be unrestrained with a limited lifespan (Lundblad and Davies, 2015). According to the studies, one's self-concept might lead to further

purchases; however, the true impact of the social-self on sustainability is unknown. The existing research on self-concept explains how it inspires consumers to become selective about their clothes and to strive to stand out from others. Yet there is a perception that the existing literature has a lack of explanation of social self-concept in terms of fashion's sustainability. Moreover, the influence of the social self-concept on clothing consumption and non-sustainable behaviour is not adequately investigated.

2. Lack of information: Fashion sustainability has been investigated since the early 1980s, and consumer awareness has grown over time (Jeong and Ko, 2021). Consumers nowadays are acutely aware of the harm caused by production and consumption as a result of increasing media attention (Wang et al., 2020). Contrarily, consumers are unable to translate their worries about ethical fashion practices into actual purchases due to a lack of understanding about ethical buying and fashion sustainability (Saricam et al., 2017; Hvass, 2014; Shen et al., 2012). Joy et al., (2015) reported that consumer knowledge is confined to the retail stage or is so limited that they are unable to comprehend or be inspired to support SF (Joy et al., 2015). However, consumers who are familiar with the concept of sustainability seldomly apply their knowledge into their actions (Jeong and Ko, 2021). These contradictory assertions in the literature about sustainability are so mystifying, and it does not reflect any specific situation of the consumer awareness. It's unclear if customers are aware or not, or how much information they have. Besides, the studies do not go into detail or provide any leading grounds on why customers' knowledge in the apparel business doesn't transfer into action if they are already aware.

3. The price fact: According to studies, the primary reasons for FF's popularity are its beautiful designs (Mrad et al., 2020; Li et al., 2014) and consistent new collections (Napier and Sanguineti, 2018; Remy et al., 2016). However, most researchers said that FF's cheap price and budget-friendly nature is the primary motivation to purchase it (Joung, 2014; Gabrielli et al., 2013, Chan and Wong, 2012; Sull and Turconi, 2008, Rickman and Cosenza, 2007). On the other hand, SF is dull and uninteresting (Brandao and Costa, 2021; Zhang et al., 2019; Joy et al., 2015), costly (Niinimaki et al., 2020), inaccessible (Brandao and Costa, 2021; Jacobs et al., 2018; Hassan et al., 2016; Moon et al., 2014), and time demanding (Brandao and Costa, 2021 (Connell, 2010). Scholars believe that one of SF's main drawbacks

is its cost (Niinimaki et al., 2020; Joy et al., 2015; Chan and Wong, 2012; Young et al., 2010; Joergens, 2006; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). While the cause has been recognised, no specific research has been conducted to demonstrate how product price is one of the most important factors in deciding whether or not to buy FF and how it works against SF. Additionally, the literature does not clearly address how the price of clothing influences people's buying choices or which group of people it affects and how it surpasses all ethical and moral concerns.

1.4 Aim and objectives

The purpose of this research is to discover a relationship between consumers' social-self and their final purchasing decisions. This study will investigate why SF has not succeeded like FF, despite the fact that it has a better possibility of being accepted by mainstream buyers. Furthermore, this research will look at both companies and uncover why FF customers are willing to stay with FF and make frequent purchases while not fascinated with SF. The following research objectives will help to accomplish the goals:

1. To explore the social-self-concept in relation to fashion consumption.
2. To analyse the consumer awareness and its effects on fashion sustainability.
3. To investigate the financial soundness of consumers which influences their clothing selections.

1.5 Research questions

1. How does the social-self determine fashion choices and sustainability among consumers?
2. What impact does consumer awareness have on SF and FF buying decisions?
3. How does the financial capabilities of customers influence their buying selections between SF and FF?

1.6 Research Usefulness

This research will fill the three gaps identified in the literature above. Further, the study will advance scholarly understanding and offer a new idea. The following details are given.

1. In the fashion industry, self-concept is not thoroughly addressed. The majority of study on self-concept has been on an individual's identity or actual-self's functions in clothing selection. The research on self-concept focuses mostly on how self-concept might influence an individual's or group's desire to be different, but it ignores how clothing choices and the desire to be distinctive can lead to unsustainable buying. However, this study will examine the impact of the social-self on consumer behaviour. The influence of the social-self on individual purchases can provide insight into how people shop for garments and how their purchasing habits may have an influence on the sustainability. To the author's knowledge, no study has been conducted examining the relationship between the social-self and sustainable or unsustainable fashion consumption. That is to say, the findings of this study will significantly contribute to the academic literature.

2. Presently, people are considerably more conscientious about their purchases. It is effortless to get information on a product, such as its manufacturer, legitimacy, source, ingredients, ethical information, to name a few. We anticipate fashion customers to be similarly knowledgeable about their clothing. However, academics have divergent views on fashion customers; some argue that monitoring a product's information is not always feasible. However, this study will not attempt to trace down any products' root; instead, it will examine the basic knowledge held by FF customers. The author believes that FF's basic information regarding sustainability is sufficient to discourage customers from purchasing FF or, if they cannot afford to do so, it will encourage them to act more responsibly, which is an excellent first step toward sustainability. This research will provide insight on consumers' basic comprehension of their apparel and the impact of such knowledge. This will eliminate the literature's ambiguity over customers' awareness of fashion sustainability. In addition, by detecting the level of knowledge consumers possess and determining the consequences of that knowledge, the study will be able to contribute to the literature concerning consumers awareness of fashion.

3. Existing studies highlighted the pricing discrepancy between the FF and SF. Due to SF's much better quality and ethical standards, the price is higher than that of FF; this is quite reasonable. Numerous studies assert that price significantly affects people's purchasing decisions, particularly when it comes to SF and FF, which have substantial price differentials.

This research is to establish a link between product prices and people's financial stability. Besides, depending on the income level of the individual, it will also analyse who is most impacted by the product price. Therefore, this research will contribute to the scholarly literature by interpreting why FF buyers are hesitant to pay a premium for a considerably higher-quality SF product. And will educate us as to whether their reluctance is genuine or whether circumstances are generally beyond their controls.

1.7 Project outline

The study report is organised into six major sections. The first chapter begins with an overview of the project. It briefly explains the subject's research, how the research addressed the research gap, the research value, and lastly, the study's goals and objectives. The second chapter reviews essential literature in the area and summarises the literature review and a strategy for addressing the research questions. The next chapter discusses the research methodology, which essentially describes how the study was performed. The fourth and fifth chapters, respectively, represent the collected data and the conclusions from the data. The last chapter of the paper concludes the study and makes recommendations for further research.

Chapter-2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction:

The garment industry is under increasing criticism for its environmentally destructive practises across its entire supply chain. However, the sector is growing due to the continued success of fast fashion (FF), which has failed to demonstrate its commitment to sustainable development via its environmental impact (Niinimaki et al., 2020). Despite being the least sustainable apparel brand in the market (Gupta, 2019), FF sales are growing because to its profitable cheap price and modish style, which make the customer forget about the environmental, economic, and social consequences of their clothes (Joy et al., 2015). Simultaneously, sustainable fashion (SF) aims to repair the industry's environmental and social harm while prioritising economic viability. SF is not a new idea; it developed in the 1960s in response to increasing concern about the negative impact of garment production (Jung and Jin, 2014). Despite the SF's lengthy fighting time, it is unable to achieve the same momentum as the FF (Henninger, 2016, P.400). This chapter will next examine the fashion industry's environmental footprint, the commercial strategies of both types of fashion businesses (FF and SF) and the obstacles of SF. Besides it will explore the self-concept and its effects on the fashion industry if an individual is influenced by the social-self before concluding with summary and theoretical framework.

2.2 Fast fashion's footprint:

FF never stops to allure its customers with new products reflecting the latest trend and capturing the new-fangled design (Li et al., 2014). The stylish clothing pieces make the customers check new releases routinely and buy them instantly at the full price in fear of having sold out, rather than delaying their appetite for the year-end sales (Joy et al., 2015; Mrad et al., 2020). Besides, low clothing price entices consumers to shop on a regular basis for a variation in outerwear almost every day with the same amount of money that they used to spend before on clothing but for less amount of clothes (Ekstrom and Salmonson, 2014). For instance, German adults' (Between the age of 19-69) wardrobe contains approximately 5.2 billion pieces of clothes, an average of 95 pieces of proper clothes per person, excluding small items e.g socks and undergarments (Iran & Schrader, 2017).

Therefore, the volume of post-consumer textiles is on an ongoing rise as a significant percentage of the clothes are discarded before being worn out. 62% of Swedish adults disposed of suitable clothes in the trash because consumers lose interest in using or get tired of old clothes (Ekstrom and Salmonson, 2014). Thus, the ongoing trend filling landfill with about 100 million clothing items every year (Iran & Schrader, 2017); British landfill alone consumes around £140 million worth of used clothes annually (Wrap, 2018). Landfilling is the uppermost form of managing textile waste in those western countries who do not address textile waste as toxic as they consider bulbs, tyres or batteries. Ultimately, most of the apparel waste stays in a landfill indefinitely due to their non-degradative nature because most of the FF's fabrics are made up of synthetic or blended fibres (Cotton and synthetic mixed) (Weber et al., 2016). The continuous increase in post-consumer apparel waste which is being landfilled or incinerated is pointedly the most significant challenge for the FF brands to establish themselves as a sustainable industry (EMF, 2017).

Following the growing consumption of fast fashion, the industry doubled its production in the last decade; for example, Zara and H&M are two top high street brands, respectively, offering 24 and 16 clothing collections each year and rejuvenating their aisles on a weekly basis. Hence, the overproduction for market supply causes tremendous environmental damage before products even hit the shop shelves (Napier and Sanguineti, 2018; Remy et al., 2016). For instance, in 2019 alone, 93 billion of water and about 3 million barrels of oil equivalent microplastic were used by the fashion industry and unquestionably, FF is primarily responsible (UN, 2019; Chan et al., 2019). Moreover, this deleterious industry absorbs more energy than the combined totals of international shipping and aviation, emitting 8-10% of global CO_2; liable for 20% industrial water pollution; and around 35% of microplastic oceanic pollution; and an enormous amount of solid waste (UNFCCP, 2018; Remy et al., 2016; Niinimaki et al., 2020).

FF brands consistently fail to match their demand and supply assessment, doubling the apparel industry's production over the last decade. As a result, 92 million tons of solid waste are created by overproduction every year from around 100 billion clothing pieces (Niinimaki et al., 2020; Napier and Sanguineti, 2018). Subsequently, FF retailers undertake frequent and severe season-ending clearance sales to eliminate these overproduced pieces (Wang et al., 2020), and some FF retailers destroy the remaining unsold pieces (Remy et al., 2016).

2.3 FF and their customers' perception:

The fashion industry doubled its production over the last decade because of its high sales volume and the credit for those increased sales go mostly to the FF brands for their massive manufacturing and sales. In 2017, H&M, the top listed FF brand, solely captured 1.4% of the international clothing and footwear market. The current market expansion and acquired market share proportion of the FF companies indicate that an enormous amount of clothes is being used and disposed of (Fung et al., 2021). FF business is based on the new design and price, and many FF brands outshone the non-FF brands by their approach. The industry is thriving by charming consumers by offering quickly adaptable trend and a variety of options to choose from. Therefore, consumers buy their on trend clothes without any hardship and with less financial cost (Gabrielli et al., 2013).

Presently, consumers do not buy something for the reason alone that they need it; instead, the FF allows them to make various selections and plenty of purchases. But unfortunately, FF has proven to be a short blast of excitement without any prolonged reward (Napier and Sanguineti, 2018). Additionally,, FF consumers can make mistakes in their clothing purchase since it does not have any high value to regret (Gabrielli et al., 2013). Identically, the bargaining price allowing the purchasers to fill their wardrobe with random pieces of clothes that either end up in landfill or incinerated after a short period (Iran & Schrader, 2017). Beyond that, the FF business model shifts the customers from the traditional fashion system (occasional or essential shopping) to weekly shopping even several times a week in many cases by their perpetual revival proposals (Gabrielli et al., 2013). Iran & Schrader (2017) blame high street clothing brands for customers' this type of negligent conduct. However, Hoffman (2007) shift the blame to faster trend and information sharing system around the globe that triggered fulfilling the demand with affordable choices and a requirement to shop more frequently. In contrast, Pedersen et al., (2018) point the finger at the downstream customers rather than the upstream supply chain for using-throwing behaviour and hindering fashion sustainability. Solomon and Rabolt (2004) resonate the same by saying that sustainability is simply not a feature to consider when purchasing attires. According to a research participant of Joy et al., (2015):

"Just recently I purchased a cocktail dress for my friend's wedding party. I saw a similar dress at Marc Jacobs—a velvet beaded dress—but I bought this one at Zara for a fraction of the price. It may not be premium quality, but it is a trendy piece and very affordable!".

Similarly, people who are so worried about environmental sustainability and engage themselves with recycling plastics are concerned about using the washing machine, using hang-dry instead of a dryer, stopping buying books, and continuing e-learning to conserve electricity. However, they do not consider ethics while buying clothes with no long-standing value. These attitudes justify Bonini and Oppenheim's (2008) statement on consumers' behaviour and sustainability:

"Around the world, there is a great deal of concern about environmental issues, but when it comes to actually buying green goods, words and deeds often part ways."

Moreover, Gabrielli et al., (2013) outline, consumers are aware of the quality of the products and their temporariness, but most of the percentage is not concerned as long as they are getting an unusual or different style to renew their wardrobe with new lines. As an explanation, customers ignore the quality of lenses while buying a pair of 5 euros sunglasses; instead, they are happy to add up an extra pair in their collection, which is trivial and going to be used infrequently. Apart from that, Joy et al., (2015) suggest that customers' social and environmental solidarity cannot minimise the usage of fast fashion. In addition, customers are still growing their positive attitude about FF, although many are aware of the industry's consequences and challenges. Researchers further suggest several reasons for preferring the FF over the Sustainable, circular or slow fashion. Firstly, consumers' preference of having the current trend's clothes almost every week at reasonable price overshadowed the unsustainable pattern of the business (Kim et al., 2013). Secondly, present consumers are much aware of FF production and consumption damage due to increased media coverage. However, consumer awareness is mostly limited at the retail stage (Wang et al., 2020) because the industry's highly fragmented and sophisticated supply chain nature makes it tricky for average customers to understand the actual destruction (Park & Kim, 2016). Thirdly, consumers who express their solidarity for the environment and society against the high street fashion market often contrarily involved themselves in buying low-priced, stylish and poor-quality fashion items, resulting from the hanker for the latest taste (McNeill and Moore, 2015).

Other than that, miserable quality, low price and continual new clothes influence the consumers' post purchasing behaviour. Though there is no precise data for how much longer a consumer holds or uses attires (Morgan and Birtwistlr, 2009), FF evidently fosters a wasteful culture (Chau, 2012) by creating non-essential solid waste (Weber et al., 2016). After using a clothing item once or twice, abandoning them is so common among shoppers since they are not worried to throw away a piece of fabric that is not costly and loses its dazzle after some uses. (Joung, 2014). Although some consumers show their solidarity by donating or recycling, many of them are not aware of the value of their clothes as a fibre to the recycling industry and continually enhancing the waste stream (Weber et al., 2016). Therefore, post-consumer waste is fuelling the total textile waste where horrendously 85% of textile waste is ending up in landfill despite being 100% recyclable (most fashion pieces) (Weber et al., 2016)

2.4 Fashion retailer's business policies:

The fashion industry has significantly changed over the last three decades due to the global supply chain and the digitised market with the direct consumer-retailer platform (Brydges, 2021, P. 292). Because of the growing interest, several academic studies have focused on understanding whether or not low-cost locations could support the best possible supply chain configurations since fashion companies have profited from moving their manufacturing to low-cost countries. However, the exploitation of resources in foreign sourcing countries often results in many environmental and social problems and apparel companies became progressively more concerned about the harmful exposure they could face with a limited supply chain transparency (Arrigo, 2020). As a result, fashion companies are integrating sustainability in their production lines in response to the growing sustainable crisis through the development corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Puspita and Chae, 2021, p.133). Regardless, the apparel industry's sustainability and reporting are titled "greenwashing" because of the discrepancy between talk and practice (Truant et al., 2017).

2.4.1 Fast-fashion's business approach:

2.4.1.1 Shopping around the world

The FF industry is thriving because of quick prototyping, small bundles with many items, and swift transportation (Joy et al., 2015). However, it confronts fair trade, appropriate wage, child labour, ethical sourcing, working conditions, and other human rights issues in a negative way. (Fulton & Lee, 2013). The labour-intensive market outsourced mainly from the countries where infrastructures are minimal, labour costs are cheap, and governments are so useful to the businesses that they can manipulate the enforced rules and regulations. Besides, the market often witnesses high street companies shifting their sourcing from country to country for the exchange rate fluctuation and labour cost advantage (Taplin, 2014).

2.4.1.2 High volume with low production cost

The continuous enhanced materials' price forces other brands and industries to raise their prices to manage the situation. In contrast, FF's principal market strategy provides low prices to the customers and maintains cut-throat competition in the market for the shrinking production cost. The big-names of the FF brands who are publicising sustainability are conversely advertising the latest items to the billions of customers. Concisely, retailers benefit from the enormous sales volume by maintaining a cheap price (Niinimaki and Hassi, 2011; Dauvergne & Lister, 2013). Consequently, maintaining quality and high-volume production is a continual challenge since the lean supply chains have higher efficiency while keeping the cost low despite not guaranteeing quality (Dauvergne & Lister 2013). Moreover, Napier and Sanguineti (2018) criticise FF retailers' sustainable measures (using fewer resources) in production, while the overall consumption and production are intensifying. They further called it a deception since the companies are stepping two steps backwards while moving one step forward.

2.4.1.3 Revival of the store shelves

The highly competitive structure of the industry pressurises companies to minimise the costs and constantly challenge their ability to offer the "latest" possible craze to the

customers (Turker & Altuntas, 2014). As time has passed, companies have achieved the strategy to lead consumers' behaviours instead of meeting the consumers' demands (Gerard & Cachon, 2011). The new dynamism of the industry has compelled high street retailers to bring operational changes in their supply chain. This comprises seeking low cost, elevating versatility in designs, speeding up the deliveries to defend the rising number of fashion seasons (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2010), and regularly replenishing the store with new items (Joy et al., 2015). Moreover, FF companies are obliged to obtain the immediate demand-supply because of their business structure (Torres et al., 2017). To accomplish these policies, they often compromise human rights, labour practices, and environmental protection (Choi et al., 2014; Li et al., 2014).

2.4.1.4 Leading the consumer behaviour

High Street retailers' market strategy switches the consumers from 'buying less by buying better' to 'buying more by buying cheap' (Iran & Schrader, 2017), causing an escalating sustainable concern over on high rise in production and consumption (Turker & Altuntas, 2014). In addition, the miserable quality and the short functional life pattern curtail the potentiality of reusing and recycling the products after some wash (Iran & Schrader, 2017; Joy et al., 2015). This shorter life-cycle of garments is believed to be the marketers' dilemma, to reduce the span of an item for creating a persistent hunger for more clothes (Napier and Sanguineti, 2018).

2.4.1.5 Pressurising the suppliers

Fashion retailers' substantial proportion (60% -90%) of expense goes to its supply chain. Therefore, considering the current FF market situation, attaining a reduction in the production line is significant to sustain the business (Niinimaki and Hassi, 2011). However, to lessen the making cost, FF companies embrace cheap unethical resourcing and compromise with labour supports and quality controlTo achieve the target cost, FF retailers suppress their suppliers by offering a lower price than they used to and therefore forcing them to curtail the production cost (Torres et al., 2017). Moreover, since there are no exceptions, suppliers can disobey the retailers if any cash discount is demanded (Dauvergne & Lister, 2013) because of the fear of losing the contracts if they fail to comply with their

unethical terms (Taplin, 2014). As a result, suppliers either bankrupt themselves or subtract the labour facilities to balance the cutting cost. However, retailers state that pressing suppliers delivers better environmental results, particularly reducing waste and increasing efficiency. In contrast, Dauvergne & Lister (2013) argue that restricting suppliers choices directs them to select illegal routes as worse as tax evasion, employee exploitation, the substitution of poor-quality materials, and deception in audit reports. In addition, middlemen firms and sub-contracting processes often known as 'shadow companies' (Dauvergne & Lister, 2013) take the operational knowledge as far away that in many cases, the retailers are not aware of the place where the products are being made, which obscures the accountability of the company and traceability to estimate the sustainability of the FF industry (Taplin, 2014).

2.4.1.6 Green marketing/washing

Walmart's senior director of sustainability characterised sustainability as a business tactic, not a strategy for charity work (Dauvergne and Lister 2013). Like other industries, fashion is no different from using sustainability as a business strategy. FF industry is under constant surveillance because of its impulsive environmental considerations and other social challenges. The growing concern regarding sustainability is compelling fashion managers to work on rebuilding the public image and change the public opinions in their favour (Liu et al., 2020, P.1). Although, some green measures are taken, such as ethical sourcing and using organic fibres (Wolfe, 2018), recycling the fibres, collecting old clothes in stores (Weetman, 2017). However, it is often evident that FF companies use the environmental crisis as a marketing agenda rather than delivering any significant change in their business model or a process called 'greenwashing'. (Raushch and Kopplin, 2021).

According to Lyon and Maxwell (2011), greenwashing is a deceptive marketing or ethical claim of companies' environmental credentials to gain a positive image and promote wider acceptance. FF organisations spew positive fake information to improve their image; besides, no consumers can be aware of the impact of products completely without thorough research. Therefore, detrimental information is concealed, and false-positive news spreads (Rausch and Kopplin, 2021). FF providers use the ethical tag as an addition to

newlines in their collection but not as an essence of the business. For instance, fashion brands like H&M and Zara both have sustainable collections; however, these are in addition to their regular unsustainable FF business. Furthermore, the company provides no clear evidence of the ratio or quantity of their sustainable and non-sustainable materials. Mehar (2021) denounced FF companies for not maintaining an acknowledged standard and failing to consider sustainability across the entire process.

2.4.2 Sustainable fashion retailers' business approach

Sustainable fashion is an exercise that brings sustainable development and fashion under the same roof. The SF industry aims to develop their products to achieve the environmental virtue and social rights. SF not only considers the products; it pays attention to every aspect related to the sourcing, production, shipping and products' end life. In broader sense, sustainability in fashion deals with all the dependent or independent variables of environmental, social and financial means relating to the products. Furthermore, SF reviews all of its stakeholders' benefits, animal welfare and affluence of the future generations (Fung et al., 2021).

It generates deliberate consumer and pushes fashion retailers to carry out a sustainable approach in every sector of their business. In addition, sustainability reveals the current environmental, social, and economical requirements balanced with the necessities of the upcoming generations (Wang et al.,2019). Therefore, many clothing design organisations have been practising environmental sustainability by re-designing their business measures and building proper supportability programs (Choi & Li, 2015). Besides, big retailers are engaging themselves in sustainable solutions not because they are so concerned about sustainability, but the sustainable tag provides them with an advantage over their competitors (Gupta, 2019). It helps them to attract new customers and retain their existing ones; therefore, a high sales volume is doubling the profit (Dauvergne & Lister, 2013).

2.4.2.1 Ethical sourcing and recycling materials

In SF design, materials play a significant role and designers are compelled to use organic or eco-friendly materials. The material selection is the prime concern for the SF industry since

all materials are totalled to estimate the environmental effect (Huang et al., 2009). Hence, organic and sustainable raw materials can minimise the carbon footprint of this polluting industry (Claxton and Kent, 2020, P.3). Besides, different apparel companies have already adopted recycling materials (closed-loop to keep the fibres in the system), water-based adhesive and biological textile production in their process. For instance, Patagonia, a clean, sustainable explorer, uses 100% cotton in all products (Karaosman et al., 2017, P.19). Another brand, Eileen Fisher, embraced responsible wool sourcing and became the first brand certified to the Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) in 2018 (Eileen Fisher, 2021). Other than the genuine SF brands, some non-sustainable fashion companies started sustainable product lines and carry out partial ethical sourcing rather than making all their items in a green way. Notably, H&M uses 11.4% of sustainable and organic cotton in its product; Marks and Spencer (M&S) runs a completely recycled materials-based suit line (Karaosman et al., 2017).

2.4.2.2 Innovation in design and manufacturing

Fashion offers something new for every trend; therefore, it is consistently urged to produce unique designs (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Design can deliver success to a business, but it has an immense impact on the environment too. Consequently, SF products are marginally different from conventional fashion designs. Since the design's objectives are to make a functional cloth that can keep the natural resources (Raw materials) active for a longer time and recycle the fibres after the end of useful product life (Claxton and Kent, 2020, P.2; Fung et al., 2021). Therefore, sustainable designers focus on the firmness of the product to sell an item numerous time in order to retain the value of the materials by making upcycling possibilities (Early and Goldsworthy, 2018).

Furthermore, to increase a products' reliability, designers can follow different global standards such as ISO 14001 and certified materials (Fung et al., 2021). Besides, effective pattern cutting and minimising detrimental chemical use during the production process (dyeing and finishing) are essential for diminishing the destruction (Claxton and Kent, 2020). Moreover, innovative suppliers with modern equipment and techniques (plasma

technology, 3D prototyping, smart textiles) assist in accomplishing the retailers' objectives (Wei, 2017; Fung et al., 2021).

2.4.2.3 Traceable supply chain

SF manufacturers aim to establish a sustainable supply chain from the collecting process to delivering the end goods (Winter and Knemeyer, 2013). Hence, retailers collaborate with their suppliers to emplace sustainability's three dimensions, emphasising People, Planet and Profit (Talay et al., 2020 P.605). However, a substantial number of fashion suppliers are from developing countries and continue to work in a poor environment and miserable working conditions (Nayak et al., 2019). For instance, Zara has been criticised for not taking responsibility for its supplier AHA's (90 % of product manufacturer of Brazilian Zara) poor working practices. Consequently, the mother company Inditex has 52 alleged charges by the Brazilian government for sweatshop conditions (Burgen and Phillips, 2011).

Moreover, the contract and sub-contract policies (Known as multi-tier supply chain) (Mejias et al., 2019, P.143) established in the supplier countries create a complex and nearly untraceable chain to measure the true cost of fashion. Thereby, responsible retailers commenced assigning their time and labour for ensuring standard quality in their whole network chain (Turker and Atluntas, 2014; Nayak et al., 2019). Additionally, fashion buyers are developing a management system for tracing and building lengthy contract periods for better collaboration with suppliers and training teams to improve a sustainable supply chain's performance (Mejias et al., 2019, P.144). Besides, sustainable garments suppliers invest in green energy, research and techniques to achieve a higher profit by obtaining a green tag and additional contracts from the SF retailers (Talay et al., 2020 P.606).

2.4.2.4 Operational certification

Sustainable attire brands have introduced the green supply chain method (GSCM) for better sustainable manufacturing. GSCM promotes a positive environmental mind in every stage of the production process which starts with the designing and sourcing until the product's end life after a functional use (Puspita and Chae, 2021, p.134). Along with the green actions, a sustainability report facilitates a business to assess its performance, determine the

objectives and adapt to any operational change for a more sustainable production asserted by Global Report Initiative (GRI). Presently, many companies publish their self-assessed report, which third parties may not necessarily verify (Goncalves and Silva, 2021), since guidance on different concerns like social responsibility (ISO 26000) is still voluntary and do not authenticate the attempts. However, companies have the choice to voluntarily audit themselves to certify different international standards on the environmental management structure (ISO 14001, European public regulation EMAS) to verify the improvement and assessment of ecological impact (ISO, 14001; Goncalves and Silva, 2021). In fashion supply chains and retailing, currently LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), a score-based certification is widely adopted. Moreover, in some countries, for instance, France ruled on the compulsory disclosure of all stock exchange listed companies about the social and environmental impacts of operational activities in annual reports (Goncalves and Silva, 2021, P.11). Regardless, fashion organisations are accused of using green certificates as a marketing strategy for creating a brand reputation with different green industrial awards (Dauvergne & Lister, 2013).

2.5 Self-concept in fashion:

Consumer impressions of themselves, as well as the amount to which a product represents important components of a consumer's self-image, identities, and values, are referred to as self-concept (GoldSmith et al., 1996).

Fashion reflects people's personality thus, new clothes are not only for the self-satisfaction but fashion creates the external appearance (Legere and Kang, 2020, P.3). It is evident from the research that, consumers mainly buy clothes that suit or increase their self-concept (Niinimaki, 2010; D'Souza, 2015; D'Souza, 2006). Legere and Kang, (2020) defines self-concept as the consumers' personal impression of themselves and develop the self-image and individuality by the positive involvement of the products. Besides, consumers prioritize their self-identity therefore, their actions are rooted to defend and improve individualism. Out of the 4 dimensions of self-concept (actual, ideal, social and ideal-social) (According to Sirgy 1982, as cited in Anand and Kaur, 2018, Legere and Kang, 2020) most research focused on actual-self (how they see themselves) and ideal self (how they would like to see themselves) (Anand and Kaur, 2018).

Self-concept is the integration of socially acceptable ideals, which then play a critical role in developing motivations for essential activities (Seong-hee, 2017). Individuals develop buying inclinations in order to maintain the constancy of their self-esteem, ideas, and actions, which serves as a method for establishing a person's self-concept. As a result, because modern customers like expressing themselves via fashion, the entire purchasing process has evolved into a technique of determining each customer's values and lives (Jeong and Ko, 2021).

Self-identity has a positive relationship with purchasing behaviour especially for the young generation who desire to develop an identity and social-self-image (Au et al., 2007). Individuals are considered to be driven by self-presentation in order to control the perceptions others make of them, and identity is recognised to be formed within social roles. Additional purchases are required to fulfil these roles, which might be prompted by internal and emotional factors such as esteem and status requirements (Stryker and Burke, 2000). Since, one's possessions represent one's identity, therefore, an increasing number of individuals are eager to acquire more clothing in order to grow and express their identities (McNeill and Venter, 2019).

As reported by Jacobs et al., (2018), instead of the common interest, fashion is determined by personal interest (Social status). And since, fashion has emotional and social connections apart from the functional benefits, therefore, self and social identities influence the buying choices. The social-self of consumers represents how they wish to be seen by others. As a result, distinguishing purchasing and expanding one's collection might help one achieve or grow their social identity by making them stand out amongst their peers.
Personal requirements frequently take precedence over sustainability when purchasing clothing (Joergens, 2006), **a**s the social-identity process progresses, the SF becomes less fashionable and undesirable. In consequence, while building their social-self, customers may develop a negative attitude toward sustainability (Ozdamar & Atik, 2015)**.**

2.6 Consumers' involvement with Sustainable fashion:

2.6.1 Sustainable fashion

The purpose of the sustainability in fashion is to ameliorate the standard of life by providing all the necessary needs while considering pros and cons throughout the generations along with the minimized environmental impact (Ertekin and Atik, 2014, P.53). Sustainable development in fashion is indispensable since, the world is swallowing and wrecking clothing at a much higher rate than the earth can handle, yet there is no conscientious response from the fashion retailers (Napier and Sanguineti, 2018). Additionally, the irresponsible consumer's desire for regular fresh tastes in dress, is intensifying the problem with their unethical purchase and buying-throwing behaviour (Joy et al., 2015). Ertekin and Atik, (2014, P.56) asserted some consumers will continue to buy new attires despite being aware of the reality that it opposes their own interest.

However, fashion companies are trying to come out from the traditional linear model due to the severe criticism and an increasing awareness of ethical fashion and related environmental issues among customers (Wagner et al., 2019). Moreover, responsible consumers are inclined to a circular atmosphere (Strahle, 2017); eco-friendly fabrics and further investment in research and development to generate more sustainable alternatives in fashion (D'Souza, 2006). Subsequently, fashion brands are compelled to review environmental concerns for a sustainable world from the beginning of the product development phase (Luttropp and Lagerstedt, 2006).

SF has emerged as a substitute for the disastrous FF because of the intensified demand for change within the fashion industry, following the consumers' understanding of the effect of their clothing selection on nature (Brandao and Costa, 2021, P.3). It refers to a fashion estate that will create sustainability in the manufacturing and consuming process without harming the environment (Kim and Oh, 2020, P. 03) for the long-term welfare of the earth and yet offers the best taste for fashion lovers. It balances the planet's confined resources for the continual development of our society while maintaining production growth simultaneously (Fung et al., 2021). The majority of the SF materials are sourced from recycled or organic materials (Kim and Oh, 2020, P. 03). Moreover, the SF concept does not

restrict the process only in primary sourcing or production procedures; besides, it addresses fair trade (Kim and Oh, 2020, P. 03), slow fashion, eco-business, circularity in the industry, energy efficiency and using solar energy, animal rights, labour rights and a positive work environment (Grazzini et al., 2021, Legere and Kang, 2020). SF operates to maximise the alternative options (repair, recycle, reuse, upcycle) rather than buying new pieces every time (Jung et al., 2020).

2.6.2 Consumer involvement

In general, concerned consumers buy environmentally-friendly clothes made from eco-friendly or recycled fibres under a suitable work environment or second-hand or sharing platform sources. Besides, consumers' post-purchase behaviour should be in accordance with sustainable practices by wearing as longer time possible, donating, reusing or recycling (Armstrong et al., 2016, P. 421). Nonetheless, consumers are worried and empathic towards the natural environment (Kozar and Connell, 2013). Moreover, many research participants of Mcneill and Moore's (2015) study agreed on humans' harmful nature and are aware that the continuation of their incorrect conduct will bring a severe natural catastrophe. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic situation compelled the consumers to be more committed to sustainable buying. Mckinsey & company revealed that more than half of the consumers (among 2000 British and German consumers) had changed their lifestyle to lessen the environmental impact, and presently newness in the attires is the least important factor in fashion shopping (Granskog et al., 2021; Stancu et al., 2020).

In contrast, the majority of consumers' concerns and all their affection for the environment is not transformed into actions when it comes to fashion purchasing (Rausch and Kopplin, 2021, Armstrong et al., 2016, P. 420). Many consumers, especially young buyers, acknowledge that despite their devotion towards eco-fashion, the lack of modernity demotivates them to buy sustainable pieces of clothing available in the market (Joy et al., 2015). Zhang et al. (2019) asserted that consumers are more inclined to other functional green products like energy-saving equipment than ethically sourced green clothing products. As a result, sustainability is often overlooked by fashion consumers (Brandao and Costa, 2021, P.4). Further, sustainable fashion consumers' behaviour demonstrates that

environmental concern and social responsibility alone cannot persuade buyers on their purchasing decisions. Instead, research indicates more influential drivers during the purchase process: lack of awareness about the products (Rausch and Kopplin, 2021), negative perception of performing worse than the usual product (Bonini and Oppenheim, 2008), insufficient environmental consideration (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009), distrust about the superiority and greenness, encountering the high price (Bonini and Oppenheim, 2008) and finally limited products (Joergens, 2006; Yee et al., 2016).

2.7 Sustainable Fashion barriers:

2.7.1 Globalisation and Economic growth

Globalization led to the current practice of acquiring cheap products from different corners of the world by using, or exploiting, the local environment and its people (Ertekin & Atik, 2015). The fashion industry has earned the 'extremely fragmented' title because of their business policies; using the resources of diverse countries and shipping the manufactured products to locations all over the earth. Under no circumstances it is possible to assure and preserve the standards in supply chain without significant effort to lower the intermediaries and develop the transparency (Mihm, 2010). Therefore, recognising the green and non-green product is quite a challenge for the consumers. Customers often express their doubts on the green labelling (which are in fact sustainable) and end up with buying products that have no green value (Wolfe. 2018). The fashion industry has accomplished the multi trillion-dollar landmark with the expansion of FF business. FF helps to boost economic growth and create jobs for millions of people. Hence, there is an impression that sustainable development in fashion will slow down the current surge of the economy. And FF operators are most likely to continue the current trend to substantiate the economic growth (Ertekin and Atik, 2015).

2.7.2 Economic factors

SF demands more price than the regular fashion (Young et al., 2010; Niinimaki et al., 2020). Consumers want to get the maximum value for their money therefore, higher awareness and environmental concern is obligatory to transform the desire to buy sustainable clothes into

actually buying them. Moreover, consumers' economical condition is a significant factor in buying SF. Different variables like shortage of money, low-cost product inclination and affordability; regulate consumers' buying patterns. If consumers are too poor to buy the sustainable clothes, then the consideration of ethical issues and buying SF is impractical (Ertekin and Atik, 2015, P.61). It is also evident from the research that, in spite of being aware of child labour and natural harm 30% of consumers give the priority on clothing price rather than the ethics (Iwanow et al., 2005 as cited in Harris et al., 2016). Accordingly, SF has to confront the consumers' general tendency to acquire fashion at an affordable price (Young et al., 2010).

2.7.3 Ignorance of fashion industry

According to Dunlap and Jones (2002, as cited in Cruz and Manata, 2020), being enlightened about environmental problems, attempting to resolve them or having a least an inclination to be a part of the solution refers to an environmental concern. Park and Lee, (2021) believe, consumers with higher environmental knowledge and fashion chains' information, apparently show more positive attitudes. Conversely, a large proportion of the fashion consumer is unaware about the dark side of the glamorous clothing business. Additionally, segregated resourcing, manufacturing and retailing does not help to portray a better picture of the devastation. Goodwin (2012) opines that consumers frequently fail to understand the intensive value of the clothes, since they do not endure any immediate consequences. Thereby, the unawareness of the garment industry's harmful nature is considered to be one of the prime barriers of SF (of the Harris et al., 2016, Bonini and Oppenheim, 2008, Goworek et al., 2012). Besides, many FF consumers are not enlightened properly about the SF and carry the misconception that SF pieces are mostly dull, old-fashioned and uncomfortable (Ozdamar & Atik, 2015). However, Niinimäki and Hassi, (2011) argue that present SF offers new designs and innovation brought customization and modularity in clothes. Thus, Kim & Ko (2012) suggest the SF retailers to educate their consumers regarding sustainable development and eliminate the misconceptions. Hassan et al., (2013) denoted that customers' unawareness effects the buying preference and impels them to compromise with unethical clothing purchases. However, Goworek et al., (2012) disputed that, clothing choices are specified by the consumer's own personal and economic considerations. Moreover, ample information

does not assist customers to calculate the quality and longevity in the moment of purchasing rather they are habituated of buying clothes by its feel and reputation of the brand.

The apparel industry should use the information in this study to develop more effective strategies for educating consumers (Kim & Ko, 2012).

2.7.4 Unavailability

Research on sustainable consumption suggests that consumers are perhaps inclined to buy SF products if they experience the convenience in sustainable shopping with available products (young et al., 2010). However, in reality, consumers encounter the inexpedient situation while performing sustainable shopping. Limited products, accessibility to ethical items, short of sizes and uncomfortable fits are considered to be the significant barriers of SF (Brandao and Costa, 2021; Jacobs et al., 2018; Hassan et al., 2016). Moreover, many consumers do not know where they can find SF; no big shop names or the existence of any local shops may force back the consumers to return to the high streets' chain (Moon et al., 2014, Jacobs et al., 2018). Barbarossa and Pelsmacker (2016 as cited in Bradao and Costa, 2021) uncovered that, unavailable products are destroying the sustainable consumers' purchase intention and affecting their pro-environmental behaviour as well. Since SF limitations allow the consumers to buy FF, consequently it is lowering their general sustainability concerns (Bradao and Costa, 2021), although Connell (2010) disputed that, enormous collections of SF are available online and provide quick access to the consumers.

2.8 Summary: Consumer attitude and awareness confines the sustainability in fashion:

Sustainability in fashion is nothing new but the demand is on the rise because fashion's supply chain and sourcing transparency is growing (Byrd and Su, 2020). Therefore, today's consumers should much more aware of the detrimental effect of fashion and garment retailers, particularly FF retailers, should confront stiff challenges to alleviate their carbon and environmental footprints. Regardless, FF continues to rise with the high volume of sales, for instance, H&M enjoyed a 11% sales growth in 2019 with a gross profit of SEK

122,453 million, before it had been hit by Covid-19 pandemic (H&M group report, 2019). Researcher has discovered several obstacles of the fashion industry to obtain sustainability (Brandao and Costa, 2021; Ertekin and Atik, 2015; Harris et al., 2015; Hassan et al., 2013). Research suggests that consumer awareness can persuade retailers to attain a higher sustainability (Qiao et al., 2021, P.776) and lack of it frequently acts as an obstacle (Goworek et al., 2012; Bonini and Oppenheim 2008). Retailers are coming forward to reduce their damage and attempting sustainability in their operations; for instance, using organic fibre (Wolfe, 2018), recycling the fibres, collecting old clothes (Weetman, 2017). Besides, consumers today are more educated and aware of the products and their impact on nature with the support of online and social media and sustainable promotion (Granskog et al., 2021). Even so, consumers' sustainable buying intentions do not translate into actual purchase (Ertekin and Atik, 2015; Young et al., 2012). Furthermore, many end users of fashion are not aware of the fashion sustainability (Rathinamoorth, 2018). Therefore, it arises two preliminary questions:

(i) Why are consumers not aware of the harmful nature of the clothes they purchase? and

(ii) Why are efforts of retailers to promote sustainable fashion and educate consumers not reaching mass consumers?

Consumers economic power is substantial in achieving sustainability since SF prices are higher than the normal fashion charge (Niinimaki et al., 2020). SF managers explained that SF price are high because of their verification, supply chain traceability (Moon et al., 2014) and organic materials (Karaosman et al., 2017). Besides, it is difficult to explain the reason behind the high price to the consumer (Moon et al., 2014). However, little research has been conducted on the consumers ability to buy those high-priced products, although some economic barriers; shortage of money, low-cost product inclination and affordability (Ertekin and Atik, 2015; Moon et al., 2014), price sensitivity (Brandao and Costa, 2021) have been detected. Nonetheless, the maximum number of fashion consumers' (low to middle income people) (Gazzola et al., 2020; Lavile, 2019) buying power and income has been overlooked in the literature. Consumers may engage themselves with non-ethical buying despite being aware and knowledgeable enough to distinguish between favourable and unfavourable shopping. Therefore, the fashion issue will not be resolved unless this

question is answered; if SF is not being provided at the affordable price-range for the maximum number of purchasers, how can it establish itself in the fashion market?

Finally, people buy clothes for satisfying personal desires and to establish their social identity (Jacobs et al., 2018). Research on self-identity (actual-self and ideal-self) in fashion (Anand and Kaur, 2018, Legere and Kang, 2020) has revealed how the identity influences the consumer's buying behaviour. But, how the social-self affects the fashion choices is still indistinct. Thereby, the social appeal and peer-pressure inducement on fashion consumers who practice unfair buying will expand the self-concept theory (Sirgy 1982).

2.9 A practical guideline to addressing the research questions

Based on the previous discussions and interviews conducted with fashion buyers, the author will briefly outline the guidelines utilised to answer the research questions. The study aims to discover the obstacles of the FF buyers to becoming more sustainable and evaluate the reason behind the SF brands' struggle to establish themselves as a household name. This study adds to the body of prior empirical research on the sustainability of fast fashion consumers using a variety of data sources. The primary source of data for this study is qualitative data derived from a mix of previous literature and semi-structured interviews with FF consumers of varying ages and occupations. Numerous sources will shed light on FF customers' purchasing patterns and their inability to transform into a more sustainable and responsible buyer. Diverse perspectives will be examined, including the FF customers' frequent purchases, their purchasing habits, economic conditions, and fashion expertise; all of these factors will contribute to the development of a comprehensive picture of the FF sector and its consumers' sustainability. The author has mentioned three research questions below and has resolved to address them.

Research question (1): How does the social-self determine fashion choices and sustainability among consumers?
The consumer's social-self influences his or her purchasing habits and consumption decisions. Existing literature explored the self-concept regarding clothing preferences. However, this study will identify the buying pattern caused by the ideal social-self and their impact on sustainability.

Research question (2): What impact does consumer awareness have on SF and FF buying decisions?

As the FF consumer behaviour has been analysed, it enables us to get a deeper understanding of the customers' buying behaviour and the reasons for their loyalty to the FF brands. This literature review chapter found many patterns relating to the purchasing behaviours of FF customers and their challenges in acquiring SF. Additionally, the research process has aided in a greater grasp of the primary reasons contributing to the typical FF consumer's unsustainable purchasing behaviour.

Research question (3): How does the financial capabilities of customers influence their buying selections between SF and FF?

The final question focuses on the business strategies of both FF and SF merchants regarding their production cost and pricing of the products. Later, the products' price is correlated with the consumption. The literature study demonstrates unequivocally that FF merchants consistently outperform SF brands in terms of sales volume and market share. The interview aided in elucidating the internal causes of SF's failure by eliciting customer perceptions of SF brands.

The literature study was conducted to get a better understanding of FF consumers' purchasing habits, FF merchants' strategy for dominating the fashion industry, and SF businesses' disagreements with ordinary customers, more particularly FF consumers. The study seeks to expand our knowledge of the situation and, more significantly, to uncover the main causes for the fashion industry's failure to provide enough sustainable fashion consumers and how SF is incompatible, unsatisfying, or unavailable to the general fashion customer. To obtain these answers, the author has chosen to undertake a qualitative research study and collect data through a semi-structured interview. Without a question, the chosen technique is very useful for comprehending consumers and their particular routines and preferences. The next chapter will discuss the technique used and the whole study process from data collecting to result.

2.10 Theoretical framework

This research used the consumers behaviour theory to understand the consumers buying pattern of fashion items. In consumers behaviour many things affect the consumers decisions. Here, the author specifically chose the consumers' self-concept, their awareness and the consumers' purchasing power to develop the theoretical framework.

2.10.1 Self-concept in consuming fashion

Sirgy (1982) introduced the four-dimensional notion of self to the academic literature (as cited in Anand and Kaur, 2018). Actual-self, ideal-self, social-self, and ideal social-self are the aspects. Among the research of the self-concept in fashion; Goldsmith et al. (1996) examined fashion leaders' self-concepts and discovered that they each had a unique type of self-concept and they believed themselves to be more exuberant, indulgent, modern, formal, flamboyant, and egotistical than followers. According to Peters et al. (2011), self-concept in fashion is a very complicated problem that extends far beyond product perspective, pricing, and style. Additionally, self-concept is associated with fashion due to its creative nature. Individuals that have a strong sense of self often seek innovation in their clothes (McNeill, 2018). According to self-concept, fashion choices represent one's personal identity. Paying a premium for a unique or sustainable fabric reflects one's personal identity. For instance, wearing a high-end designer label identifies oneself with a certain group of individuals (Legere and Kang 2020).

The existing knowledge on fashion's self-concept is clearly apparent regarding consumers' desire to reach out by shifting their clothes choices and accumulating collections. In accordance with previous research, this study will contribute to the theory by describing how self-concept driven decisions might lead to a diverse consuming mindset. It will also build a link between that consumer mindset and sustainability. Although there has been research on self-concept and consumer identity in relation to fashion, this study will provide an additional perspective on self-concept and consumer consumption in relation to sustainability.

2.10.2 Consumer awareness

Fashion customers are often aware of the product's poor quality and are aware that if they purchase these transient items, they will not endure long (Gabrielli et al., 2013). Since FF consumers adore their goods and their concern for the environment and society outweighs their uncontrolled consumption (Joy et al., 2015). Research further suggests that it is difficult for consumers to comprehend the implications of purchasing FF and they continue to develop a connection to the FF due to their understanding being confined to the retail stage (Joy et al., 2015). More information on consumer awareness is needed, since an informed customer can make the best purchasing decisions. Existing studies are a little ambiguous in terms of consumer awareness and the proportion of customers who understand about fashion sustainability. Although Wang et al., (2020) claims that consumers are aware of the FF's consequences and environmental damage, other studies (Harris et al., 2016; Bonini and Oppenheim, 2008; Ozdamar & Atik, 2015) suggest that the majority of consumers are unaware of the true consequences of their purchasing decisions.

2.10.3 Consumers' economic affordability

The available literature unanimously agrees that the FF's growth is due to its cheap price. In comparison, the cheap price works against SF, since it prevents it from being as popular and readily accessible to every consumer (Niinimaki et al., 2020; Wong, 2012). FF companies keep their price low by exploiting the suppliers and using cheap materials (Joung, 2014; Gabrielli et al., 2013) while SF price goes up in order to maintain the sourcing and production standard (Chan and Wong, 2012). SF's premium costs are acceptable because of its ethical sourcing, fair labour pricing and working conditions, and use of the best quality materials. However, when considering regular customers and their economic power, variables such as a lack of money, a preference for low-cost products, and affordability, this additional price of SF has a significant influence (Ertekin and Atik, 2015, P.61).
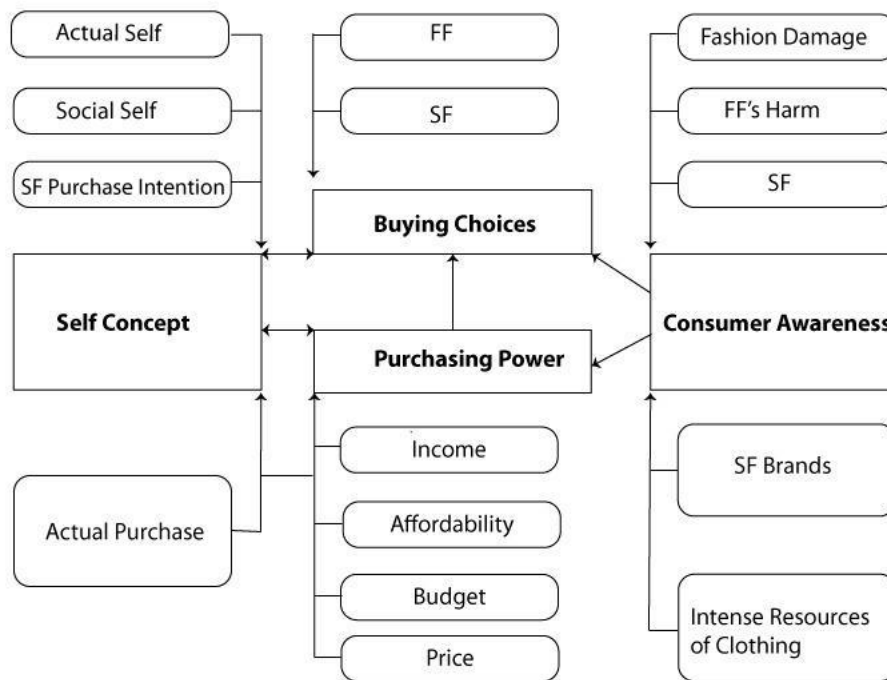
Figure 2: Theoretical framework

Figure 2 displays the theoretical framework of this study by combining the four primary components (self-concept, buying choices, purchasing power and consumer awareness). The purchasing preferences and volume are determined by the self-concept whereas, which items (SF or FF) to buy is determined by awareness and purchasing power. Because self-concept influences buying habits, it has a substantial impact on purchasing decisions because consumers must determine whether they want to stand out in a sustainable or unsustainable manner.

Consumers' understanding of FF's environmental impact and the benefits of SF, influence their purchase decisions. Furthermore, purchasing power is a bridge between knowledge and purchase decisions, as economic conditions often affect what to buy. Although awareness might aid in decision-making, purchasing power is what ultimately determines between the SF and the FF. For example, to purchase a long-lasting piece of clothing, one must spend a particular amount of money, which is determined by the financial situation. Furthermore, purchasing power is linked to self-concept since an individual will desire or be able to stand out by holding a specific economic position because a low income or budget

will prevent one from following or establishing one's self identification. Finally, a consumer's purchase decisions might reveal their awareness, purchasing power, and self-identity. Because a well-informed and educated consumer will make the best option for society and the environment. Choices can reveal a person's economic status as well as their ability to acquire social identity.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction:

With the increasing awareness of sustainability, current fashion consumers are concerned about how and what they shop. However, their inclinations cannot change the situation because there are other obstructions in the way. Fast-fashion retailers captivate customers with their inexpensiveness and fresh designs; in contrast, sustainable traders become clothing providers for aristocrats and the wealthy. This research investigates the underlying motive of consumers' devotion to their fast-fashion brands and inquiries about the obstacles to switch to sustainable purchasing.

A decision was made to carry out qualitative research for this study, and the primary means of collecting data was semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the semi-structured interview is to allow the participants to talk openly. The researcher sets the question guide and interviews the identified respondents. During the data collection process, the author abided by the university's ethical conduct. Besides, due to the Covid-19 pandemic the author has to re-design the data collection strategies since the conventional face-to-face communication was in conflict with the imposed restrictions by the government. The author conducted face-to-face interviews where possible and participants were willing to do so by abiding all the government's rules. And rest of the interviews were replaced by the remote data generation using messenger video calls. Moreover, care was taken when discussing the interviewee's purchasing-managing behaviour and loyalty to the fast-fashion brands. Later, the collected data analysed in NVIVO software followed by the coding process and formation of themes for accomplishing the transformation the data into theory.

3.2 Research design:

The research design refers to an overall plan to find solutions to the research questions and choose a method between quantitative, qualitative, or different mixtures of both choices. In this study, research questions are framed to apprehend the fast-fashion consumers' clarifications, which can be attainable through close interaction with participants. The

author has realised that accumulating up-close information from the participants by a direct conversation and observing their situational context will help answer the research questions.

3.3 Methodological consideration:

Research methodology is the philosophy or the general practices that guide researchers throughout their work. It is an extensive technique that starts with perusing a research topic, addresses the limitations and difficulties, and makes the right choices as every step carried on around a research project (Dawson, 2009, p. 14). In empirical research, explanation of choices is significant to create the research project's credibility (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, p.128). A sequence of research philosophy, approach, strategy, choice, time horizon, purpose and procedure are entailed to outline the process distinctly. Since the methodology is the entire guideline to manage research, an appropriate way of undertaking it can smooth the project, be feasible and practical (Melnikovas, 2018, p.33; Thompson, 2021). The author chooses a suitable methodology from different methodological choices to explicate all the conflicts and uncertainties and make the research more transparent. Thereby, Saunders et al., (2019) 'research onion' (figure 3) a step-by-step research development strategy is used here as a framework to validate the work. To get the model's best outcome, comprehending the details and illustrating each layer is essential instead of peeling the layers (Saunders et al., 2019). In accordance with figure 3, the author created research onion figure 4, which exhibits this particular study's methodology in a step-by-step manner.

Figure 3: Research Onion
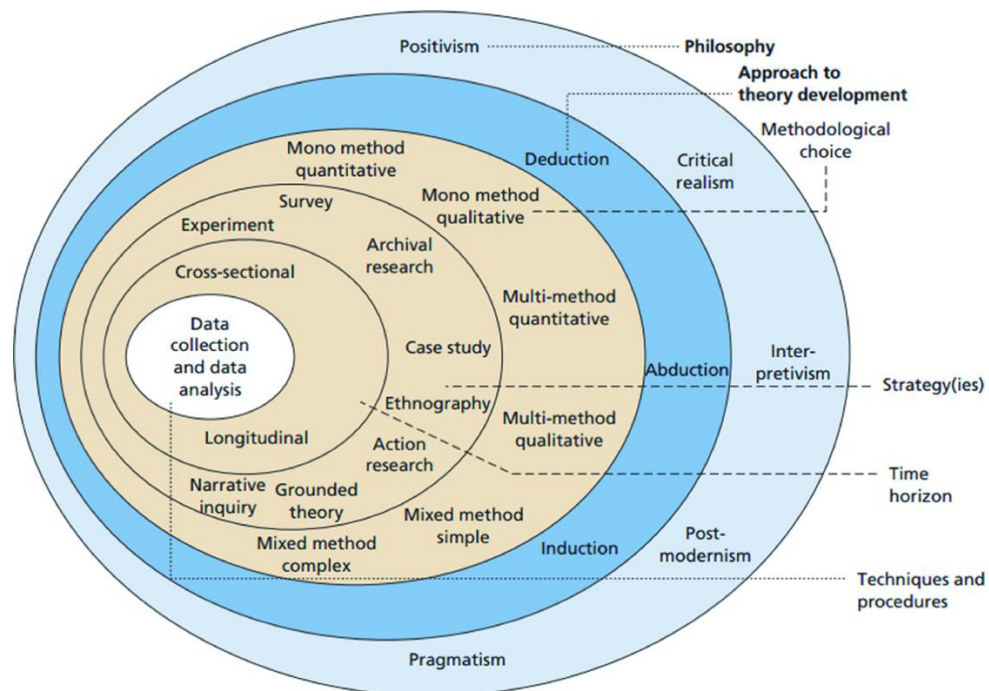
Source: Sauders et al., (2019).

Figure 4: Choices for this specific study
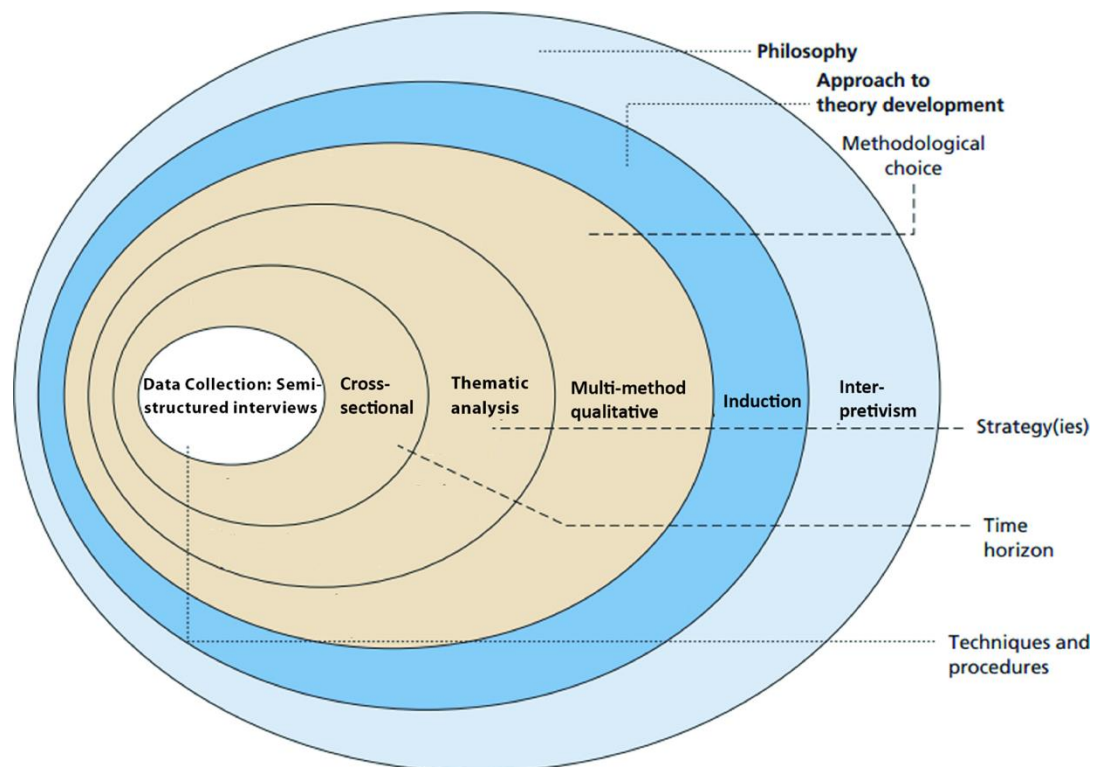
Source: Author

3.3.1 Research Philosophy:

Research philosophy refers to a set of beliefs and assumptions that add up new knowledge in a particular field. It is not obligatory to be unusual, unfamiliar or producing a completely new theory. In reality, researchers can add value to the existing knowledge by resolving a specific problem in a selected industry. A well-worked-out assumption about the realities creates a reliable philosophy that paves the unambiguous way for the following layers of the onion.

Research philosophy helps researchers to draft an organised project and bring all the particles under the same roof. Besides, it assists them to make wise decisions while addressing the research issues. It substantially impacts understanding the investigated subject and actions taken to execute the research (Saunders et al., 2019, p.130). Any deficiency in considering the philosophical issues can lessen research quality (Bahari, 2010, p.18). Therefore, watchful consideration is indispensable for philosophical commitments throughout the research strategy (Saunders et al., 2019, p.130).

Philosophical Assumption:

An explicit philosophical assumption guides the researcher in their study. According to Creswell & Poth (2018, p.18), "a *researcher's view of reality (Ontology), how the researcher knows reality (epistemology), the value-stance taken by inquirer (axiology), and the procedures used in the study (methodology)*" are all critical to the research process. In this study, the aim was to get as close his participants as possible to collect data from the ground, based on their personal views. Data from the research participants' subjective experiences add value to knowledge and help us know what we know, in other words, to know the reality of the situation under investigation (Saunders et al., 2019, p.135, Creswell et al., p.21).

Philosophical approach for the study:

For this study, the author has chosen interpretivism as the philosophical method. Since interpretivism discovers new and richer insights by interpreting societal contexts rather than generalising universal laws on the assumption that every individual or group's circumstances

are distinct and unique unlike positivism. The selected approach will help to extract the sense from their complex analysed data. Furthermore, interpretivism is better suited to small-scale research like this study since it develops qualitative value rather than numerical values from semi-structured interviews with individuals.

With the interpretive approach, this project will seek to establish a new understanding of fast-fashion consumers' complications to be sustainable. Furthermore, individuals' different experiences or realities can enlighten the study with a broad view by interpreting participants' intentions and actions (Saunders et al., 2019, p.145).

3.3.2 Research approach:

Every research project involves theoretical development that is usually precise while presenting the outcomes and conclusions, but which can be unclear within the research design. However, selecting a research approach among theory testing, building or modifying can make a detailed design for a project more effective.

The research approach is a part of organised planning for a more expansive view of the data collection process and analysing. To select a correct approach, a researcher needs to look at the nature of their research problems. Besides, the research approach is significant for consistently exploring data with pre-assumption (Saunders et al., 2019, p.152). However, Thomas (2006) argued that pre-assumptions can undermine the collection and analysis process since speculation can cause interference between research and researcher by overlooking critical issues.

This project adopts an inductive approach:

According to Saunders et al., (2019, p.153), the data collection approach for evaluating any phenomenon alongside the generation of theory with untested conclusions is inductive. Besides, it is an orderly method for data analysis, where certain objectives direct the data assessment process. In this process, the researcher interprets the initial data to extract concepts to create a clear image, which later uncovers the investigation with more precise data (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Further, using this technique, a researcher develops theory from their collected data (Strauss & Corbin's, 1998, p.12).

The inductive approach is applicable for this study to get to the essence of the issues being researched from the collected data. It connects the research objectives and data findings and rationalises the connections with transparency for the audience. Contrary to the deduction and abduction, this research will not test its theory and findings; instead, it will formulate the results to construct theoretically informed insights. Researchers understand the problem's nature, collect and analyse the data to address or explicate the challenge. Moreover, the author can find different explanations that are barely possible in a deduction way, since deduction's strict methodology often disregards the variant's reality (Saunders et al., 2019, p.155).

3.3.3 Research method:

The prime general difference between qualitative and quantitative method is that the former operates with numerical data (numbers) where the latter works with non-numeric data (text, description, visual). The quantitative method is mainly used to generate and analyse numerical data or statistics. Conversely, the qualitative method illustrates the use of data collection, methods and analysis that are generally in non-numeric form. However, using both methods together (mixed method) is not unusual or new (Saunders et al., 2019). Nevertheless, this particular study's nature and objectives are more appropriate for selecting the qualitative method than collecting numerical quantitative data. Since, in qualitative study the researcher interprets the subjective meaning of the socially constructed expressions to make the studied subject more understandable. A qualitative study with an inductive research approach can formulate a research design to originate new theory or display different perspectives. In this method, researchers can build relationships with their participants to create the desired field for acquiring appropriate data. They have so many choices to select data collection and analysing technique that fits them to establish a conceptual framework and later add contribution in theory. The existing data collection methods which are used in the qualitative study are so beneficial in adapting changes with focus, questions or process that is not unlikely to happen during research.

The study uses multi-method qualitative methods:

There are different data collection styles in the qualitative method, such as structured, semi-structured, unstructured interviews (group or individual), observation and analysis of textual or visual, focus group, media research etcetera. When a researcher uses only one data collection technique, it is called a mono-method qualitative technique, and if it involves more than one technique, it is called a multi-method qualitative technique (Saunders et al., 2019, p.179). However, one particular source of data can raise the question of the result or outcomes of the research. Therefore, using multiple data sources can diminish any dispute and can be persuasive for this project.

Every researcher is focused and curious about finding answers to their questions. However, in qualitative research, a researcher is a part of the research process as much as their participants with data. The author has selected a qualitative method to conduct this research; because participants' internal experiences are significant to achieve a clear impression. Moreover, to carry out qualitative research for this study, there were some other grounds as well. Firstly, the author was required to explore an area that not yet been studied profoundly. Secondly, this research is based on the participant's experiences and outlook; only qualitative researchers can connect with their participants to understand the sentiments (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, p.05). Further, existing studies on similar research ground as this study, such as McNeill (2018) and Anand and Kaur (2018), have achieved significant outcomes by conducting qualitative research through the interview data collection process for their study.

The author has used a multi-method qualitative study to strengthen the outcomes and defend the research method. Apart from the semi-structured interview for primary data source, substantial information has been assembled on a field note by holding-up casual conversations and observing the participants. Moreover, the author has carried out media research for gathering data on the consumers purchasing choices and fashion retailers' business policies and pricing.

3.3.4 Research strategy:

Research strategy is the methodological link between the philosophy, related choices of collecting data and their analysis. Sometimes research strategy inter-connected with a specific philosophy, approach or method despite having some boundaries. However, presuming strategies may not be suitable in every research because no particular strategy is stronger or weaker than others. Hence, selecting a strategy should rely on connecting cohesively with the other layers of the onion and guided by the researcher's questions and objectives (Saunders et al., 2019, p.190).

For this qualitative study, the author has chosen the thematic analysis approach. The purpose of this study is to look at the challenges that fast-fashion customers face in becoming more sustainable. The author wants to show the economic elements of fast fashion customers, which have not been fully explored in earlier research, as well as the concept of self on sustainability, which is a relatively new subject in the literature. Thematic analysis is more appropriate for this study because the author intends to explain something and provide some reasons that may address some valuable factors on some inadequate theories.

In qualitative research, flexibility is significant since researchers are not preoccupied with any pre-assumptions or a particular research process. Therefore, the author has considered thematic analysis for this project because it is not limited to any theoretical approach, rather it is more flexible and has more adaptability to become an independent approach. In addition, it can be competent for any theoretical orientation on general or particular phenomenology. Unlike grounded theory which is a series of theoretical research framework or "off-the-shelf" methodologies, Thematic analysis is more related to a theoretical technique or method and quite forthright for new qualitative researchers (Braun and Clarke, 2021, P.1). Besides, this technique is appropriate for this study since McLeod (2015, P.147) believes that theme analysis is useful if the researcher has a clear vision of what they want to achieve and is not afraid of methodological issues. It is a perfect fit for this research since the author has a clear vision of what he wants to accomplish with it. By conducting the selected strategy, the author desires to construct the key concepts and systematically investigate them to uncover the research questions since thematic analysis

makes easier to uncover similar themes from the narratives of respondents (Stancu et al., 2020).

3.3.5 Time Horizon:

This research is undertaken in a limited time with many uncertain obstructions like the pandemic. Carrying the research through the pandemic and particularly when the major data source is the interview was so difficult. Thus, it did not allow the researcher to have enough time to carry a longitudinal study. Therefore, cross-sectional design is selected to cover the study within a time frame. It may not be enough time, but qualitative research strategies can rely on small sample interviewed over a limited time.

3.4 Research procedure:

3.4.1 Data collection method:

Data collection is the main foundation of research because, every research is designed to formulate a theory or test a theory and this whole thing guided by collected data. As mentioned earlier, this research has conducted a semi-structured interview as a principal and primary source of data which is unlikely to be as confined as structured interviews and more focused than the unstructured interview. It will also use the observations and media research for more profound data and support the demonstration. For conducting the interview, the author has created a question guide (Appendix-5).

Semi-structured interview is appropriate for this research because the author has decided to ask the questions in different sequence to investigate the information while keeping the prime interview questions in the same way for every interviewee. Further, the author needs to get close to his research participants to understand the reason behind their opinion and choices. Therefore, the chosen data collection method is ideal since it is effective to extract the data from the interviews with the option of open-ended questions and with no tight structured question booklet.

As an interpretivist and an interviewer, the author had the opportunity to probe the interviewee's conversation and thoughts in a particular way to include substantial value to the acquired data. Besides, the author could ask questions out of the question guide in

response to the interviewee's answer. The discussion with the participants sometimes went to different areas which were ignored before but later proved to be very useful for understanding and confronting the research questions (Saunders et al., 2019, p.444).

To get the diverse data, the author approached different aged people (18-35), with different earning sources (student, part-time/full-time employed, low/medium/high affordability) and different shopping habits (fast fashion/ sustainable fashion). Further, various media has been screened to collect information about the fashion brand's strategy, policies, prices and purchasing habits of the consumer.

All the interview data was recorded in a recording device and later stored in I-cloud for diminishing the likelihood of losing data. All the interviews were converted into a written transcript from for the qualitative text analysis. The author has used the NVIVO (computer software) for the data analysis of this study. Before the interview, the author provided an information sheet to every participant detailing the project overview and got the signed consent to use their opinion in a separate consent sheet. All the interviews were conducted in English, and some little explanation was given about 'fast-fashion' / 'sustainability' to those who were unfamiliar with these terms.

3.4.2 Pilot study

In qualitative research, often pilot studies are conducted to evaluate the efficiency of the research tools. A pilot study has an influential role in the semi-structured interview for qualitative projects. Besides, a dummy interview can equip new researchers for the challenges they may face, develop the confidence and detect the weaknesses (Malmqvist et al., 2019). By conducting a few pilot interviews a researcher can assume how the participants will respond and can have a chance to evaluate the interview guide. Moreover, it can reveal any resistance between the participants and any data collection means (Quinlan et al., 2015, p.279).

For this study, the author did not want to lose any data by not asking the questions in any pre-fixed standard technique. Consequently, the author has conducted three pilot interviews in pursuit of determining a finer way. Each of them took 15-20 minutes, and none of them were covering all the research issues. Consequently, the interview guide has been restructured, unnecessary questions were excluded, and new questions were added.

Nevertheless, the pilot interviews have facilitated the author to become confident of taking interviews and to discover different techniques of carrying a functional interview. Since the author had no previous experience of leading such kind of conversations. He has found his lacking, resolved the weaknesses, and learned how to get the best outcome from the interview.

3.4.3 Sample selection criteria

Often, researchers are unable to gather or analyse all available data owing to time constraints, a lack of resources, or insufficient access to respondents. As a result, the most viable method for collecting all feasible data is to sample all possible instances. It may avoid or minimize the need for an excessive quantity of data by establishing a sub-group or sampling procedure (Saunders et al., 219, p.292).

Because this research is about fast fashion customers, it is much too broad to cover in a one-year time period. As a result, the author chose a small sample size but varied individuals from a variety of backgrounds (student, employee, businessman), ethnic origins (Asian, European, American, and African), income levels (low, medium, and high), and the most likely fast fashion consumer (age 18-35). This study examined fast fashion consumers and their struggles to become a more sustainable shopper. It bridges the gap between the consumer's desire for sustainable fashion and their ultimate purchase of fast fashion. It is intended to provide a comprehensive knowledge of the reasons behind rapid fashion consumption and the misfortunes of sustainable fashion. The author chose a purposeful sample of FF customers with a minimum of a college degree. Because the author desired volunteers who could give comprehensive information about the subject by virtue of being a frequent fashion consumer and possessing a certain level of knowledge. Therefore, the author will have credible information from educated individuals.

3.4.4 Research sample

Although the sample size was modest, it was successful owing to the purposeful sampling stated before. There was a total of 21 interviewees, 12 of whom were female and 9 of whom were male. All participants were between the ages of 18 and 35. Except for two individuals who reside in Canada, all participants are from Yorkshire, United Kingdom.

Table 1: Interview participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Education
Charlie	Male	University graduate
Jamal	Male	University graduate
Chris	Male	College graduate
Adil	Male	College graduate
Mahmud	Male	University student
Ullah	Male	College graduate
Sahadat	Male	University student
Bappy	Male	University graduate
Adnan	Male	College graduate
Nushrat	Female	College graduate
Chayley	Female	College graduate
Nancy	Female	College graduate
Olivia	Female	University student
Megan	Female	University graduate
Fatema	Female	University student
Huma	Female	University graduate
Samira	Female	University student
Mariam	Female	University student
Asha	Female	University graduate
Vladiana	Female	College graduate
Iqra	Female	College graduate

3.5 Data analysis

The purpose of this study is to determine how different variables influence consumer behaviour by examining customers' social and economic circumstances. By performing qualitative research, the author hopes to distil all of these variables into a single approach. The author conducted an examination of previous materials and the collected interviews for

this study, that assisted to identify the problems and subsequently to contribute to discussions about the influencing factors of consumers' unsustainable purchasing choices.

Hilal and Alarbi (2013) stated that organising, structuring, and extracting meaning from collected data is not a simple job. Additionally, qualitative data analysis is needed to establish relationships between themes and data categories with the goal of increasing knowledge of the phenomena. As a result, researchers must be vigilant and have a more favourable relationship with the data. The selected thematic analysis method can be used to analyse practically any type of qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The author has categorised the acquired data into five sections, using the Braun and Clarke (2019) thematic data analysis approach.

1. Transcribing data

To begin, the author used the apps 'Transcribe' to convert the recorded data into written papers. It was really convenient since the provided audio file was converted into a written document. It was unquestionably a time-saving method, as playing the audio, setting the speed, and the rewind procedure all take a long time. To prevent missing any data, the author double-checked all of the audio files with the written data by listening to them again. Since it is highly possible to have changes in words or sentences because software can interpret data incorrectly, as it occurred with the author when he was cross-checking written materials, a number of errors have been detected. The author went over the data in a soft copy multiple times to familiarise himself with it and to spot different patterns.

2. Coding

Coding is a term used in qualitative analysis to refer to a word or group of words that summarises a part of textual data from interview transcripts or other qualitative data sources. Researchers create codes to facilitate the translation of their data for further paradigms of data, classification, hypothesis development, and other data analysis processes, which are followed by theory construction (Saldana, 2016, P.4). Coding not only offers a succinct description of the data, but also adds value to the study narrative.
Using highlighter markers, the author began manually coding the data. Electronic software, on the other hand, is more user-friendly and produces more exact results, as he quickly

discovered. As a result, the NVIVO programme is used for the majority of data processing. Qualitative research can benefit from NVIVO's thoroughness.

For qualitative data analysis, researchers often use some kind of continuous comparison. According to some academics, doing so restricts qualitative researchers' access to codes of the dataset only; other kinds of connections within the data are not identified and may be missed. NVIVO software tools enable researchers to do a variety of types of analyses. so that the data's underlying ideas and connections may be discovered (Leech, 2011, P.70). The author of this study has adopted semantic coding strategies that are data-driven rather than latent codes, which are more research-based. Because a theoretical lens alone would not be able to explain emerging patterns shown by semantic codes, avoiding any significant code is very unlikely. The coding process left the researcher with just under the 50 codes from where he has chosen 39 codes to develop the theme.

3. Develop themes

After the coding process the author was looking for patterns. Similar or relevant codes had been put together in different sections and the author has developed seven themes (Appendix-4) that could help to answer the research questions.

4.Finalizing themes

The author was looking for bigger patterns in the data that may assist to answer the study questions as the themes developed. The author was able to spot patterns in the data due to the frequent repeat of the codes, as well as a few key codes. In terms of drawing the pattern, some unexpected facts emerged, such as discomfort of wearing the same clothes in social gatherings or competitiveness to be seen in different outfits. These unanticipated codes, on the other hand, contributed to the development of the pattern of self-concept and unsustainability. Out of the seven, the author developed three major themes that were closely relevant to the research's goals.

5. Analysis

Although semi-structured interviews were the primary data source for this study, media research and field notes were used to capture the broader view of the subject. After doing

the primary data analysis, the author connected and confirmed the results with other sources (media and field notes). The primary data (interviews) of this research were analysed using qualitative content analysis.

According to Bazeley (2006), electronic software provides more genuine and accurate data than human analysis. It is true that NVIVO aids the researcher in comprehending and simplifying the study process by allowing them to code the textual material, analyse them and generate themes from it. Denzin and Lincoln (2005), on the other hand, believe that the researcher is the most critical component of data analysis. The researcher uses the programme to aid in the data analysis process, but the software does not analyse the data automatically for the researcher (As cited in Leech, 2011).

Lather (1991) refers data analysis as the 'black hole' of qualitative research (As cited in Elizabeth et al., 2014). Researchers must evaluate the collected data considering the targeted topic, which Jackson and Mazzei (2012) refer to as 'thinking with theory'. To put it simply, data analysis is the process of analysing gathered data via the use of analytical and logical reasoning to get the desired information. Among the many data analysis techniques available, the author chose thematic analysis in conjunction with a qualitative research method. Thematic analysis is an excellent match for this study since it is beneficial for doing research on people's perspectives and views, as well as for analysing qualitative data from interview scripts. Additionally, it is anchored in the original data set; it examines the themes and ideas generated during the process and connects them back to the raw data to improve the research's credibility and reliability. The author developed the themes according to the theoretical lens of the study. As a result, the themes are capable of answering the study questions and achieving the goals.

While reviewing the previous literatures, the author became aware of the other researcher's methodology and potential difficulties. This provided him an advantage in addressing any issues that may arise throughout the study process. Additionally, the author's own experience, collected facts, observations, field notes, and media material all contributed to a much easier identification of the major themes. Which was very beneficial in doing the data analysis and establishing the purpose of the study.

3.6 Ethical consideration

Qualitative research with particular groups is optimal because it enables the extraction of a more nuanced knowledge of the participants' own experiences. The open-ended nature of qualitative research allows for a more in-depth examination of participants. However, this kind of research, such as focus groups and interviews, has the potential to steer the discussion in ways that are inconsistent with accepted ethical practises (Lenton et al., 2021, P.4). While collecting data, the researcher must consider the participants' values, freedom, emotions, religion, beliefs, self-respect, and impartiality (Annink, 2016). While interacting with the participants, the author took ethics extremely seriously. Participants have given all the right while the author was collecting data for this study. Some steps taken by the author are as follows:

o It was entirely up to the participants' discretion whether or not to engage in this study.
o No one has been interviewed without being adequately informed about the research.
o Participants are informed of their right to discontinue participation in the study at any time.
o They are not disturbed before to or during the interview with the author.

Besides, this data gathering took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. The author conducted interviews through video call and in-person. As a result of the pandemic scenario and the restrictions in place, the author followed all of the regulations in effect at the time. Face-to-face interviews were conducted only when participants expressed an interest; it was entirely up to them.

The author followed the University's research ethics standards to ensure that accurate data was collected, and that research was conducted in a lawful and ethical manner. Additionally, the author respected the University's right to this research and did not publish any of the data or results without the University's consent. All has been kept in secure places without any outsiders' access. The study was conducted without causing damage to anybody and with extreme caution. Additionally, ethical considerations were made to prevent future

ethical dilemmas. Participants were provided an information sheet (Appendix-1) with the contact information of the author and the university if they want to contact for any future queries. The author obtained the permission of each participant to use their opinion in this study by obtaining their signature on the consent forms. Furthermore, all the participants have been notified their actual names would not be used in any aspect of the study and that their perspectives would be used exclusively for academic purposes. The original names of the participants were never disclosed in the project; they were substituted with pseudonyms. The author has taken the first letter of each participant's name and given them a name from his acquaintances or relatives that begins with the same letter. The participants' genders and pseudonyms were maintained consistent so that their genders could be deduced from their names.

3.7 Researcher's self-reflection:

This research was motivated and inspired by the author's own experience. Following the commencement of my MSc in Risk, Disaster, and Environmental Management, I developed an interest in sustainability. I began to consider alternatives to unsustainable behaviour, for instance, taking own bag to the stores, carrying a water bottle or a coffee cup, recycling as much as possible and donating my clothes to charities. But the situation changed dramatically when it came to my sustainable consumption in fashion. Despite my desire to purchase ethical clothes, something push me to walk through the fast-fashion doors. Finally, I was able to distinguish my internal responsible consumer from my buying power and the allure of quick fashion. I have discovered that I could not purchase any sustainable fabric on my clothing budget, my budget comes within fast-fashion prices. I may pay a premium for being a conscientious customer, but not nearly as much as sustainable companies want. Additionally, I favoured quick fashion above sustainable fashion. That made me consider if, by being concerned about the environment and having an average buying power, I am having difficulties for being sustainable when it comes to fashion, then it cannot be only my tale; there must be others.

Though the study started off well, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out just three months after I began my project, and everything was devastated. For months, the facility was put under complete lockdown. I had no data since the pandemic began, and without data, my study

came to a halt, with nothing going anyplace because everything was still in the early stages. In addition, I was having a mental breakdown as a result of not being able to see any of my family members. Things had got to the point that I needed to seek mental health counselling to get my mental health back on track.

Chapter-4: Findings

4.0 Understanding the constraints of fashion sustainability:

This chapter will offer insight into the data analysis findings. The data analysis results are divided into three distinct parts to meet the study questions and objectives. The first section will examine the elements that contribute to fashion buyers' unsustainable mindset (4.1). The second section will examine the fashion awareness of FF customers and demonstrate how their ignorance hinders them from being sustainable (4.2). Finally, it will show how economic factors affecting consumers indicate that sustainability is not feasible for FF consumers (4.3).

4.1 Factors that motivate the consumers to do unsustainable purchase:

This section identifies the reasons that drive customers to engage in irresponsible purchasing. After evaluating the respondents' answers, the five most prevalent factors that encourage customers to purchase FF were determined.

1. Design
2. Social-self
3. Tourism
4. Availability
5. Online Posting

Fashion companies draw customers in a variety of ways; nevertheless, some elements convince consumers astonishingly. Out of 21 respondents, the majority said that the designs of FF has an effect on them resulting in additional purchases. Additionally, the social character of customers forces them to purchase an increasing amount of clothing. Apart from these two primary causes, participants noted a few other factors; some of the most salient arguments are highlighted in this section.

4.1.1 Factors that contribute to increased purchasing

I) FF's lucrative designs and variations

Consumer purchase behaviours have altered throughout time when it comes to shopping. People are buying more clothes than they have in the past. The "casual revolution," as it is known, began in 1990 (Seo et al.,2001). Shopping malls have grown into modern leisure destinations, with people visiting them on a daily basis. Increased clothes purchases are due to fast fashion. The more inexpensive duplicates of catwalk style the firm produces, the more customers are compelled to keep their appearances and wardrobes new (Sanghani,2018). Iqra, a frequent mall visitor, commented:

> *"I used to go to the shopping malls really often, but because of the lockdown, I have to do it online; I don't know when the thing will reopen, can't wait to back to Plazas. It's like enjoying your time or having a vacation while I go for shopping; I really miss it!"*

All of the major fashion houses are presenting dazzling ensembles that are difficult to resist. Similarly, Vladiana believes that current customers like shopping because it allows them to diversify their clothes. As a result, they often change their attire inventory. Buying is no longer a need; it has evolved into a pleasurable habit:

> *"[…] I like to have something new all the time. […] It's not that I need it, if I like something I buy it […]. I think mainly with me; if I like something, I like to get into it […]."*

When we think about modern shopping malls as leisure locations, we see that they are often visited by people. And mall visitors are often attracted to visit such establishments and try on the clothing because of the colourful garments on the mannequins. Furthermore, individuals go shopping for fun and to look around the new collections without intending to buy, a practise known as window shopping or browsing (Chen et al., 2019). Customers are persuaded to make a purchase when window shopping because of FF's eye-catching apparel with unusual patterns, according to the participants' responses. However, because such flashy gowns are affordable, it is not a big decision to make. Samira enjoys window shopping alone or with company for pleasure:

> *"[…] Like if I really don't feel about going out with friends or family or not in a mood to go out anywhere, I hang around the shopping malls and do the window shopping […]. Sometimes I see some designs are so nice that I buy them instantly in fear of losing the dress "*

On a daily basis, consumers purchase significantly more clothes resulting in an increase in the number of undesired items as they lose interest in previous apparel (Ekstrom and Salmonson,

2014). Zara is a specialised fashion chain that is a good example of a fast fashion retailer, with quick product turnover and vertical reconciliation. Zara is unquestionably regarded as a forerunner in the FF universe (The Economist, 2005; Strategic Direction, 2005, Foroohar and Stabe, 2005, as cited in Bruce & Daly,2006). Zara's success in the fashion sector may be attributed to the range of essential designs. Adnan acknowledged FF's ability to entice him with their designs, and his wardrobe continues to grow with more unnecessary clothing:

> *[…] just go with my friends and see the brands, […] browse the latest collection […]. […] it is style; Zara's designs are better than the others. Even my friends like Zara as well. […] You will always get something new and different. […] anything I like and not cost much; I take instantly. […] I do not want to lose it […]. […] I end up buying some clothes though I did not wish to or needed […]. I do not know how many clothes I have […]."*

FF companies, like bakeries, create new designs practically every day. They include every market trend into their clothes design (Li et al., 2014) and urge clients to come in to satisfy their demand for new attire (Joy et al., 2015; Mrad et al., 2020). Huma likes the diverse collections and purchases on a regular basis:

> *"[…] Probably because of the collections, because they have got lots of colours like in jeans or shirts in the latest style and it's just quite accessible […]".*

Mariam considers FF's design is akin to magic; it is difficult to take your gaze away from them. Sometimes individuals feel as if they have enough clothing; nevertheless, their instincts do not listen when they see another fresh design:

> *"[…] you see the clothes, and you get interested and also because it is cheap and trendy design […]. […] there is no coming back without buying that piece of cloth."*

Similarly, Kayumova and Pervushina (2020) expressed that garment consumption develops into a dangerous addiction; it is referred as 'oniomania' - a need to buy anything without regard for the consequences or the future. Shopping becomes a way of life, leisure, and enjoyment. For some consumers, purchasing new clothing has evolved into a way to demonstrate their status.

II) Self-concept in fashion

Individuals like purchasing more clothing to provide diversity to their ensembles and appearance. When individuals attend an event, they want to be the most attractive person there especially the young people (Au et al., 2007). Besides, consumers desiring self-improvement would make decisions and behave in ways that extrinsically expressed their

entire sense of self (Legere and Kang, 2020). As a result, there is usually some worry regarding the clothing they wear to social gatherings. Nancy, a frequent fashion shopper, believes that the human social urge compels people to seem stunning and purchase confidence via appearance during social gatherings:

> *"I like to go to the parties and meet friends. […] . All the girls in my group tries to look stunning all the time. It seems like there is always a race of looking nice and looking different. […] when I stay at home or just going for some work, I wear usual clothes. But in the parties with friends or family I try my best to wear new clothes that no one has seen on me before […]."*

Consumers buy things that are compatible with or strengthen their self-concept (D'Souza, 2015; Niinimaki, 2010). Individuals place a high importance on their self-concept, directing their conduct in ways that both protect and promote it. Regardless of whether one's actual self-concept is favourable or unfavourable, the majority of customers have a positive ideal self-concept that they aim to achieve (Legere and Kang, 2020). Therefore, to achieve the ideal-self human portrays that there is a pressure in society to look good all the time in the social appearance although it's actually satisfying their ideal-self (Jacobs et al., 2018). For Chris there is a real challenge to go out for a social gathering concerning ideal social-self:

> *"[…] I do not wear the new clothes always. I do repeat my clothes […]. But I try to wear a new cloth every time in big social gathering. I feel more comfortable with the new dresses. Though when I am staying at home or just going somewhere nearby for groceries I am not bothered about my outfits, but I stay so concern to choose my clothes while I am going to be in a social group."*

Consumers' private consumption reflects their actual-self, but they are more likely to build their social-selves since they are more interested in publicly presented attires while avoiding exposing their actual-self by trying to conceal their private consumption patterns (Anand and Kaur, 2015, P.167). Therefore, attempting to stand out during social gatherings appears to be highly frequent among people. Adil has tried to establish that parties and special events have distinctive dress codes, since an individual's perspective may earn him social respect:

> *"I always prefer buying, […], branded stuff like Zara or H&M. […] for parties and occasions, because that comes with like certain […] criteria. So, if you're wearing brands and people can see that you're wearing brands, that brings you social respect. […] So, I always buy from H&M and Zara […], they do perfect party clothes […]."*

Vladiana feels the same way about the fashion point of view. When it came to social events or special occasions, she had strong opinions about what to wear:

> *"[…] like to show off […]. […] do not want to be seen in the same old clothes. It more of a matter of disgrace if others are seeing me on the same dress for consecutive events […]. It is always great to maintain a good space for repeating clothes on social gathering […]."*

People desire to seem distinct at social gatherings, but they also want to appear wealthy in other people's views via their appearances. As a result, affluent people are extremely devoted to luxury goods, and the influence of self-concept and emotional brand loyalty towards luxury brands is visible (Anand and Kaur, 2015). In Samira's family, the majority of her relatives are very wealthy, and they compete not just to appear unique, but also to look exclusive:

> *"[…] I have to wear a gorgeous dress in my family functions. Because all the relatives appear with gorgeous outfits and expensive jewelleries. […] some of them even buy gold for one time, use the gold in a wedding and I have never seen them use it again […]. If one of my aunties or cousins order a dress for example £1000, the others will spend more than that. It's a pure display of look and expenses […]."*

People's social identities have a big impact on their additional fashion consumption. While some may be delighted or dissatisfied with this social component, the majority are following the trend. It raises consumption while also raising the level of unsustainability. Since Charlie performs regular purchases:

> *"[…] buy more often for last few years. […] since I go out for work and meeting more people every day […]. More collection of clothes makes me comfortable and easier since my collection consists of attires for all occasions and gatherings […]."*

The findings of the self-concept established a particular buying pattern of fashion. It provides the insights of the influence of ideal social self-concept on fashion consumption that goes well beyond product considerations, cost, and appearances (Peters et al., 2011). Besides, consumers can pay a premium price to look distinctive and achieve their social identity (Joergens, 2006).

4.1.2 Other factors that motivate the unsustainable consumption

Apart from the primary causes, there are several secondary aspects that contribute to unsustainable consumption. FF provides its clients with every conceivable piece of clothing; stores stock everything from socks and shoes to hats and accessories. Jamal makes the following argument for altering the brand's preferability:

> *"It does not matter what I need, […] socks, undergarments, cap, shirts, belts they literally have everything. […] They even do the jewellery and other accessories. It is definitely time saver […]*

no need to look around every shop [...], one high street store is enough for me [...], in no near future I will look for substitution brands."

Additionally, tourism is growing; 1.5 billion people travelled globally in 2019. (UNWTO, 2020). Travel necessitates the purchase of new clothing. For the typical visitor, travel is associated with a limited budget. Mahmud's situation is identical to that of any other regular traveller:

"FF is the best option I have for my clothes [...]. I always take new clothes with me while I set off for my vacation. [...] It gives me a different vibe when I put new clothes on, in a new location. [...] Fresh and good attire always gives me happiness [...], what can add more to your joy rather than your fancy outfit [...]."

Whether or not FF brings joy to the holidays, new outfits appeal to people's emotions, particularly young people today (Tiggemann and Andrew, 2011, P.646). Additionally, social media has a significant dual impact on fashion buyers. To begin, FF merchants utilise the platform as a marketplace; they sell goods, advertise them, solicit feedback, and build relationships with customers. The amazing images, peer evaluations, and online sale (discount) encourage consumers to buy more (Na and Kim, 2019; Nadeem et al., 2015). Simultaneously, social media users make further purchases to reflect their current outfit. Everyone, from fashion bloggers to the general public is rushing to promote varied, quick fashion trends. Chayely's observations about the FF purchases of the average social network member are very informative:

"I post online very frequently. [...] I want to be in a different outlook while I am posting online. [...] Sometimes I repeat the same outfit as well, but with a different look [....]. But I prefer to see different dresses in my posted picture [...]. [...] Especially on the videos (Tik Tok or Likely)."

FF generates desire for further purchases and has positioned themselves in such a manner that they can respond to any surge in demand by focusing on getting the clothing into shops as quickly as possible. The situation has resulted in an increase in the number of "seasons." Due to the rapid pace of fast fashion, businesses in the Far East are becoming more adept at transitioning from product manufacturing to integrating design and branding in accordance with the "floor-ready" idea (Bruce & Daly,2006).

4.2 Defeated SF in rivalry with other FF brands:

4.2.1 Disguise FF benefitting by unidentified SF

Despite its environmental and social devastation, the FF business thrives (Joy et al., 2015). Notwithstanding, the vast majority of FF customers are unaware of FF and the consequences of their purchasing decisions. As a result, customers are unaware that they are undoubtedly purchasing FF. Asha who loves Primark and do lots of shopping unfortunately does not know what FF is: *"[…], FF! Not really. Could you please explain?"*. According to the interview data, many FF customers are unfamiliar with the phrase 'Fast Fashion.' Participants that frequent the FF on a regular basis reacted horribly when questioned about the FF. Adnan, who has never heard of the term 'FF': *"[…] my favourite store to be honest is Zara. […] that's a Canadian brand […]. Fast fashion! Not really, I didn't hear the term yet!"*. On the other hand, Iqra mistakes FF as something luxurious: *"Fast fashion, Are they big brands? […] I imagined the ramp walk with all the gorgeous outfits when you mentioned FF[…]"*. The incorrect information regarding brands is alarming. Additionally, FF merchants' repeated pledges to move toward sustainability seem deceptive when their consumers are ignorant of the term 'Fast Fashion' or the harm caused by their goods.

Without a question, fast fashion is reshaping the apparel industry, as well as the environment, a paradigm that begs for change (Armstrong et al.,2015). Huma thinks that FF merchants are in fear that if they educate their customers properly about the environmental and social costs of their products and advocate SF, consumers may become disinclined to purchase from them, resulting in market collapse; therefore, it will never be granted:

> *"[…] Retailers will never want the customers to know more […], whatever they are doing, it's all greenwashing. If they really do […], […], It would turn the customer off. […] No business will ever want that."*

FF is capitalising on the market's unfamiliarity with SF. A sizable portion of the fashion consumer population is unaware of SF. While some concerned customers are aware of or want to do sustainable purchasing, many are unfamiliar with sustainable brands. Furthermore, when the author presented the names of five of the top SF brands to the participants, none of them had ever heard of them. Participants reacted surprisingly when they heard the brands:

Fatema: *"No not really! Are they a clothing brand?"*

Samira: *"No, never heard of them."*

Charlie: *"No never, they sound too difficult as well, not easy like Zara!"*

With their limitations, SF works are insufficient to please today's youthful customers. The customer believes they are either overpriced or poorly designed. Additionally, customers remark that the expense of incorporating eco-friendly components into sustainable design is considerably higher than the cost of quick fashion. Apparel's perceived worth is regarded as an impediment to sustainable usage, since consumers, regardless of whether they are eager to purchase inexpensive items of clothing, will most likely be unable to complete the transaction (Henninger et al.,2016). Fatema, on the other hand, purchased a sustainable hoodie from H&M's sustainable department out of curiosity; nevertheless, she was unsatisfied with the money she paid and the perspective she received. Additionally, she raised concerns about the quality of H&M's sustainable clothing:

> *"I did […]. […] From H&M […]. […] I would not go for that price for a hoody for sustainable hoody […] I just wanted to try the quality, the product. […]. It was not worthy of it […], […] the quality was like a bit, um, you know. […] the design, like you would obviously want something nice to wear, especially if you're spending that much amount of money. […] They're very plain design […]."*

SF brands' market operations and promotions fail to reach common fashion consumers since SF brands are anonymous to the general shoppers. Therefore, Ullah indicted the SF brands as a failure considering that destructive FF brands benefiting with sustainability tag; on the other hand, SF brands remain under veil:

> *"I have never tried SF […]; my mom sometimes does from Zara […]. It is hilarious […] Zara making money from both sides (FF and SF). […] I never came across with any sustainable brands […]. No idea! Where they are living on!"*

Consumers that are eager to buy a SF, due to their ignorance of any real SF brands, visit the FF houses for SF pieces. As a result, FF businesses profit from offering both types of goods and take full advantage of the low visibility of SF shops. H&M, the pioneer of FF, recently brought the term 'Conscious" under the sustainability segment instead of the previous 'sustainable' clothing tag. The company claims 50% sustainable materials are used on those clothes and offers a nearly similar price to FF (H&M, 2021); however, it is apparently a downgrade from the previous sustainable section of H&M. The component that has

influenced Zara's prosperity is its capacity to make and keep up shared circumstance consciousness in the fast-changing fashion business (Sull & Turconi, 2008). Conscious style endorses the expansion of the existing clothing pattern; reused and harmless to the ecosystem materials. This style is directed by popular characters like Emma Watson, Stella McCartney, Miroslava Duma, Olga Glagoleva, Natalia Vodianova and many more. (Kayumova and Pervushina,2020).

4.2.2 FF substitute other FF brands

According to the respondents, FF consumers are devoted to their brands. However, a more significant part of them reckons that their ratio of purchasing FF and sustainable brands is 70:30. Although some consumers consider the FF percentage is much lower for them and consider themselves as a more sustainable consumer. Nevertheless, a substantial portion of consumers' SF demand is fulfilled by different FF brands and remainders are fulfilled by the designer brands, surprisingly, no place for SF brands in sustainability.

Sahadat believes that 70% of his apparel purchases are from FF labels such as Topman, H&M, and Primark; nevertheless, he consumes the other 30% from non-FF brands. Regardless, his sustainable businesses included other FF brands as well:

> "I purchase other brands as well. […] The ratio would be 70% with FF and 30% sustainable […]. […] Among sustainable brands I love to buy the GAP hoodies and Urban Outfitter jeans. I like the colours and textures. […] As you can see, I am currently wearing a red GAP hoodie."

Without a doubt, H&M, Zara, and other low-priced brands such as Boohoo, Asos, New Look, and Primark are the top-ranked low-priced FF brands. Nonetheless, FF customers have the mistaken belief that somewhat more expensive retailers (Urban Outfitters, Gap, Guess, Adidas, Nike, Zara) are the ultimate sustainable brands. Apart from the standard FF brands, Bappy enjoys shopping at Nike and Adidas:

> "I like high street shops, like Top Shop, New Look sometimes Primark […]. […] Yes! I know fast-fashion […], my ratio would be, uh, 60 with fast fashion and 40 with non-fast fashion. […] excluding fast-fashion, I buy Nike or Adidas […]."

To summarise, Generation Y members would choose to purchase a greater variety of lower-quality, low-priced, and fashionable clothes than those born after WWII (baby boomers), who

would want to purchase fewer more ideal garments (Crewe and Davenport 1992, as cited in Bhardwaj & Fairhurst,2010). Present young people are much more inclined to possess a variation rather than the quality.

4.3 Economic factors regulate the purchasing choices

According to Sections 4.1 and 4.2, contemporary consumers purchase more clothing than they need. And they prefer FF over SF for a variety of reasons, including ignorance, admiration for their designs, and so on. However, this section will demonstrate how important pricing is to the sustainability of fashion that customers who attempt to be sustainable often fail.

4.3.1 Low price of FF

The fashion industry was designed in such a manner that FF businesses could maximise their profit while selling more by maintaining a low profit margin (Iran and Schrader, 2017). As a result, all participants acknowledged that they frequently go to the FF stores because of their cheap prices. Increased clothing purchases imply increased shopping expenditures; they need additional funds to satisfy the continuous buying requirement. However, FF customers have a remedy to this; it is simple and inexpensive. Grewal et al. (1998, as cited in Kansra, 2014) demonstrate that brand renown, store goodwill, and price decrease all have an effect on a consumer's purchase intention. Discounts, internal reference prices, and quality all have effects on perceived value, which in turn has an effect on purchase intent. Asha expects that, for routine purchases, FF is the best choice. FF catches her eye because of their cheap price:

> *"It basically attracts me with its price. [...] For regular shopping or loungewear, I think of where I can get cheaper clothes [...]. [...] I go to Primark because it is cheap."*

FF is much less expensive than other clothing companies, and since it is affordable, individuals may purchase large quantities of apparel. Price is one of the most influential marketing factors on customer buying decisions. Cost has an effect on the client's buying intention, especially the reference value, which has the greatest influence when customers are not immediately prepared to compare brands (Andreti et al.,2013). Thus, FF is an excellent option for Vladiana, who does not only purchase inexpensive clothing, but also frequents high-end designer labels

such as 'Philipp Plein' and 'Zanotti,' two of her favourite brands that cost about £1000 for a dress and £1500 for a pair of shoes:

> "[…] I think it's better to have more options and go for the cheaper ones, especially for regular use. I won't wear a £1000 dress to go hang around the town or to a restaurant; they are only for special occasions. […] And nobody can tell the price anyway […]. […] Sometimes it's good to have more cheap clothes rather than having one good one. […] I go to House of Fraser and Debenhams for my wearing."

Apart from the low prices, FF constantly incorporates the latest trends into their goods; they create their own designs and sometimes imitate luxury brands. Consumers of FF are lucky to have access to every design available on the market at a historically cheap price. Although price reflectivity is a major element influencing customer consideration and attention (Reibstein, 2002, as quoted in Menon et al., 2016), low prices and the latest trends ensure FF consumers' loyalty. According to research by Menon et al. (2016), merchants may directly attract customers' attention to cost by manipulating the pricing focal points or by implication by using a noteworthy feature such as a model/mannequin. Mariam accepts the following:

> "I think its price definitely […]. […] Good thing about fast fashion is that they copy whatever it's trendy, so you're getting the same thing for a cheaper price […]."

4.3.2 Habituation of low-cost

Along with the low prices, FF shops often provide discounts, sales, buy one get one free, and other profitable deals to generate demand. Despite being a conscientious second-hand shopper, Mariam sometimes cannot resist the lure of the FF price:

> "I love second-hand clothing, […] […] I do sell some of my clothing online. […] I know cheap fashion does not last long […]. I will buy it if something I like […]. […] I know the quality isn't there, but I think since it's trendy and cheap, I will get it. […] If I am going to H&M, I will buy from the fast-fashion section rather than the sustainable section."

Consumers with an eye for fashion need more clothing in a variety of styles. However, people are so used to cheap prices that they are unwilling to purchase more costly clothing. Certain customers who dislike cheap FF and are concerned about the product's quality also desire clothing at a reasonable price, although maybe a bit more than the lowest. Bappy dislikes a few of the FF brands, but he approaches buying differently:

> "I stopped going to Primark and H&M; they are the worst […]. Primark's quality is not even good before you start using it […]. […] Forget the after use or wash […]. The only time I had a Polo-shirt from H&M for my holidays in Turkey. I could use it only once; it

was that bad [...]. So, I go to other brands like River Island, TK Max, Tommy and North Face, and search for a different design with better quality. [...] They have some good stuff if you are willing to pay a little extra [...]. However, I never purchase at a full price [...]. [...] Since I had so many clothes, I'm never in need of anything, So I only buy if I like something when it's on clearance or sale whether I need it or not. [...] Literally, I filled every inch of two of the three doors cupboard."

Customers who are used to paying the lowest possible price are unwilling to pay an additional fee for sustainable clothes. Environmental harm caused by FF has no immediate impact; besides, there is no incentive to purchase SF at a high price. Charlie discovered that product costs have a significant influence in the decision not to acquire sustainable fashion brands:

"I do not know it is price or what? If it is price, I am solvent enough to pay [...]. What I feel like, why? [...] I think that's a waste of money [...] why I would pay £200-£250 for solid colour knitwear! I mean, who will pay that! if I am not getting anything in return. [...] I can be concerned about other things like recycling, no plastic bags, carrying own cups rather than thinking about fashion [...]."

FF groomed people to purchase at a bargain. Individuals who are affluent enough to purchase SF but do not want to spend excessive amounts of money on clothes because of the availability of other alternatives in the market.

4.3.3 Income and budgets for shopping do not correlate to the sustainable price

We must acknowledge that customers are becoming more accountable. They recycle, carry their own bags, donate items, use less energy, and some participants do not drive cars at all, preferring to ride their bikes and, more significantly, try to wear good quality clothing. Adnan wants a higher-quality fabric and is willing to pay a premium for it:

"Good quality with a little bit of extra price is good. [...] I prefer to buy a good thing; you know if it is even expensive."

Additionally, all participants, with the exception of one, agree that they do not discard their clothing until it fades away. For instance, take Asha, a Primark devotee:

"I wear a piece of clothes too many times. [...] As long as it lasts like before the colour gets faded."

Moreover, all these FF consumers are actively recycling. Participants like Samira who although stuck in a family competition of showcasing items does recycle too:

> *"I try to recycle or donate to the people who are in need […]. […] Like when I was staying in some other countries, […] I always donate to those factory […] where people […] recycle the clothes."*

Despite, purchasing FF they agree about sustainability practices. However, when it comes to buying from sustainable brands, everything split up for Asha:

> *"I feel that it does not match with the price because the price is too high, and sometimes the price is too high that it's not worth it; to get it."*

Sahadat has similar sentiment about the SF brands' price:

> *" I won't spend that much money on shopping. Let's say £500 for a bag and denim. […] With that money, you can go for a euro tour for a week including hotel, foods and flight. Let's just not waste the money on clothing […]."*

Fatema sets a budget for her shopping and adheres to it. As a result, she is forced to frequent FF stores in order to stay under her budget:

> *"I have a budget, like maximum budgets, like how much I'm going to spend for a month. So […] I go for fast fashion. […]. Sometimes sustainable products are like too expensive; you don't have that amount to spend every month, so sometimes you can spend, but not every time. […]"*

Though SF cannot be used in lieu of FF, Mariam does so in the following manner:

> *"[…] let's say I found nice leather pants and they are selling them for £200, […] If I can't buy it from sustainable fashion, so I will go like on ASOS or Shien or somewhere I can find similar."*

Occasionally, going slightly over budget is insufficient to get SF. Huma is a very thrifty shopper when it comes to clothes; nevertheless, she has a budget for her signature pieces:

> *"I am not going to buy £10 jeans and then expect it to last for me for two years. […] Neither, I will spend more than £50-£60 on a pair of jeans. […] because I just don't think that they should cost more than that."*

The majority of participants in this study were middle-income earners, with the exception of a few who earned much more or came from affluent families. Given that the typical earner's budget is based on income, it is absolutely true for them that sustainability is costly and not always possible. While income is taken into account, Fatema's exemplification is once again so piercing:

> *"Since I am a student, I don't earn that much, and I bear my own expenses for living. […] I can ask for money from my parents if I need to buy a laptop or phone but definitely not for expensive clothes. […] I would say from my earnings I can pay 20%-25% for my clothes, not more than that if no big occasion!"*

The UK's top five sustainable fashion companies (Been London, Mother of Pearl, Elvis and Kresse, Bird Song, and Beamon Organic) charge approximately £300 for a bag, £200 for trousers, £250 for knitwear, and £100 for active or loungewear (according to their websites). On the other hand, a minimum wage worker gets about £300 per week after national insurance and a tax break if he works full time (Gov.UK, 2021). According to Mcneill and Moore (2015), the primary impediment to sustainable consumption is cost. This research suggests the same thing, but why price is acting as such a barrier of SF in this manner; customers think that the prices SF charge for their goods are unaffordable. Megan refused to purchase a piece by a SF brand with a week's hard-earned money; since it would be unsustainable for her to buy a sustainable product with her small amount of money. Besides, she has more responsibility over her family rather than on environmental matters:

> "I prefer to purchase sustainable clothes. […] work on minimum wage in a super shop. But a piece of jacket or dress cost more than my week's salary […]. I sweat blood on my work, […]. If I buy clothes with my whole salary, then how I will pay my expenses […]. And they talk about sweatshop, how they expect our hard-earned money for a £300 dress […]."

Consumers who are ethically conscious are more likely to explore the sustainable offerings of well-known companies than unknown pure, sustainable brands. Because, in addition to environmental considerations, customers have their own fashion sense. Mcneill and Moore (2015) described fashion customers' views on sustainability in their design purchasing as being determined by their social concerns and natural prosperity, their biases toward economic design, and previous behaviour consistent with moral consuming activities. Jamal prioritises luxury over SF if they have less discrepancy in economic value:

> "A good SF brand asks nearly a luxury brand's price. Maybe a hundred-pound difference […]. If I can pay three or four hundred, then I can add another hundred for Gucci. If paying that much, then why not luxury!"

Brand image is a major driver of brand value, since it refers to consumers' entire perception and emotion toward a brand, which influences customer behaviour. Thus, the primary objective of sellers is to influence shoppers' perceptions and dispositions toward a brand, to establish the brand image in the minds of consumers, and to animate buyers' actual purchasing behaviour toward the brand, thereby expanding deals, increasing the share of the pie, and creating brand value (Zhang,2015). However, SF has been seen to be drowning in the industry due to its failure to develop brand value, awareness, and customer loyalty.

Besides, purchasing SF depends on the financial situation of the customer. Various factors, such as a lack of funds, a preference for low-cost products, and affordability, all influence customers' purchasing behaviour. If customers are unable to afford sustainable clothing, ethical considerations and the purchase of SF are unrealistic (Ertekin and Atik, 2015, P.61). The study details SF consumption, as well as consumer earnings and financial stability. It also assessed whether or not the SF is affordable to the majority of people.

4.4 Summary of the findings

This study aimed to investigate self-concept in the context of fashion consumption, as well as developing a relationship with sustainability. In addition, this research intends to identify the variables that obstruct the SF and lead to unsustainable consumption, as well as to looking at consumer behaviour and economic issues. The study results revealed a range of factors influencing the apparel industry's sustainability. The following is an overview of the findings:

Social-self:

The study has some significant findings on social self-concept over fashion consumption. major findings are as follows:

o Human need to be recognised in a crowd (social-self) by their appearance and it leads to a large fashion consumption.

o Competition with others to be as out of the ordinary as possible.

o. People are willing to repeat clothing at home or for their actual-self but no one wants to repeat clothes in a social setting. As a result, the priority is to establish social-self.

o. Consumers are loyal to FF or luxury companies that may deliver them exclusivity. Social-self being affluent.

o. Even if some people repeat their clothing, they wish to retain a secure space from the last time they wore it. Repeating may cause their social-self standing to deteriorate.

o. Additional purchasing to fulfil the social-self stance has a detrimental impact on sustainability.

Over consumption of FF:

o FF contributes to an unsustainable tendency to excessive consumption while also providing a remedy to it via their cheap cost of financing over expenditure.

o More aspects such as availability, tourism, and social media platforms contribute to the other reasons for purchasing some additional pieces of fabric.

Market share between the fashion brands:

To make the additional purchase stated before, customers flock to various clothes shops. Due to its popularity, FF draws a large chunk of those customers. Additionally, customers seeking the finest materials go toward designer labels or choose for luxury. SF is able to maintain a negligible market share by maintaining a low profile and being a victim of customer ignorance.

Economic factors on purchase decisions:

The summary's first two points explain why unsustainable consumption happened and how it resulted in the acquisition of unsustainable items. However, it is critical that we include environmentally conscious customers, informed consumers, sustainable consumers, and people interested in purchasing a piece of SF among the unsustainable consumers' list, despite their willingness though, they are unable to purchase it owing to a poor salary or a tight budget. To summarise, SF's exorbitant pricing prohibits people from practising sustainability.

Chapter-5: Discussion

The research topics and problems were all adequately described based on data collected via semi-structured interviews, a review of the literature, and the findings chapter. This study examines the unsustainable buying patterns of FF consumers and the challenge of SF brands to become the brand of mass people. On the basis of the preceding principles, it is now possible to elaborate on the study's aim.

This section explains why SF has been unable to attract large numbers of consumers while being more ecologically friendly than FF. Since customers continue to participate in substantial FF shopping (Iran & Schrader, 2017; Ekstrom & Salmonson, 2014), consumer behaviour theory aids in understanding the causes that influence their purchasing decisions (Pedersen et al., 2018). As previously mentioned, excessive FF consumption exacerbates the environmental damage caused by the company's operations and post-purchase waste (UNFCCP, 2018; Iran & Schrader, 2017; Remy et al., 2016). Regardless, FF merchants continue to top the list of the largest fashion companies (SRD, 2021; Olanubi, 2018). This shows some similar responses, as respondents agreed on the critical nature of continuing their connection with FF owing to its affordable price, attractive designs, and accessibility. According to the available research, FF businesses have many advantages over SF merchants as a result of their distinctive business practices. Companies in the FF industry keep their prices low by abusing suppliers and profiting from the huge volume of sales (Niinimaki and Hassi, 2011; Dauvergne & Lister, 2013). Additionally, they persuade customers with newly created designs (Torres et al., 2017; Turker & Altuntas, 2014).

Moreover, fashion shoppers are ensnared by the offers of FF merchants. FF provides absolutely everything a person might want at a much lower price than the SF. Additionally, FF has conditioned consumers to expect to pay a cheap price for nicely designed goods. As a consequence, paying a premium for SF is still a long way off; many consumers choose to wait until FF's goods go on sale. Apart from the FF's devious marketing strategies, there are many more significant reasons why customers avoid SF businesses while allowing the FF to continue growing. Additional grounds are given below:

5.1 Lack of fashion knowledge of the FF consumers

Research published around ten years ago indicated that consumers' awareness of FF sustainability was low (Chau, 2012; Goworek, et al 2012). Numerous changes have occurred in recent years; individuals are increasingly informed of and updated on current events. That reflected in the recent publications as well which indicate that consumer knowledge of sustainability is increasing globally (Cheng, 2019), and fashion customers are aware of fashion's negative environmental effect and willing to purchase sustainable goods (Kotahwala, 2020, McNeill et al., 2020).

Each participant in this study holds a minimum of a college degree, and the majority are either recent university graduates or current students (see participants' list). Additionally, while they are all frequent buyers, they lack fundamental understanding about fashion and its sustainability. To add to the surprise, over half of respondents are unaware with the term "Fast-Fashion," despite being in love with the brands like Zara, H&M, and New Look and do regular shopping from those outlets.

Without a doubt, today's consumers are more environmentally concerned. Even the participants in this study showed concern for the environment by avoiding the use of plastic bags, carrying their own coffee cups, and doing recycling. However, this study contradicts recent publications that claims fashion consumers are now aware of the consequences of unsustainable fashion, since consumer knowledge of fashion sustainability is far too low.

5.2 Deceptive FF's marketing:

FF businesses are introducing new ideas and technology to help us gradually move toward sustainability. They are making a concerted effort to improve their negative reputation (Liu et al., 2020). At the moment, all fashion businesses have distinct sustainability sections on their websites and publish an annual sustainability report.

While FF's websites have sustainable sections, they make no such effort in their physical stores. The sustainable clothing selection is too small, and their stores mostly feature FF designs and make use of mannequins to draw in consumers. Some of this study's participants who are truly concerned about the environment feel that FF merchants are not adequately informing consumers about the goods and are actively pushing FF products under the guise of a sustainable adaptation.

FF is showing the effort towards sustainability by compling with the environmental regulations. On the other hand, they are still producing FF, promoting it and making huge margins of profit by selling it. They do not want consumers to come across this information. Consumers who are only concerned with the environment or who are ready to learn about any relevant environmental information are the only ones who are aware of FF and its sustainability problems.

5.3 Maintaining a lower profile by SF

According to Unilever (2017), a third of customers now make purchases based on a brand's social and environmental effect. Additionally, businesses who demonstrate their sustainable credentials stand to earn an estimated €966 billion. Though study indicates that the market is sufficiently developed to enable the purchase of sustainable items, where SF has some competitive advantages over FF, it should focus its efforts on marketing policies and mass promotions to capture that particular group.

The interview data revealed that, with the exception of two participants, no one had ever seen an SF fashion advertising or field promotion. While visiting a Uniqlo's actual shop in Manchester, the remaining two participants saw a booklet and information about the goods' sustainability were written next to the shelf. However, it is quite obvious that SF maintains a low profile when it comes to marketing.

Promotions for products always persuade consumers to purchase or repurchase the same product (Lee and Charles, 2020). However, scholarly research on SF marketing policies and promotional tactics is inadequate. This research identified that if SF conducts effective

marketing, becomes well-known to customers, and periodically offers attractive promotions, consumers will be considerably more accessible to SF.

5.4 Economic strength of the consumers

Consumers always have a budget for the items they wish to purchase, such as a shopping budget, a home budget, or a vacation budget. If someone is purchasing a home, they will undoubtedly seek for one that suits their budget. Consumers are accustomed to purchasing items within their budgets or little over or below. In terms of SF, it is more expensive than FF since it offers much greater quality and confirms a sustainable operation from source to final product. Mcneill and Moore (2015) encountered that the increased cost of SF is one of the primary barriers preventing the ordinary customer from making a sustainable purchase. However, by saying expensive does not demonstrate how price alone can be such a significant influence in customers abandoning sustainability and favour of FF.

Among the participants some FF consumers are aware of the harm caused by FF and show concerns for the environment's long-term viability. Their concerns have encouraged them to engage in recycling, avoid the use of plastics, and minimise energy use. However, they do have a difficult time when it comes to fashion. The reason for this is that SF is prohibitively costly and does not correspond to the average person's income. All of the prominent SF companies' products (Patagonia, Eileen Fisher, Been London, Mother of Pearl) are pricey, even some of the SF pieces are as costly as luxury labels like Gucci. The prices they are charging are prohibitively exorbitant for a customer with an average income.

According to this research, consumers are unable to acquire SF pieces owing to their financial situation and limited purchasing budget. The world's mass consumer bulk is comprised of people with low to middle incomes. It cannot be a wise decision to set a SF price that will be out of reach of the consumers with average buying power. If the cost of SF is prohibitively expensive for that demographic, it should be categorised as luxury. And there is no way to achieve sustainability by focusing exclusively on wealthy consumers, who are a minority. Besides, if SF is keeping their price near to luxury brands the consumers will more likely to buy that luxury brand by paying the differences.

5.5 Self-concept leading to unsustainable consumption

Fashion-conscious customers are always on the lookout for new clothes. An individual with a strong sense of self is more inclined to select innovation and creativity in their fashion choices (Mcneill, 2018). Clothing is the most often utilised mode of self-presentation because it allows a person to establish, maintain, and alter their appearance.

Among the four common dimensions of self-concept literature mostly focuses on the actual-self and ideal-self (Legere and Kang, 2020; Anand and Kaur, 2018). However, this research revealed that the less researched social-self is one of the most powerful components of the self-concept and has a major influence on fashion choices and consumption.

This study adds value by bridging the knowledge gap between social self-concept and sustainability. Although previous research has been done on self-concept and how it influences choices (Legere and Kang, 2020; Niinimaki, 2010; D'Souza, 2015), this study uncovered several new aspects that are impacted by the social-self. Firstly, the desire for individuality contributes to the purchase of additional apparel. Hence customers' additional purchases are contributing to fashion's unsustainability. Furthermore, this study shed light on several distinctive characteristics of customers, such as competitiveness to spend more than others for uniqueness and the embarrassment of wearing similar or repeating outfits. Individuals like seeing themselves more attractive to others. As a result, they dress in a variety of styles and avoid wearing the same outfit during social gatherings. This sense of ideal-social-self encourages individuals to continue adding to their clothes collection. It encourages them to purchase more clothing, and consumers who cannot afford to buy many pieces of clothes from a sustainable store they go for an FF outlet. Therefore, ideal-self-concept create a random buying pattern that led to an unsustainable consumption.

In addition to the new findings, the study brought value to previous studies. People repeat their clothing at home, which implies they wear the same dress several times without it affecting their actual-self. However, the same people are reluctant to repeat their clothes in social gatherings since they believe that it will lower their social-self. As a result, the priority is to establish social-self rather than concerned with the actual-self. Individuals strive to be

unique and believe that well-chosen clothing may do wonders for their attitude (Jacobs et al., 2018). However, according to this study, an individual's distinctiveness is mostly based on how they are perceived by others (ideal social-self) rather than how they are perceived by themselves (actual-self). However, they like to wear new attire and attempt to appear unique in the sight of others. For instance, they enjoy seeing unique in other people's eyes during social gatherings, parties, and weddings. There is a belief that if they wear an unusual dress, others will look at them and think about them, which will elevate them to a particular status. Therefore, there is always competition to appear unique at social gatherings, which is why fashion consumers frequently purchase new and attractively designed clothing in order to stand out and draw attention to themselves when mingling with various groups of people. Additionally, clothing has an emotional connection with individuals; bad clothing brings them down, and they sometimes feel humiliated by the repetition of clothes in parties. In reality none of the participants have encountered such thing where someone approached and said, "Hey! Is it the same thing you wore last time?". However, nobody wants to be noticed when they are wearing the same fabric again in a social event with the same set of people.

Chapter-6: Conclusions, Recommendations and Limitations

6.1 Conclusions and contributions

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of self-concept on fashion consumption by determining how it promotes selections and volume. Furthermore, it investigated various aspects that restrict SF's capacity to compete with FF, since none of the SF brands have been able to gain a place in customers' hearts alongside FF brands such as H&M and Zara, the two market leaders in the fashion sector. Consumer behaviour theory and the elements that impact customers' purchase decisions were investigated in this study. The conclusions and contributions of the study are summarised below.

Begin with, this study sought to ascertain the effect of self-concept on fashion consumption. This particular study constructed a correlation between the ideal social-self and unsustainable purchasing habits. The social self-concept of being exceptional in order to stand out from the crowd increases purchase volumes. Since they are always striving to be special, which includes wearing unique clothing to stand out and be noticed. As a result, the volume of consumption grows, highlighting that the social self-concept causes unsustainable consumption. This study has contributed to the consumer behaviour literature by establishing a link between fashion self-concept and sustainability. In addition, this study also demonstrated how an individual's social identity could lead to excessive consumption, which is not sustainable.

Secondly, the consumer's understanding of the goods they buy is substantial since it facilitated determining whether or not customers are meant to purchase unsustainable fashion while being aware of the implications of their purchases. FF businesses claim that they adapt and promote sustainability (Wlofe, 2018; Weetman, 2017), while the findings of this research discovered that many FF consumers are unaware of the consequences of their FF purchases. Using college and university graduates as a sample, this study established that although individuals possess the education and necessary information to investigate and

can make an informed purchase, their lack of fashion knowledge prevents them from shopping in an environmentally friendly way.

Lastly, mass consumers refer to individuals with low to moderate incomes who comprise the bulk of the world's population (Lavile, 2019). In order to attain a milestone, SF enterprises must reach out to the general consumer market. However, the high cost of SF puts it out of reach for most individuals. This particular research substantiates that, the average person's earnings is incompatible with the SF's offer, making SF unaffordable to the significant number of regular consumers. It adds additional understanding by comparing the average person's income to different SF's pricing. Sustainability is not a task that can be attained by one set of people. There must be a concerted effort involving the largest possible number of people. Therefore, it will be difficult for SF to replace FF's broad market appeal and attaining fashion sustainability will be challenging unless consumer buying patterns alter.

6.2 Recommendations

1. The sustainability of FF businesses is under serious question. The majority of their sustainability claims are categorised as greenwashing. The removal of this allegation of greenwashing will help FF advance further towards sustainability and increase acceptance. Therefore, more appropriate and credible authorities must be established to trace and verify the FF's claims in order for them to be more acknowledged.

2. To increase customer awareness of environmental degradation, FF retailers should play a proactive role rather than relying on a year-end sustainability statement. To educate customers, FF businesses can give more information about clothes and its sustainability in-store or online. They may also expand their sustainable offerings in the actual shop. For example, H&M and Zara both offer separate sustainable lines in their online stores, which they are constantly modernising and expanding. The sustainable lines, on the other hand, are so limited in the real shop.

3. SF should have a lead role in educating customers, since they are the pioneer of sustainability of the fashion industry. They should develop more effective marketing strategies to ensure that their importance is recognised and understood by everyone. Additionally, they may demonstrate to the public how unsustainable consumerism can result in environmental disaster. Further, establishing enough physical stores of the SF brands are needed to be more accessible to the customers.

4. SF costs are certainly higher than FF pricing. Even so, the change in consumer buying patterns and attitudes towards SF purchases is achievable for everyone. Additional awareness and education can encourage consumers to change their buying patterns from 'purchasing more (cheap FF) to stay within budget' to 'purchasing less (high-grade SF) whilst spending the same (budget)'. One FF customer, for example, can spend £90 on one sustainable jeans rather than three £30 unsustainable jeans. Because the higher quality material will last him as long as or longer than the three poor quality inexpensive jeans.

5. Fashion's ideal social-self-concept must be addressed urgently, as it contributes to an unsustainable society. To address this, we must increase societal awareness and work together to accomplish the objective. Social media is a great platform for establishing a trend for wearing the same item as much as possible and preserving a piece of clothing for years. Already, there is some well-established trend that has acquired popularity and is being followed. For example, 'Trash Tag,' an Instagram cleaning challenge that has gone popular, requires people to pick up all trash in the vicinity of a place and submit a picture of the before and after using trash bags. If we can track something like this, wearing the same outfit many times and documenting it on social media, this may establish a trend to follow.

Figure 5: Trash-tag challenge on Instagram

Source: Instagram

Figure 6: Recommended challenge to use ideal social-self-concept in sustainability's favour

Source: Author

6. Apart from social media, we may cultivate a culture in our actual society in which durable and repeated clothing are appreciated more than diversity and new apparel. We may start this trend in our communities, friends' groups, family reunions, social events, and special occasions. Individuals' attitudes about fashion will shift in such scenario, and they will embrace more sustainable practices.

6.3 Limitations:

1. This research encountered a number of constraints. To begin, the ideal social-self in terms of sustainability is a novel notion in the literature, with no previous study. Following a thorough review of scholarly research articles, it became clear that further study on the subject was necessary.

2. Over a one-year timeframe, this kind of study is always a challenge. Additionally, the covid-19 epidemic made it more difficult and took longer than anticipated. Throughout the data collecting period, the authorities enforced a lockdown on the whole nation. As a result, this uncertain issue impacted data gathering, and the author was forced to alter his collection strategy.

3. Due to the pandemic situation and limited time this study was of a small-scale nature. This may have harmed the results' generalisability. Primary research on a large scale may or may not provide comparable results.

4. Additionally, lack of time and limited resources were significantly affecting this study. Time and money are two essential components of large-scale research. Due to the absence of both components, this study was performed on a small scale and was restricted to a single geographical population.

6.4 Future research suggestions:

This study significantly advances our understanding of the impact of consumer behaviour on sustainability particularly by highlighting the consumers' ideal social-self-concept, awareness, and income level. However, the author has encountered many major difficulties while doing this study. Due to the focus on this particular study addressing other issues were not possible though confidence enough that these problems, if addressed, may make a significant contribution to academic study. The following are some future study suggestions:

This study established the fashion consumer's lack of awareness. Whereas prior research on consumer awareness has shown that contemporary consumers are highly informed about

the market and goods and want sustainability across all sectors of their life for instance, food, fashion, and appliances. Additionally, businesses, especially FF, are altering their operations as a result of their negative image. FF is incorporating sustainability into its operations and educating customers. If that is true, it begs the question of why FF customers are so uninformed about fashion sustainability and FF's negative impact. Further study may be conducted to determine why the FF's efforts to educate customers about sustainability are not reaching the broader public. Additionally, they may examine the issues that are impeding their ability to reach customers and those that profit from this.

Apart from that, this study's results demonstrated how income plays a significant role in driving ordinary customers to purchase unsustainable fashion. Despite the suggestions given previously in the recommendation section, a new price structure for both the SF and FF should be considered as important research issue. The price study may help us determine The feasibility of FF's higher pricing in exchange for superior quality and at what cost structure SF will be most acceptable to mass customers.

6.5 Summary:

According to this study, price and awareness are two major problems that are impeding the growth of SF. Apart from that, this study illuminated the literature by demonstrating that self-concepts can have a detrimental impact on the fashion sustainability. Despite significant limitations, this research was accomplished, and an academic contribution was made. This study, in addition to the scholarly contribution, makes some essential recommendations for overcoming the obstacle of sustainable solutions. If those proposals are followed by relevant firms and organisations, the author believes they will assist to mitigate some of the harm caused by the fashion industry. Finally, yet importantly, research is a continuous process and always necessary to do further study in order to develop the concept more clearly or elaborately. Aside from that, new research might add new perspectives to old research. As a result, several future study ideas have been made in order to illustrate the relevant issue more broadly and on a larger scale, which this research was unable to achieve owing to time constraints.

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Appendix-1: Information sheet

Information sheet

Fast fashion and shoppers: By choice or trapped in an allurement culture.

Background: The glamourous fashion industry intoxicating the environment throughout its entire line of production. Fast fashion is believed to be the most unsustainable and bough of the industry among all its other branches. For making the world better for living and maintaining in a sustainable state; resolving the fast fashion consuming is the grand challenge of this century.

Granting that, people have all the information about what damage the fast fashion doing to their environment; they are showing absolutely no sign of stopping to buy fast fashion apparels.

Project information: The project aims to investigate the aspects; those are leading to the growth of fast fashion; 1) scrutinising the fast fashion business policies to draw the customers; 2) examining the consumers' purchasing and managing behaviour; 3) investigating the relation between consumers' buying power and fast fashion shopping.

The project will be undertaken by the research student of the University of Huddersfield. Any business or personal concerns rises due to the Covid-19 will be given full attention. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from this research project at any time by; 1) communicating any concern to the researcher, or; 2) directly contacting the university of Huddersfield on the number below. Only members of the research team will have access to the collected data, which will be stored in secure facilities at the University of Huddersfield. If you are willing to take part, please sign the attached consent form and return it via the email address below or in person to the researcher. This does not infringe any of your statutory rights.

For more detailed project information contact Mohammad Sayeed Kabir mohammad.kabir@hud.ac.uk | 07949840481 | University of Huddersfield Central Switchboard 01484 422288

Appendix-2: Consent form

Name of Researcher(s): MOHAMMAD SAYEED KABIR
Title of Research Project: Fast fashion and shoppers: By choice or trapped in an allurement culture.

For participant to complete   **Please tick box**

I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet related to this research, and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. ☐

I understand that all my responses will be anonymised (if requested). ☐

I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. ☐

I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date:

Name of Researcher: _____

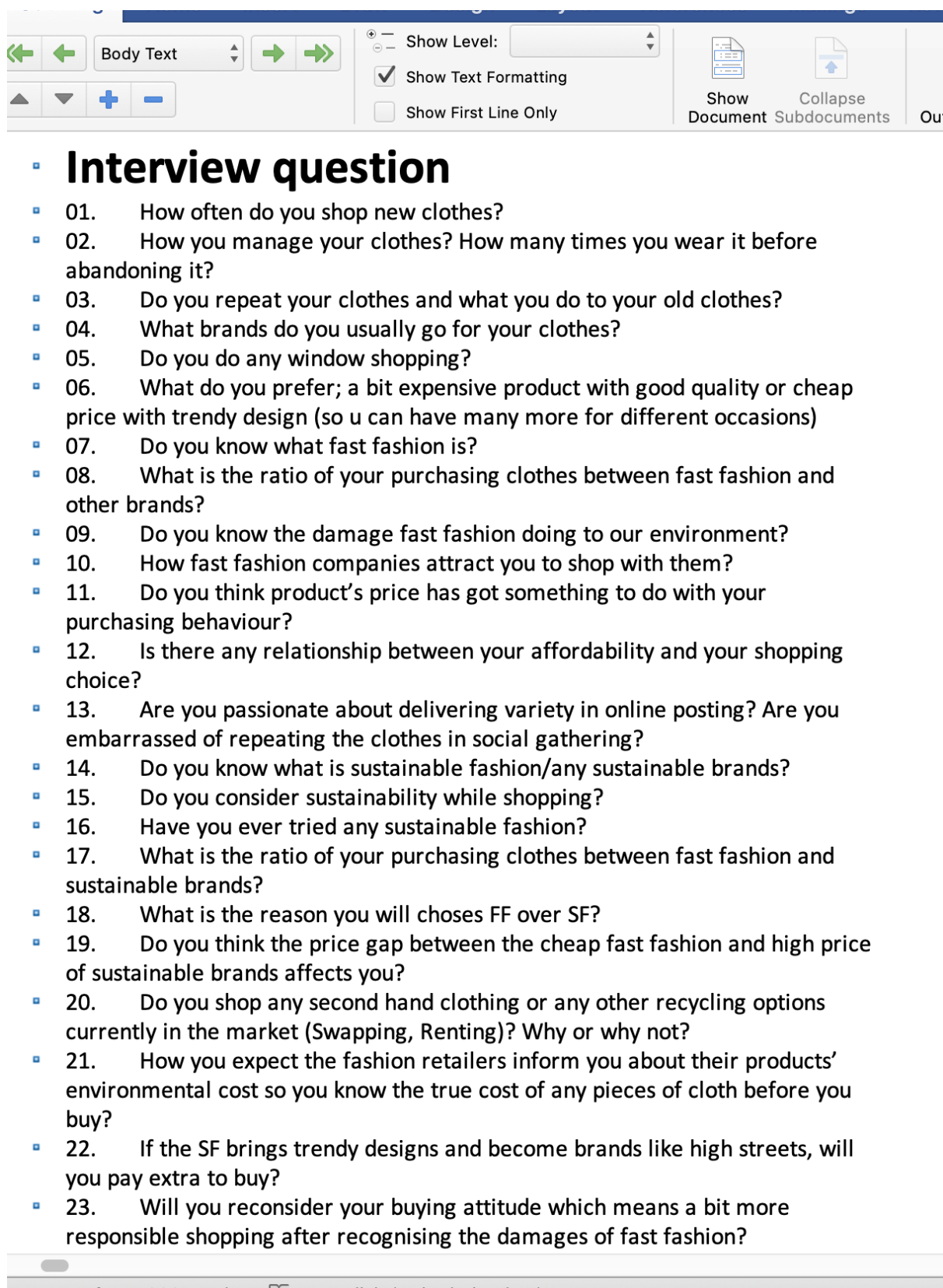Signature of Researcher: _____

Date:

Appendix-3: NVIVO Coding

Appendix-4: Themes

General shopping Habits	Familiarity With Fashion	Self-concept	Economic factors	Conflict between sust. and Unsust.	Misleading FF	SF pros and cons
Shopping frequency	Knowing FF	Additional purchase	Expensive/Cheap	Recycling Old clothes	Attract	
Buying Brands	FF sustainability	Variety/Designer clothes	Price connection with purchase	Clothes life-span	Allurement	Drawbacks of SF
Loving FF	Knowledge of SF	Preferences on gathering	Budget/Income	Repetition	Misinforming consumers	Sustainable /expensive clothes
Ratio of FF/Other Brands	SF shopping	Repetition	Shopping budget	Disastrous buying		Expectation
Online Posting	Sustainable brands	Embarrassment of not distinctive	Paying for SF	Ratio of SF and FF		Suggestions
Show off		competition		Second-hand shopping		
Requires more clothe				Sustainable consideration		
				Buying Reconsideration		

Appendix 5: Interview topic guide

Interview question

01.   How often do you shop new clothes?

02.   How you manage your clothes? How many times you wear it before abandoning it?

03.   Do you repeat your clothes and what you do to your old clothes?

04.   What brands do you usually go for your clothes?

05.   Do you do any window shopping?

06.   What do you prefer; a bit expensive product with good quality or cheap price with trendy design (so u can have many more for different occasions)

07.   Do you know what fast fashion is?

08.   What is the ratio of your purchasing clothes between fast fashion and other brands?

09.   Do you know the damage fast fashion doing to our environment?

10.   How fast fashion companies attract you to shop with them?

11.   Do you think product's price has got something to do with your purchasing behaviour?

12.   Is there any relationship between your affordability and your shopping choice?

13.   Are you passionate about delivering variety in online posting? Are you embarrassed of repeating the clothes in social gathering?

14.   Do you know what is sustainable fashion/any sustainable brands?

15.   Do you consider sustainability while shopping?

16.   Have you ever tried any sustainable fashion?

17.   What is the ratio of your purchasing clothes between fast fashion and sustainable brands?

18.   What is the reason you will choses FF over SF?

19.   Do you think the price gap between the cheap fast fashion and high price of sustainable brands affects you?

20.   Do you shop any second hand clothing or any other recycling options currently in the market (Swapping, Renting)? Why or why not?

21.   How you expect the fashion retailers inform you about their products' environmental cost so you know the true cost of any pieces of cloth before you buy?

22.   If the SF brings trendy designs and become brands like high streets, will you pay extra to buy?

23.   Will you reconsider your buying attitude which means a bit more responsible shopping after recognising the damages of fast fashion?

Appendix 6: Interview transcript

Sayeed: How often do you shop new clothes?

Samira : It depends like for vacations or on my mood, if I want to purchase something I just purchase.

Sayeed : Is it like once in a week or once in a month or something?

Samira : Yeah, it's like once in a week or a month, like, it depends. Exactly. Depends on my mood. Yeah.

Sayeed : How much clothes do you need, is it depends on the necessity or something else?

Samira : If I need I do purchase otherwise not.

Sayeed : Okay. How you manage your clothes? I mean how many times do you wear your clothes before abandon it?

Samira : Until, unless that is usable, I use the clothes. I never, never through it. Like, I never suggested myself to throw clothes without any reasons.

Sayeed : Okay. what do you do to your old clothes?

Samira : Mostly. I just give to the people they're in need of.

Sayeed : Okay. Have you tried to do recycle your clothes?

Samira : I tried, like when I was staying in some other country, like I always give, , those, , factory, the, where the people, they recycle the clothes.

Sayeed : Okay. where do you usually go for the clothes?

Samira : The brands shops and like, it depends, like if I want to attend some present party or programs, like always choose branded clothes or for the knee, like an as like always use like everyday use. I just, um, take the normal clothes. Non-brand

Sayeed : What are the shop's name? Where do you go?

Samira : If I talk about like, my favorites are H&M, Next, these are the shop.

Sayeed : These are the brands you go for your party clothes, or are, are these all your like regular use? I mean, if u r using it at home.

Samira : No, if I'm staying at home, I always choose Primark. Cause that was the cheapest one.

Sayeed : All right. do you do any window shopping?

Samira :

It depends. Like if I really don't feel to go out with friends or family or not in a mood to go out anywhere, I hang around the shopping malls and do the window shopping.

Sayeed : What do you prefer? Expensive product with good quality or cheap price with trendy design. So, you can have many different types of clothes for different occasions.

Samira : I always prefer buying, um, branded stuff. Like if I choose, if I talk about like parties and occasions, because that comes with like certains, you know, criteria. So, if you're wearing brands and other people, they can see that you're wearing brands that brings you social respects, I feel. So, I prefer to buy something which is expensive when I'm using it like I'm going for a party or some occasions.

Sayeed: Do you work full time or part time?

Samira: I do part time job 20 hours in a week.

Sayeed: What percentage of your income you can spend on buying clothes?

Samira: I can't be sure! May be 15-20%.

Sayeed : Do you know what fast fashion is?

Samira : Um, I don't have any idea about it.

Sayeed : First fashion is like a regular fashion. I mean, the high street fashion. Are you familiar with the high street fashion? So high street super shops, like it provides the newest, fashionable trendy designs with very less price. They always bring the new trend or add up the trend so fast. Like, some trend is going and they're bringing it, bringing those trends in their shops in fastest way possible. So that's how it calls Fast fashion. They're like desirable, fashionable looking, they look nice and more importantly, they're really, really cheap to get. And, but the problem is like, the quality may not be as good as the other brands. So might not last long, it doesn't last long as well.

Samira : Well. Okay.

Sayeed : So, you know it now, you didn't know the first fashion. Okay. what is the ratio of your purchasing clothes between fast fashion and other brands? Do you know what is fast fashion brands?

Samira : No I don't know. I think it's a primary, I guess they are first fashion because, you know, they, they always come with the new ideas and the new clothes with every week and the coming from a very diverse country.

Sayeed : Yeah. The primary that's correct. And, the biggest, fast fashion names are, H and M and Zara and like gap. they are all of fast fashions, mostly your brands, actually, whatever, wherever you go. So, if I, if you take the fast fashion brands, I mean, wherever you go. So what the ratio of fast fashion brands and other brands. For example if you take the Michael Kors, take the Armani take the Gucci. I mean, other, brands, like it would expensive or luxury brand or designer brands. What would be the ratio?

Samira : If I talk about like, um, Guess or Zara, or like Topman any other brands, which is very expensive. I know like if I purchase a cloth from them, like it's going to be one, if I'm going for the fast fashion is

going to be like, more than that. So it's completely different. Like if I choose something expensive, then I, I might go for other stores, like, which is like Guess or Zara, like Guess or Armani or something else. Like if I choose something like less price with a good,., you know, the better design. So maybe the fast Fashion.

Sayeed : No, I mean, so if you take taking the ratio, like out of 10 what the fast fashion would be?

Samira : I'm gonna take the first patients, like usually more rather than like, um, the expensive ones, 70 and 30. Yeah.

Sayeed : Okay. are you buying fast fashion even though, you know, that it won't last long?

Samira : Yeah, Because it's cheap and, like it can give me a more comfortable so I can purchase like more and more.

Sayeed : So basically you're not expecting much. No. Okay. do you know that damage fast fashion doing to our environment?

Samira : I know the environmental problem because for, for the industry, like they're the, they're the basic, um, they're using some basic requirements like, which is gonna be like, you know, harmful for the environment. I'm aware of it.

Sayeed : Okay. So low price or modern designs. What is the primary reason for shopping with fast fashion?

Samira : I think the low price, because people, they are more conscious, like they are more conscious of whatever they paying, you know, where they're paying and what clothes they are buying.

Sayeed : So do you think products, price has got something to do with your purchasing?

Samira : Yeah, obviously because, there was so many people's like that if they think of what they're earning, they, they might go for the fast fashion because it's a low price and they can just get a good, , you know, good design with a very less price. So maybe, yeah.

Sayeed : Is there any relationship at university between your affordability and your shopping choices?

Samira : Oh, definitely. Because if you can afford a good, you know, good clause in a good price, you will never go for the fast fashion because you know, like, the first fashionhis like harming to the environment, but, and you cannot use that product like again in again, but when you go for the brand, the quality and everything is going to be like too good. So you it's like, it's not going to damage like within, within one or two wash.

Sayeed : Are you passionate about delivering variety in, in, in online posting? Do, do, do you post frequently?

Samira: No.

Sayeed: All right., are you embarrassed of repeating the clothes in social gathering?

Samira: Not at all

Sayeed: like maybe a big wedding. You don't want to repeat the clothes cause you already wear it in the past.

Samira : Not really at home, because nobody is going to check your clothes. Like how many times do you wear it? So, it's fine.

Sayeed : Do you know what is sustainable fashion?

Sayeed: I don't have an idea what is that

Sayeed: Right? So that's the sustainable fashion is like, it's pretty much opposite to fast fashion. They do good, very good quality cloth so that it can last long. So on that sense, it's really, really sustainable because you are wearing your clothes for a very long time and they source ethically. they keep in mind that they don't harm the environment much. Or they tried from sourcing their productions, everything. they try to do it ethically and not to harm them or as much as less as it can be. Okay.

Do you want any SF brands?

Samira: No.

Sayeed: Do you consider sustainability when shopping, do you keep in mind, the environmental things while you're shopping? Like it's going to harm the environment or whatever you're doing is going to harm the environment.

Samira: Not really! To tell you the truth

Sayeed: Have you ever tried any sustainable brands?

Samira: No.

Sayeed: DO you know any sustainable brand?

Samira: NO

Sayeed: Have you ever heard of BEEN LONDON, MOTHER OF PEARL, ELVIS AND KRESSE, BIRD SONG, BEAMON ORGANIC, PEOPLE TREE?

Samira: No, never heard of them.

Sayeed: What is the ratio of your purchasing clothes between fast fashion and sustainable brands?

Samira : I think it's like again, 30, 70,

Sayeed : Did you buy any sustainable brands?

Samira : No, never. Oh, sorry. Sorry. It's like, it's going to be zero. Yeah, Because I was not aware of sustainable brands, so I don't know it.

Sayeed : Oh, okay. So, but this is some of the fashion brands have been expensive as well. Cause it, cause it costs cost money or anybody you're thinking all these things sort of thing ethically and providing good quality tech, it really costs money. So, the product products will be costly at then my question is, okay, so, what is the reason you will choose the fast fashion over sustainable fashion. What is the reason? Is it the price?

Samira : Honestly, it's a price because like the designs, like a price matters a lot, you know, because cloth is something that you can just, take one cloth and just, you can wear that one cloth years and years. So, you need to change your clothes in design, Yes.

Sayeed: Will you pay £200 for a pair of denim, £300 for a bag, £100 for active wear and £250 for knitwear?

Samira: No chance in the earth I am gonna pay that much money for my clothes. I won't say I can't pay or afford the money; I'll say I won't spend that for shopping. Let's say £500 for a bag and a denim. With that money you can go for a euro tour for a week including hotel, foods and flight. Let's just not waste the money in clothing.

Sayeed : Alright. do you shop any second and clothing or any other resecting options?

Samira: No. No, no, never.

Sayeed: do you think fast fashion retailers are properly informing their customers about the environmental cost of the clothes they are offering?

Samira: No, I don't think so.

Sayeed: Cause you don't know [inaudible] okay. So how you expect the fast fashion retailers inform you about their products' environmental cost. So, you know, the true cost of any pieces of cloth while you're buying it.

Samira : I feel like they can use a social media. They can just, you know, write down the statements of what the clothes and everything and they can actually, like they can post some posters in their clothing store as well. So, while purchasing the clothes, people, they can actually read about the product and they will understand the environmental problem. Because social media is a booming sector now, like everyone, they can actually, you know, read and understand like about, many things, um, in social media. So I feel like the social media is the best way for them too, you know, give the information to the customer.

Sayeed : If the sustainable brands brings trend to designs and become brands like, high street brands, like let's say Zara, H&M like, and like some sustainable brands came and became like H&M and Zara like the popular brands. And everywhere, they got their shops and they bring the good designs as well. So will you pay any extra for that?

Samira : Yeah. I don't mind because, those, company, they are not very expensive. So if they come with a sustainable, um, clothing, I don't mind to pay extra.

Sayeed :
Yeah. We'll pay, like, let's say if you're paying at the moment 20 pound for a Hoodie, will you pay 60, 70 pound for a hoodie? Well, it's sustainable.

Samira : Yeah, because the difference is not that much.

Sayeed : All right. Okay. If you have to stop buying fast fashion, what other options you will take instead of shopping at the fast fashion? So, let's say there is no fast fashion, where are you to go for, for your shopping?

Samira : I'll go to Michael Kors or Guess, because those are the two brand I love.

Sayeed : So after knowing all these will you reconsider your buying?

Samira : Yeah. Maybe I will think, before purchasing anything, because before that, I was not aware of the sustainable clothing and the fast fashion.

Sayeed :
Okay. Thank you.