

Sustainability and Ethics in the Textile Industry: Challenges and Solutions from Circular Economy and Slow Fashion.

Research dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

MSc in International Business and Law

Griffith College Dublin

Dissertation Supervisor: **Sana Khan**

Student Name: Marta Puigcerver Periago

6th September 2024

Candidate Declaration

Candidate Name: Marta Puigcerver Periago

I certify that the dissertation entitled: *"Sustainability and Ethics in the Textile Industry: Challenges and Solutions from Circular Economy and Slow Fashion."*

submitted for the degree of: **MSc in International business and law** is the result of the my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

Candidate signature:



Date: 6th September 2024.

Supervisor Name: Sana Khan

Supervisor signature:

Date:

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends, who have always believed in me and supported my personal and mental growth. Without their encouragement, this would never have been possible.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all my loved ones, who have always believed in me and never let go of my hand.

Additionally, I want to thank my classmates, who are now my friends, from the master's program. They have made this journey easier and have always appreciated the effort and work involved.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Sana. From the moment I knew there was a possibility that she could be my supervisor, I knew I wanted her to guide me through this process.

Thanks to my professors, I have grown intellectually and professionally.

To the people who participated in the interviews and dedicated their time to them, thank you.

Abstract

This study focuses on examining the current landscape of the textile industry. Technological advancements have developed new methods to accelerate consumer demand, leading to the rise of fast fashion. Trends evolve rapidly, encouraging people to spend more on their appearance, which greatly impacts society. The effects of fast fashion are particularly evident in the supply chain and environmental sustainability.

To explore the consequences of this modern fashion trend, a descriptive approach has been used to portray the current situation accurately. Moreover, the aim is not only to emphasise the challenges the industry is currently facing but also to explore the most viable solutions that could constructively address these issues.

The findings of this study highlight the constraints faced by all stakeholders involved in the fashion process. Throughout the research, special focus is given to the difficulties encountered by each party and potential strategies to address them.

In conclusion, this paper stresses the importance of a collective shift in mindset, focusing on the behaviours and practices adopted by the textile sector in recent years. It also seeks to promote greater awareness of the industry's challenges.

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1 Introduction.

1.1 Overview.

The main purpose of this research is to study the effects of user habits on trends in the textile industry in the 21st century.

The focus of this study is on the textile industry due to different reasons that will be seen throughout the document. The primary reason is provided by the definition of “fashion” in the Oxford English Dictionary:

1. A popular style of clothes, hair, etc. at a particular time or place; the state of being popular.
2. The business of making or selling clothes in new and different styles.
3. A popular way of behaving, doing an activity, etc.

The second epigraph addresses a more technical way to describe the concept of fashion, viewing it as a product created by the artistic discipline of textile design.

However, the third definition is also related to the second, as fashion relies on individuals to offer them a product according to their demand.

These uses and customs have led to what we know today as fast fashion. Therefore, there is no better way to study the effects caused by consumerism than through fashion, a behaviour triggered by the decisions and actions of consumers.

As Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) mention in their book about consumer behaviour, they refer to consumers as unique and different from each other, but if there is one common circumstance, it is that everyone is a consumer. They also emphasize the importance of the consumer’s role, as their decisions have an impact on the production chain, such as the use of raw materials.

Martin-Cabello (2016) relates how fashion is directly connected to consumption. It is the result of societies with greater wealth, being the maximum consumption expression. Additionally, he adds that fashion is not more than a situation orchestrated within the market sphere, that is, around a purely commercial model.

Whether there has indeed been a boom in initiatives both public and private, aimed at curbing excessive consumption in recent years, awareness of this issue remains low (Defra 2008). Additionally, economic recovery is reinforcing and prolonging these consumer habits.

Thus, we are witnessing a global phenomenon that may turn against all its consumers in the short term. Contemporary consumption benefits the numbers of the global economy, but at the same time, indirectly harms the planet, making it necessary to analyze this impact and, even more so, to find solutions toward sustainable fashion (Zeas, 2017).

1.2 Research Purpose

As a starting point, it should be considered the consumer profile in the last decade in the textile industry. As the unanimity in the literature indicates (Davis 1992; Crane, 2012) there has been a change in consumer preferences, going from viewing the dressing practice as a necessity associated with the search of long-lasting clothes to considering it as a treat for people who are seeking cheaper clothes, and therefore short-lived clothes. Priorities have been watched and altered throughout history, arising in a way to differentiate classes in society.

However, last year consumer behaviour refused social motivation due to a multiple fashion election as the author Martinez-Barreiro explains (1996).

This leads to greater autonomy for consumers when deciding which products to buy, a topic we will explore further. Additionally, the phenomenon of prêt-à-porter, introduced by Pierre Cardin in the 1950s, literally meaning “ready to wear”, shares a similar goal with fast fashion in democratizing fashion and reaching a broader audience. As Ferguson (2011) points out, the emergence of standard sizes the focus from bespoke fashion to mass-produced pret-à-porter designed for more advanced economies, while still referencing haute couture designs.

According to Martínez and Garcillán (2016), fashion has become a means of expression for individuals, reflecting both personality and mood. Their research findings suggest that fashion plays a significant role in the lives of consumers, who constantly seek information on the latest trends. A major influence in this regard has been the rise of social users who admit to checking these blogs and social media accounts almost daily, which suggest new trends and styles to follow, thereby encouraging continuous consumption.

In this context, we are witnessing the climax of consumerism, a moment in history that is reshaping the very structures of society, as Bauman highlighted in 2012. Notably, the fashion industry has become the second most polluting industry globally, following only the oil industry. The production of clothing consumes millions of litres of water, which paradoxically returns to the environment as toxins, causing severe pollution in oceans (Toboso,2017). This is the dark side of the textile sector, which many theories trace back to a common origin: the consumerism driven by the fast fashion phenomenon, particularly

through the application of the just-in-time system by the giant Inditex (Crofton and Dopico, 2007).

The social impact of this phenomenon has asked a significant amount of literature. One of the movements that has emerged in the last decade as a response to this situation is slow fashion, which aims to slow down the process that has fueled this consumerist web. Cataldi et al. (2010) define slow fashion as follows:

“It is based on the Slow Food movement and other slow movements in general. It is a new model that seeks to unite ecological, ethical and sustainable fashion into a single movement, to meet fundamental human needs while allowing natural regeneration of the Earth.”

The fast fashion industry characterized by its rapid production cycles and high turnover of trends, plays a significant role both in the global economy and in environmental sustainability. Understanding its impact is crucial for driving meaningful change. The panel of the Fossil Fuel Fashion campaign held in New York was the first in a series of initiatives by a coalition dedicated to eliminating fossil fuels from the fast fashion industry. This campaign aims to leverage political interventions, entrepreneurial solutions, and activism to achieve its goals.

Figure 1: Fast fashion runs on fossil fuels.



Source: “We are wearing oil” campaign Report 2023.

Dr Johan Rockstrom, a leading environmental scientist and Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, emphasized that the fashion industry, given its global influence, is deeply intertwined with various environmental and socioeconomic challenges. These challenges include resource extraction, international trade, human rights,

agriculture, consumer behaviour, geopolitics, and environmental pollution. According to his research, six out of the nine planetary boundaries have now been crossed, with human activities being the primary cause. The fashion sector significantly contributes to exceeding these planetary boundaries, an impact that can no longer be ignored or underestimated.

In conducting a descriptive study on the fast fashion industry, this research aims to shed light on the complexities and far-reaching effects of this sector. The study will include interviews with consumers and two industry professionals, providing a comprehensive view of current practices and perceptions. The significance of the study lies in its potential to inform policy development, inspire innovative solutions, and promote a collective shift towards more sustainable fashion practices. By understanding the intricacies of the fashion industry, stakeholders can move towards a more sustainable and responsible future.

1.3 Significance of the Study.

The textile industry is, in fact, the second most polluting industry in the world, after the petroleum industry. The fashion industry in the world, after the petroleum industry. The fashion industry, with its various variables, significantly contributes to increased pollution levels. However, the most exploited source is one that involves us all: Fast Fashion. As Martinez Barreiro (2008) notes, Fast Fashion is characterized by speed, providing and replenishing customers with the latest fashion trends while developing a new way of dressing that combines style with low economic and psychological costs.

This phenomenon triggers a range of social and environmental repercussions. The business model characteristics that private actors have pursued over the years have led to skyrocketing pollution levels. Companies like ZARA and H&M are not only key players in Fast Fashion but have also begun to adopt sustainable models aimed at mitigating the industry's environmental impacts. Being one of the most dynamic, competitive, and rapidly growing industries globally, fashion directly influences economic, social, and environmental systems (Sharda,2012). The Fast Fashion business model of "buy more- use less" and its supply chain face significant environmental challenges. These include issues related to production and distribution processes, characterised by the intense use of chemicals and natural resources, greenhouse gas emissions, excessive packaging, and inefficient distribution practices within supply chains, all of which result in a substantial global environmental impact (Herrera Carrillo,2018).

Another critical aspect of this phenomenon is that Fast Fashion consumers often view the industry as vital to their self-identity but show little to no concern for the environment. Individual consumption habits and the production models of large companies, such as "buy more- use less", contribute to increasing pollution levels. This situation calls both

individuals and companies to rethink their environmental policies and consumption habits, as the alarming scale of the problem. According to Greenpeace “Humanity will need three planets to sustain the current pace of consumption”.

Therefore, it is evident that now is the time to implement strategies that allow humanity to progress socially, economically, and, more importantly environmentally, ensuring that the environment remains healthy and viable for the future.

1.4 Research Objective

The main purpose of this research is in the following specifics:

- to study the fast fashion phenomenon, emphasizing the breakdown of some factors that have led to its emergence (generational change, advances in the industry...)
- to define the more influential parts of the textile process, this is, stakeholders (government, users, companies, society...) and its problems. There will be an emphasis on the analysis and description of some consumer profiles in the industry and their preferences through recent studies.
- To explore different solutions in the short and long term. Valuating and offering some adequate alternatives to the moderation of the consumerist phenomenon.

Research question: How has the fast fashion phenomenon influenced the textile industry, what are the most relevant factors and stakeholders in this process, and what short and long-term solutions can be implemented to moderate the effects of the associated consumerism?

1.5 Structure of the Study.

This research is divided into five groups.

The first section serves as an introduction outlining the research question, objectives, methodology, and overall structure.

In the second section focuses on the literature review that explores key concepts related to the topic, building a conceptual framework. It concludes by summarizing the insights gained from the review.

The third section is about the methodology and research design, this section outlines the research philosophy, strategy, and the process of data collection including sources, access, and ethical considerations. It also discusses the approach to data analysis and ends with a conclusion on the methodology.

The fourth section analyzes and presents the findings. They are presented and discussed in detail. Followed by an interpretation of the results. The section concludes with a discussion of the key insights and implications of the findings.

The fifth section includes the concluding thoughts and addresses the implications of the research findings, its contributions and limitations, and offers recommendations for further research and practical applications.

At the end of the research, there is a section with the bibliography, the information sources and references consulted throughout the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

First, before analyzing all the information gathered to investigate the textile industry, including some movements within it and the various adverse factors it faces, we will discuss the literature sources and create a conceptual framework with the key concepts of this study. To logically address all the topics concerning the textile sector, the analysis will follow an order based on production sectors and the stakeholders involved, providing a structure for this work.

The literature review and conceptual and theoretical frameworks serve five main functions: to build a foundation, to demonstrate how the study advances knowledge, to conceptualize the study, to assess research design and instrumentation, and to provide a reference point for interpretation of findings (Merriam & Simpson,200). All five functions are not necessarily fulfilled by the review or framework in each manuscript, but often they are, and the functions would be the same whether for use it is going to be a literature review, theoretical framework, or conceptual framework.

Building a foundation requires using previous work in such a way as to demonstrate lineages, illustrate trends, and provide an overview of a concept, theory, or literature base. The process of conceptualizing a study involves outlining the hypotheses and propositions from earlier research, defining key terms, and clarifying assumptions and limitations while referencing relevant work to justify the study (Merriam & Simpson, 200). Finally, it serves as a reference point, allowing the study's findings to be compared with previous work and linking the implications to the existing research. Keywords used to find all the literature were: fast fashion, sustainability, textile industry, slow fashion and circular economy.

Developing search strategies for systematic reviews requires careful consideration to balance sensitivity and specificity. Although various methods outline standards for

systematic search strategies, there isn't yet a fully detailed and replicable approach for creating a comprehensive search strategy. The authors have introduced a step-by-step method for systematically developing a search strategy tailored for systematic reviews. This method involves preparing single-line search strategies in a text document, where search syntax (including field codes, parentheses, and Boolean operators) is manually typed before inserting search terms (keywords and free text synonyms) derived from a thesaurus (Wichor M. Bramer, 2018).

Table 1: Formulation of search keywords for a systematic search approach:

Term 1	Boolean operator	Term 2	Boolean operator	Term 3	Phrase and research objective
Fast fashion	And	Textile industry			<p>“fast fashion movement and how it impacts in to the textile industry“.</p> <p>Objective: to begin analyzing the research, it issential to understand what the fast fashion movement means within the textile industry and its implications.</p>

Fast fashion	And	Environmental impact	And	Sustainability	Fast fashion movement and its environmental impact and how to approach to the sustainability in this sector objective: to specifically understand its impact on the environment, focusing exclusively on how this sector affects ecological systems.
Slow fashion	And	Circular economy			Slow fashion and circular economy as solutions to the fast fashion Objective: to explore two general and researched solutions within the sector that address the

					issues caused by fast fashion.
Textile industry	And	Industry sectors			Textile industry and its sectors Objective: to contextualize the various sectors within this industry and the implications of each, analyzing each sector's components and functions.
Fast fashion	And	Social impact			Fast fashion and its Social Impact: in addition to discussing environmental impacts, it is also important to mention the social impact, including labor issues and historical problems (e.g., the factory collapse in Bangladesh).

Source: own elaboration by “Boolean operators quick guide”.

This table provides a structured approach to developing a systematic search strategy by combining relevant keywords with Boolean operators. This method ensures a thorough exploration of literature across different aspects of fast fashion, including its impact on the textile industry, environment and society. By focusing on these targeted search terms, the research can effectively gather and analyze pertinent information to address the research objectives comprehensively.

2.2 Fast Fashion.

Since this research explores the current situation within the textile market, it has been considered necessary to contextualize this term to understand its meaning and thus be able to analyze its different aspects

In analyzing the phenomenon of fast fashion, the business model of Inditex and its flagship brand, Zara, stands out as a quintessential example of this revolutionary approach in the textile industry. According to Crofton and Dopico (2006), the fast fashion model deviates from traditional fashion norms, which were based on seasonal collections designed by renowned designers. Instead, the fast fashion model focuses on continuously adapting designs to customer demands, rather than adhering to a fixed seasonal cycle.

From its humble beginnings in Galicia, Spain, in the 1960s, the fast fashion model has dramatically transformed the fashion industry. Amancio Ortega Gaona, the entrepreneur behind Inditex, introduced a model that has fundamentally altered traditional fashion practices. By 2005, Inditex, the leading practitioner of fast fashion, reported annual sales of \$8 billion and had become the second-largest fashion company in the world operating over 2,700 stores in more than 60 countries (Crofton and Dopico, 2006)

Inditex’s business model emphasizes “creativity and quality design coupled with a rapid response to market demands”, and the “democratization of fashion” (Crofton and Dopico, 2006). To achieve a swift response to customer demands at affordable prices, Inditex moved away from the traditional fashion model, which relied on seasonal clothing lines designed, and marketed with heavy advertising.

Through publications of this type and opinions from various experts, we will outline the causes that have led to the well-known phenomenon of fast fashion and how, in contrast, the movement toward sustainability has emerged.

To initiate the fast fashion movement, it is also necessary to review history. Authors such as Braham (1997) argue that unlike during World War II when high classes predominantly influenced fashion due to their exclusivity, now there is an ascending effect: many trends

originate within the general population and are adopted by higher social echelons. Similarly, the style of dress has evolved from a more uniform style to a more novel one (Farías,2016). The term “fast fashion” should be linked to “fashion victims or “fashionists”, a term introduced by American writer Stephen Fried in 1993. As discussed later in the analysis of the data found, the term has evolved to consider three profiles that could be regarded as victims of fashion: the radial axis representing the environment, animals as the angular axis, and the circular axis comprising people (Robredo,2004).

It is important to mention the impact of the fashion movement in this section. First, the environmental impact will be discussed. As will be analyzed later, European statistics from Eurostat have been consulted, and special attention has been given to conferences and the website of Ester Xicota, which leads projects related to the circular economy with a focus on transforming the textile and fashion sector towards sustainability. On her website, (<https://www.esterxicota.com/conocimiento/>), she publishes reports on how companies can shift towards a more sustainable business model. Ester Xicota has been used as a reference because she considers that while companies have the greatest environmental impact, consumers, as will be discussed later are often the most culpable. The consultant explains how the impacts start from the primary sector of the fashion industry, which, as will be analysed, is agriculture, where raw materials are cultivated and, consequently, where environmental damage begins.

A report from El Corte Ingles (a major Spanish department store) on water usage per pair of jeans is used as a reference. This report, produced by El Corte Ingles together with the Foundation Botin, is titled: “Conclusions of the Analysis on the Responsible Use of Water in the Textile Sector: from Raw Material to Garment”.

Additionally, as noted by Muñoz and Perez in their work, Pan Ye, China’s Vice Minister of Environment, who was named “Man of the Year in 2007” and is internationally known for his warnings about China’s environmental degradation, raised the alarm. As recorded in Marcelo Muñoz’s work, China 2020: “If very serious measures are not taken, pollution will multiply and the Chinese economic miracle will end very soon,” providing the following data: “Deserts cover up to 25% of the territory, and arable land has been reduced by half in the last five years”.

Regarding the social impact of the fast fashion movement, which affects the secondary sector of the industry, reports from the UN have been consulted, stating that there are over 73 million children aged 10 to 14 working in the textile industry (Williams, 1999) a clear example of the situation in countries with significant labour exploitation was the 2005

collapse in Bangladesh. For this, the Clean Clothes Campaign movement, which emerged in Europe, has been used to examine how they aim to mitigate the problem.

2.3. Sustainability

The concept of “sustainability” has been approached from numerous angles, leading to various definitions and accurate interpretations. One of the most authoritative definitions was established by the World Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations in 1987, which describes sustainable development as “the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This definition has become a cornerstone in discussions about sustainability, particularly because it emphasizes the balance between current consumption and the preservation of resources for future generations. Moreover, some definitions of sustainability go beyond this basic premise by incorporating the “triple bottom line” idea, which seeks to balance economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being (Ecointeligencia, 2013). This expanded definition highlights the interconnectedness of economic, environmental, and social factors, asserting that true sustainability cannot be achieved unless all three are addressed simultaneously.

The origins of the term “sustainability” are rooted in the field of forestry, where it was first used to describe a practice aimed at ensuring that the volume of timber harvested did not exceed the volume that could naturally regenerate over time (Wikipedia, 2023). This principle was an early form of what we now understand as sustainability, reflecting a basic understanding of the need to manage resources in a way that does not deplete them. Over time, this concept evolved from a specific forestry practice into a broader ecological principle. It now serves as a fundamental guideline in various fields, emphasizing the importance of aligning human activities with the natural rhythms and capacities of the environment (Geissdoerfer et al, 2017). In this research, the author makes a concerted effort to differentiate between the terms “circular economy” and “sustainability”, recognizing that, although closely related, the boundaries between them can become blurred. This distinction is crucial as these concepts, while interconnected, have distinct focuses and applications.

The need to transition towards more sustainable sociotechnical systems has become increasingly urgent due to the severity of environmental and social challenges facing the planet (Meadows et al, 2004; WBCSD. 2010; Seiffert and Loch, 2005; Markard et al. 2012). Critical environmental issues include biodiversity loss, pollution of water, air, and soil, resource depletion, and excessive land use, all of which threaten the Earth’s life-support systems (Rockstrom et al., 2009; Jackson, 2009, 2009; WWF, 2014). These environmental problems are compounded by social failures, such as high unemployment, poor working conditions, social vulnerability, and growing inequality, which fail to meet societal

expectations (Banerjee and Duflo; 2011, Sen, 2001; Prahalad, 2004). Additionally, economic challenges such as supply risks, problematic ownership structures, deregulated markets, and flawed incentive systems have led to financial and economic instability, affecting both individual companies and entire economies (Sachs, 2015; Jackson, 2009)

The concept of the Circular Economy has recently gained significant attention in policy agendas, as a solution to these sustainability challenges, despite its historical roots (European Commission, 2015, Lieder and Rashid, 2016). The circular economy aims to enhance resource productivity and reduce waste, aligning with the European Union's objectives for resource efficiency. It extends beyond optimizing water and raw materials to include energy resources, reflecting the EU's current focus on integrating climate change mitigation with energy security.

The Fundación Robert Schuman emphasizes the need for a transition towards a low-carbon economy that improves energy security and reduces CO₂ emissions (Frérot, 2014). This transition involves setting binding energy efficiency targets and integrating these goals into national and European policies. The potential for reducing is greater than the impact of substituting fossil fuels with renewable energy. Moreover, energy efficiency policies and integrating these goals into national European policies. The potential for reducing fossil fuel consumption through energy efficiency measures is significantly greater than the impact of substituting fossil fuels with renewable energy. Moreover, energy efficiency policies can stimulate new economic activities, create jobs, and reduce energy dependence.

Furthermore, the Circular Economy has become an increasingly important field dedicated to this topic over the past decade. Companies have also started to recognize the opportunities presented and their stakeholders (EMF, 2013).

This differentiation between circular economy and sustainability, along with the growing attention both concepts receive, highlights the complexity of global challenges and the need for innovative approaches that integrate economic, social, and environmental solutions coherently and effectively.

This evolution of the concept highlights how sustainability has grown from a sector-specific concern into a universal principle that is central to modern environmental and economic policies. The transition from a focus on timber and forest management to a broader ecological and socio-economic framework underscores the growing recognition of the complex interdependencies between natural systems and human activities.

The transition to a low-carbon economy must be strategically designed to enhance both energy security and independence. The concept of a circular economy, which aims to

maximize the productivity of resources extracted from nature, aligns with the European Union's objectives for resource efficiency. This approach extends beyond optimizing water and raw materials to include energy resources. The current energy policy priority is to reinforce the coherence between climate change mitigation goals and energy security.

Energy efficiency stands out as the most effective means to simultaneously achieve economic decarbonization and improve the EU's energy security. The Fundación Robert Schuman emphasizes the importance of transitioning towards this new model, aiming to reduce CO₂ emissions while moving towards energy independence (Frérot, 2014). To this end, energy efficiency goals should be fully integrated into all national and European policies, requiring binding targets to reduce energy consumption across various economic sectors. Notably, the potential for reducing fossil fuel consumption through energy efficiency measures significantly surpasses that of replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources. Such policies could also stimulate new economic activities at the local level, contributing to long-term job creation, economic growth, and reduced energy dependence.

At the EU level, the established target of a 20% reduction in energy consumption highlights the importance of binding targets, despite the likelihood of only marginally missing this goal.

In summary, the evolution of the sustainability concept underscores its central role in modern environmental and economic policies. The integration of circular economy principles and energy efficiency measures reflects a growing recognition of the complex interdependencies between natural systems and human activities, aiming to address the pressing challenges of our time.

The concept of slow fashion is deeply rooted in the principles of the Slow Food movement, which originated in the 1980s as a response to the growing fast-food industry. Lazaro (2014) provides a comprehensive overview of how this movement expanded beyond food into other domains, including fashion. His work is crucial in understanding the philosophical underpinnings of slow fashion, emphasizing the importance of valuing natural resources and promoting a mindful approach to consumption. However, Lazaro's analysis, while insightful, lacks empirical data to support its claims about the broader societal impact of slow fashion, which could limit its practical applicability.

Johansson (2010) is a pivotal source in this source, offering a detailed examination of the negative consequences of fast fashion, including the environmental degradation and poor labour conditions it fosters. Johansson argues convincingly that slow fashion, by prioritizing quality over quantity, can mitigate these issues. Her research is well-supported with case

studies and statistical data, making it a reliable reference for understanding the tangible benefits of slow fashion. However, Johansson's work primarily focuses on European and North American markets, which raises questions about the global applicability of her findings.

Amengual's (2018) framework provides a clear and structured comparison between slow and fast fashion, highlighting the fundamental differences in their approaches. This source is valuable for its practical utility, as it offers a concise summary that can be easily applied to various contexts within the fashion industry. However, while Amengual's analysis is useful, it is largely descriptive and lacks a critical evaluation of the long-term viability of slow fashion, especially in terms of scalability and economic impact.

The comparison table (which is demonstrated in the results of the findings) provided by Amengual outlines key distinctions, such as the emphasis on craftsmanship and maintenance in slow fashion versus the focus on image and novelty in fast fashion. This distinction is crucial for understanding how slow fashion not only offers an alternative production model but also encourages a different consumer mindset, one that is more conscious of the environmental and social impacts of their purchase. Nevertheless, Amengual's work could benefit from further exploration of how slow fashion can overcome the challenges it faces in competing with the fast fashion industry's global scale and lower costs.

While the sources reviewed provide a solid foundation for understanding slow fashion, there are notable gaps in the literature. For example, there is limited research on the economic implications of a widespread shift to slow fashion, particularly in terms of job creation, pricing strategies, and market adoption. Additionally, most of the existing literature focuses on Western perspectives, which may not fully capture the global dynamics of the fashion industry, particularly in regions where fast fashion dominates due to economic constraints.

Moreover, the literature often treats slow fashion as an ideal rather than a practical alternative, with limited discussion on how to address the barriers to its adoption, such as consumer resistance to higher prices and the industry's reliance on fast production cycles. Future research should aim to provide more comprehensive data on these aspects to support the broader implementation of slow fashion principles.

2.3. Textile Industry.

The textile industry's development has been extensively documented, with particular focus on its historical evolution and the impact of technological innovations. Maioli (2016) drawing on the earlier work of Liqueur (1992), provides a comprehensive overview of how

societal changes influence fashion design, particularly the differentiation in clothing styles between genders during the 14th century. This work is foundational in understanding the early stages of the textile industry, as it underscores the role of cultural and anatomical knowledge in shaping fashion trends.

The technological advancements in the industry, as it underscores the role of cultural and anatomical knowledge in shaping fashion trends.

The technological advancements in the industry, particularly the invention of the sewing machine, are well-documented by Palmer (2005). Palmer highlights Barthelemy Thimonnier's contribution to the mechanization of garment production in the 19th century, a pivotal moment that marked the transition from manual to machine-based manufacturing. This source is crucial for understanding how technological innovations have driven efficiency and productivity in the industry, setting the stage for modern production methods.

Palmer (2005) also explores the rise of haute couture, emphasizing Charles F. Worth's influence in establishing this exclusive segment of the fashion industry. Worth's establishment of *La Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture in Paris* is particularly significant, as it institutionalized the luxury fashion market. This analysis is complemented by Braham (1997), who examines the subsequent shift from haute couture to prêt-à-porter after World War II. Braham's work is particularly valuable as it contextualizes the democratization of fashion, where ready-to-wear clothing emerged as a practical alternative to haute couture, catering to a broader market.

Braham's (1997) analysis introduces a critical perspective on the changing dynamics of fashion consumption, where influences began to flow from the public to the elite, reversing traditional patterns of trendsetting. This perspective is essential for understanding the broader social implications of fashion and how pret-à-porter challenged the exclusivity of haute couture, making fashion more accessible to the masses.

Quantic (2017) on the other hand, provides a contemporary analysis of the textile industry's production methods, focusing on the transition from Fordism to the "just in time" model. This shift in production strategy, which emphasizes efficiency and responsiveness to consumer demand, is critical to understanding the current state of the industry. Quantic's work illustrates how modern supply chains have been transformed by this model, leading to faster production cycles and a more dynamic fashion market. This source is particularly relevant for analysing how production strategies have adapted to meet the demands of fast fashion, a key trend in the contemporary industry.

The integration of Lean Production principles, as discussed by Quantic (2017), further highlights the industry's move towards minimizing waste and maximizing efficiency. This analysis is crucial for understanding the operational aspects of the textile industry and how they contribute to the rapid turnover of fashion collections.

Understanding the dynamics of the textile industry requires a comprehensive analysis of the various stakeholders involved, each with their unique interests and influences. The analysis is grounded in a detailed table provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport (2016), which outlines key groups such as shareholders, employees, consumers, suppliers, media, and public administrations. The literature on these stakeholders offers insights into how they shape and are shaped by the textile industry, particularly in the context of fast fashion and global expansion.

The role of shareholders in the industry has been emphasized in the literature as a driving force behind the sector's professionalization and globalization. As companies transition from family-owned businesses to large corporate entities, the importance of maintaining robust relationships with shareholders becomes critical. According to reports, the pursuit of capital for international expansion and the need for global market presence often necessitate partial or full ownership by shareholders (Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport, 2016). This aligns in corporate governance literature, where the globalization of markets and the rise of multinational corporations have increased the complexity and significance of shareholder relations (Davis, 2005).

The literature used in the section on employees and internal communication is mainly based on the work of Gues (2011), who examines human resource management in dynamic business contexts. The importance of aligning employees with the company's mission and vision, as he points out, is crucial to reducing turnover and increasing job satisfaction, especially in industries where rapid change, such as fashion, is the norm. This approach is consistent with the need for internal communication strategies and employee engagement, which are critical to maintaining innovation and competitiveness.

The studies by Carrigan & Attalla (2001) and Harrison, Newholm & Shaw (2005) are central to the discussion on the evolution of consumer behaviour, highlighting how consumers have become more aware of the social and environmental impacts of their purchases. These studies emphasize the need for transparency on the part of companies and reflect a growing trend towards sustainability. It could be considered that consumers are forcing textile companies to adopt more ethical and sustainable practices.

In terms of global sourcing where the complexity of maintaining ethical standards in geographically diverse regions is highlighted, authors such as Locke (2013) have been used. Locke addresses the challenges of globalization, particularly in how supplier relationships are managed to ensure quality and sustainability. This perspective is critical to understanding the pressure on textile companies to monitor production methods and labour conditions, especially in Asian countries where much of the production is concentrated.

McQuail's (2010) work is critical to analyze the shift in the control of corporate narrative, which is now influenced by both traditional media and digital platforms. The growing influence of consumers and their opinions, shared through social networks, forces companies to carefully manage their image and relationship with the public. This study is relevant to understand how public perception can shape the reputation and, ultimately, the success of a company in the textile industry.

The growing importance of government and NGO involvement in promoting sustainable practices and protecting labour rights is reflected in Bartley's (2007) work on regulatory oversight.

This approach provides a framework for understanding how regulation has evolved in response to criticisms directed at fast fashion, where environmental and social practices have been a focus of concern.

The review on the term "fashion victim" draws from keywords, including Stephen Fried's foundational contributions. Fried coined the term in 1993, initially using it in his book *Thing Of Beauty: The Tragedy of Supermodel Gia* to describe the hardships faced by individuals working in the fashion industry. Additionally, Robredo (2003) expands the analysis by categorizing "fashion victims" into three anthropological axes: radial, angular, and circular. This categorization provides a deeper understanding of the social and environmental impacts of the fashion industry.

The literature on environmental impacts within the textile industry, as cited, offers a comprehensive analysis of the ecological challenges associated with fabric production and garment care. Key sources, such as the Textile Exchange (2014) reports, emphasize the environmental benefits of organic cotton, which significantly reduces water usage and eliminates the need for harmful pesticides substantially, highlighting the need for greater consumer awareness and prudence.

The 2014 study by Muñoz and Pérez draws attention to the severe environmental consequences of the fashion industry's activities, noting that the sector is responsible for

20% of global water pollution and substantial CO₂ emissions. They also underline the concern about toxic wastewater- an issue particularly visible in Asia, where river colors often reflect the season's fashion trends.

Further analysis provided by Díaz (2012) compares the environmental costs of synthetic versus natural fibres, pointing out the long decomposition times for synthetic materials, which can exceed 30 years, in contrast to the three months required for natural fibres. This underscores the significant environmental burden posed by synthetic textiles.

Finally, Noble (2017) sheds light on the lesser-known but significant impact of microfibers released during washing. A study from Cambridge University (2006), referenced by Noble, highlights the extensive use of fossil fuels for heating water and air during laundry processes, and the alarming fact that approximately 1900 microfibres are released from each garment per wash. These microfibers, predominantly polyester, which is used in about 80% of clothing, ultimately contribute to ocean pollution, further compounding the environmental challenges the textile industry poses.

The literature referenced in this section encompasses various studies and reports that examine the environmental and social impacts of the textile industry. Textile Exchange (2014) highlights the environmental advantages of organic cotton, including significant reductions in water usage and the elimination of harmful pesticides and chemicals. Muñoz and Perez (2014) address the substantial pollution generated by the fashion sector, noting that it contributes to 20% of global water contamination and high levels of CO₂ emissions. Diaz (2012) contrasts the environmental costs of synthetic versus natural fibres, emphasizing the lengthy decomposition period of synthetic materials compared to natural ones.

Noble (2017) references a 2006 study by Cambridge University, which investigates the release of microfibres from garments during washing and their subsequent impact on ocean pollution. Reznev et al. (2011) explore the generation of methane gas resulting from the incineration of chemically treated textiles, highlighting the adverse effects on both the atmosphere and human health. Lacasse and Baumann (2012) provide data on clothing waste within the European Union. Revealing that approximately 6 million tons of apparel are discarded annually with only a quarter being recycled or donated.

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Williams (1999) discusses the prevalence of modern slavery and sweatshops in the textile industry, citing data from the International Labour Organization to illustrate the widespread exploitation of child labour in developing countries. Bostrom and Micheletti (2016) examine the Clean Clothes Campaign, a movement aimed at raising global awareness about unethical labour practices in the fashion industry. CCC (2018) details the efforts of the Clean Clothes Campaign in advocating for improved working conditions and workers' rights in the textile sector.

Hernandez (2017) analyzes the economic and labour conditions in Bangladesh's textile industry, highlighting the low wages and precarious working environments that persist despite being a major exporter. Murujosa (2014) and Felsted (2017) discuss the supply chain strategies of Inditex, noting the company's commitment to maintaining stricter labour standards by keeping a significant portion of its production within Spain. Finally, Winter and Rainer (2016) explore how sustainability initiatives provide competitive advantages for fashion brands, emphasizing the growing consumer preference for ethically produced and environmentally friendly products.

El Financiero (2017) and El Economista provide insight into the financial performance and shareholder interests in the fast fashion industry, when talking about the tertiary sector, using Inditex as a case study. Inditex, despite having higher-priced shares compared to its competitors, has shown significant growth, demonstrating the importance of aligning corporate actions with shareholder expectations. The company's strategy, which emphasizes long-term value creation and sustainability, is a benchmark within the industry. This approach is highlighted in Inditex's 2023 annual report, which emphasizes the need to balance shareholder returns with the broader interests of stakeholders, including ethical and sustainable business practices.

The literature also explores consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of economic fluctuations. Garcia Canclini (1995) provides a critical framework for understanding consumption, describing it as an area where rationality often diminishes, leading to compulsive and irrational consumer behaviour. His work underscores the psychological drivers and irrational consumer behaviour. His work underscores the psychological drivers of consumption, particularly about the dissatisfaction that leads to the acquisition of goods.

The economic crisis significantly impacted consumer behaviour, prompting a shift towards more frugal spending habits. Alonso et al. (2011) analyzes the effects of the crisis, highlighting how it forced a reassessment of consumption patterns and brought to light the dangers of unchecked consumerism. The literature suggests that the crisis should have led to more critical reflection on consumption habits, but instead, there has been a return to pre-crisis spending behaviors in Spain as the economy recovers.

In terms of fashion-related consumption, Eurostat (2002) data reveals that Spanish spending on clothing remains below the European average, with households allocating a smaller percentage of their expenditure to clothing and footwear compared to other EU countries. Despite this, Spain remains a significant market within the EU, ranking as the fifth-largest consumer of clothing in 2018. This data highlights the continued relevance of consumption in the fashion industry and underscores the need for sustainable consumption practices.

The global consumption of clothing has surged, with 183.8 billion garments consumed in 2023, marking a significant increase from the previous year. This trend is projected to continue, with estimates suggesting that clothing consumption will reach approximately 196 billion pieces by 2028. This growing demand highlights the scale of the fashion industry and the increasing pressure it places on resources and sustainability efforts.

Martinez-Barreiro (1996) describes the multiplicity of fashion, a concept that reflects the fragmentation and diversity of consumer preferences. This phenomenon is particularly evident among younger demographics, who blend luxury and low-cost items seamlessly. The term “zarification”, introduced by D’Aveni (2010) and cited by Tartaglione and Antonucci (2013), captures this trend, where consumers adopt fast fashion to emulate the styles of the wealthy, regardless of their economic status. Modern fashion has democratized style, allowing individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds to access trends that were once exclusive to the elite.

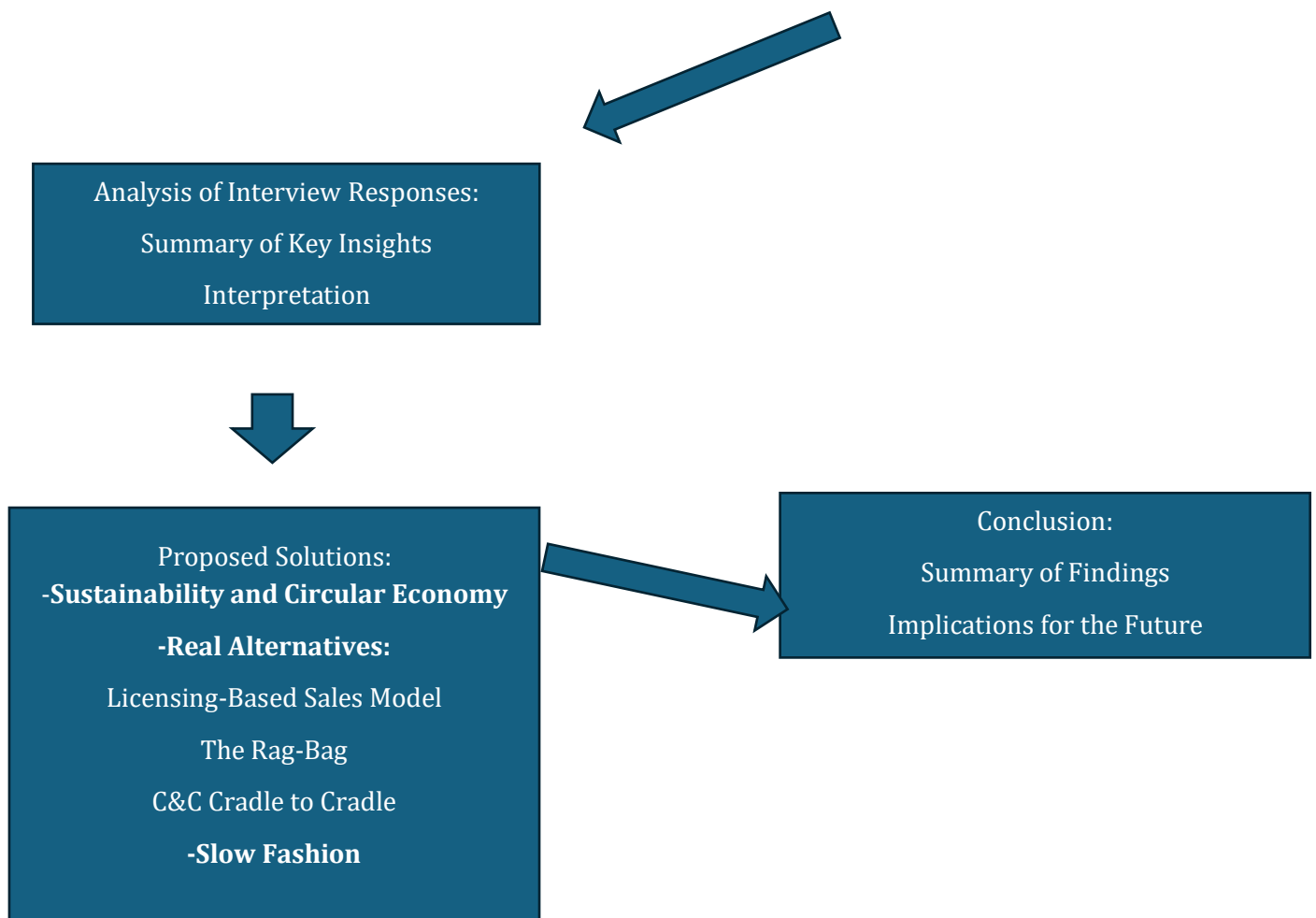
Regarding the role of marketing in Fast Fashion, it has evolved significantly in the digital age, with the fashion industry increasingly relying on online platforms to reach consumers. The transition to Marketing 2.0, as discussed by Díaz (2014), underscores the importance of digital marketing in enhancing the business-to-consumer (B2B) relationship. Social media has become a powerful tool for marketing, with platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram playing central roles in shaping consumer behavior. The rise of influencers and community managers has revolutionized advertising, shifting from traditional models to a more interactive approach where consumers actively participate in content creation

and sharing. This shift has made influencer marketing a critical strategy for brands, as noted by Perez and Luque (2017).

Sales and promotions are fundamental to the fast fashion model. Huerta (2016) discusses how the effectiveness of these strategies has been amplified by social media. Where exclusive discounts and giveaways drive consumer engagement. The immediacy and reach of online promotions have made them a crucial aspect of fast fashion's success, further fueling the industry's rapid growth.

2.5 Conceptual Framework





Source: own elaboration as a Conceptual Framework of research.

2.6 Conclusion.

The literature review has provided a comprehensive understanding of the fast fashion industry, highlighting its rapid evolution and the resulting socio-economic and environmental impacts. The review traced the historical development of fast fashion, illustrating how technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviours have led to the rise of this phenomenon. It also addressed the concept of “fashion victims”, showcasing how certain demographics are particularly affected by the industry’s relentless pace and ever-changing trends.

The conceptual framework built upon this foundation by systematically analysing the fashion sector through different lenses. It outlined the key stakeholders involved, including consumers, producers, distributors, and regulators, and examined their roles and interactions within the industry. The framework provided a detailed sector analysis, breaking down the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors to better understand the various stages of production and distribution.

Additionally, the framework incorporated insights from interviews, offering a nuanced perspective on the industry's challenges and potential solutions. The proposed solutions, such as sustainability initiatives, the circular economy, and alternative models like licensing-based sales, were critically evaluated. These solutions aim to address the negative impacts of fast fashion and promote more sustainable practices within the industry.

In summary, the integration of the literature review and conceptual framework underscores the complexity of fast fashion and its multifaceted impacts. The review highlighted the need for a deeper understanding of the industry's dynamics, while the framework provided a structured approach to analyzing these dynamics and proposing visible solutions. This combined analysis not only elucidates the current issues but also paves the way for future research and practical applications aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of fast fashion.

3. Methodology and Research Design.

3.1 Overview.

This section outlines the chosen methodology, the underlying research philosophy, and the overall approach of the study. The methodology is central to this research as it defines the strategies for data collection and shapes the study's overall reliability and credibility. It describes how the data was gathered and analysed, and how the research questions were addressed. Furthermore, it clarifies the philosophical foundation of the study and how it applies to the main concepts under investigation.

This study adopts an inductive approach within an interpretivist framework, focusing on descriptive analysis. The goal is to delve into the intricacies of the fast fashion industry, evidencing the impact of the object of study and its environmental ramifications. The research is built around case studies and structured interviews to obtain qualitative primary data, which is further enriched by an extensive review of relevant literature and documents.

Case studies offer detailed explorations of specific scenarios within the fast fashion sector, shedding light on the sustainable practices and obstacles faced. The semi-structured interviews gather insights from the industry experts, and this qualitative data is subject to discourse analysis to uncover deeper meanings and patterns. This approach facilitates the emergence of theories directly from the data collected.

The literature review is instrumental in situating the research findings within a broader context, helping to generate new perspectives. By integrating these methods, the study aims

to present a comprehensive understanding of the issues and to propose practical, theory-informed solutions.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

Philosophy	Popular Data Collection Methods.
Pragmatism	Mixed or multiple method designs, qualitative and quantitative.
Positivism	Highly structured, large samples, quantitative measurement, but can include qualitative.
Realism	Methods tailored to the subject matter, either quantitative or qualitative.
Interpretivism	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative.

The selection of a particular research philosophy is influenced by practical considerations. There are significant philosophical distinctions between studies that focus on facts and figures and qualitative studies, like examining the effect of leadership style on employee motivation within organizations.

The ongoing debate positivist and interpretivist research philosophies, or between quantitative and qualitative research methods, has traditionally been a major focal point. However, recent advancements in research practices have led to the increasing popularity of pragmatism and realism as viable philosophies as well.

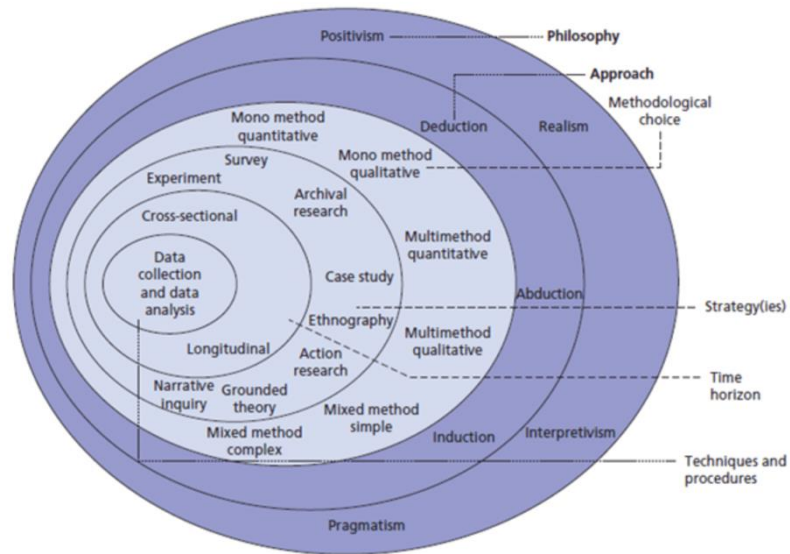
Additionally, as shown in the table below, each research philosophy tends to be associated with specific data collection methods.

Table 2: research philosophies and data collection methods.

Source: Table adapted from Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2012) "Research Methods for Business Students" 6th edition, Pearson Education Limited.

Below is the figure of a "research onion". Each stage of the research process is based on assumptions about the sources and nature of knowledge. Therefore, these assumptions will reflect what the researcher aims to highlight and will subsequently inform the research strategy. The research philosophy can take many forms, as previously discussed:

Figure 2: Research Philosophy in the “Research Onion”



Source: Tsung, E.W.K. (2016) “The Philosophy of Management Research” Routledge.

Given that I have chosen an interpretive approach for my research, it is important to explain why this philosophy is suited to my study. The interpretivist perspective is grounded in the belief that understanding human behavior and social phenomena requires a deep nuanced exploration of individuals’ subjective experiences and meanings. This approach is ideal for my research because it allows me to delve into the complexities of the fast fashion industry, capturing the rich, qualitative insights that emerge from the perspectives of consumers and industry professionals.

The interpretive framework supports my goal of exploring and understanding the various dimensions of sustainability and consumer behavior within the fast fashion context. by focusing on the subjective interpretations and lived experiences of participants. I can provide a more comprehensive analysis of how these factors influence attitudes and practices in the industry. This approach aligns with my aim to generate meaningful insights and practical recommendations based on a thorough understanding of the underlying social and environmental dynamics.

3.3 Research Strategy

While the origins of both research approaches are rooted in long-standing philosophical and strictly scientific foundations, their naming and differentiation is an inexplicably recent phenomenon.

The main difference between the qualitative and quantitative approaches is that the qualitative approach is understood as the methodological procedure that uses words, texts, discourses, drawings, graphs, and images. Qualitative research studies various objects to understand the social life of the subject through the meanings developed by them (Mejía, as cited in Katayama, p.43).

From the above definition, it can be inferred that research under the qualitative approach is based on evidence that leans more towards a deep description of the phenomenon to understand and explain it through the application of methods and techniques derived from its conceptions and epistemic foundations, such as hermeneutic, phenomenology, and the inductive method (F.A Sánchez Flores, 2019).

On the other hand, the quantitative approach deals with phenomena that can be measured using statistical techniques for data analysis. Its most important purpose lies in the description, explanation, prediction, and objective control of their causes (Kerlinger, 2002).

This study was influenced by the methodology outlined by Joseph Maxwell in his book, "Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach" (2005). Unlike traditional linear research methods that follow a sequential order, Maxwell's "Interactive Model for Research Design" emphasizes ongoing reflection throughout the research process. This approach aligns with the qualitative nature of the thesis, which utilizes a range of data sources and methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the fast fashion industry and its environmental impacts.

A research strategy outlines the approach and methods for data collection and determines how the research design supports the study. Various research strategies including surveys, interviews, case studies, grounded theories, experiments, and observations, can be classified under quantitative or qualitative data collected and design of the study which can be explanatory, exploratory, analytical, or descriptive (Saunders et al, 2019).

For this research, a descriptive strategy is employed, involving a combination of multiple data sources. I have utilized a range of materials, including academic journal articles, books, conference papers, consumer interviews, published social media articles, and additional relevant documents. This diverse array of sources ensures a comprehensive examination of the fast fashion industry, its environmental impact, and consumer perspectives.

The research incorporates structured interviews with consumers to gain detailed insights into their awareness and attitudes towards fast fashion and its impact. These interviews provide valuable qualitative data, allowing for an in-depth exploration of individual

perspectives. Additionally, the analysis of published articles and social media content offers broader sustainability in the fashion industry.

By integrating these various data sources, the study aims to achieve a well-rounded and robust analysis of the issues at hand. The qualitative data from interviews will be analysed in conjunction with information from academic and media sources to address the research objectives effectively and provide meaningful conclusions and recommendations.

3.4 Collection Primary Data

The data selected for this research will include both secondary and primary sources, such as interviews, books, research papers, news from governmental bodies, company reports, and publications from official organizations on their websites. Interviews were conducted with five individuals of varying ages and backgrounds. The information gathered through the analysis of the textile industry, specifically the fast fashion movement, will be used to compare responses to the issues identified and the potential solutions currently being implemented or proposed to address the significant challenges posed by this movement.

3.4.1 Sources

As previously mentioned, it is a deductive study, which requires the collection of qualitative data. Therefore, structured questions were used in interviews with five fashion consumers, specifically focusing on fast fashion. The participants include four Spanish individuals and one Irish individual. The interviewees have various characteristics, but the common factor is that they are all consumers of fast fashion within the textile industry. To explore this, questions are asked about their awareness, their perceptions of sustainability in this sector, and more. The diverse responses will be used to affirm findings from the various documents analysed throughout the research. They provide clarification for developing an understanding of the different types of consumers and how factors such as age, economic independence and even cultural aspects can influence consumer behaviour. For secondary data sources, books, journals, academic articles and other online sources were utilized, as previously noted.

3.4.2 Access and Ethical Issues.

To gain access to participants for interviews, I utilized a combination of recruitment methods, using people that I knew from Spain, and I knew they were fast fashion consumers. Also, I used social media platforms for others. They were selected based on their experience with fast fashion and included consumers from diverse demographics. For accessing

secondary data. I used academic databases such as Google Scholar, publications on their official websites and social media such as LinkedIn.

For ethical considerations, I used informed consent. Before participation, all interviewees were provided with a consent where I detailed the study's purpose, who I am, procedures, name and date of Griffith College and benefits of the study. They also were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. All personal identifiers were removed from the data. I used fake names to ensure confidentiality, so they were anonymized.

This study sought approval from the relevant ethics committee to ensure that all ethical guidelines were adhered to. I ensured that they read and understood a plain language statement and informed the consent form.

Possible potential risks, such as discomfort in discussing personal views on fast fashion were minimised by ensuring a supportive and respectful interview environment as it was purely professional.

3.5 Approach to Data Analysis

The data used in this study have been analysed through an understanding and extraction of information from the sources. The interviews have also been analysed based on the characteristics of each participant.

Documents, books, and famous quotes have been used to provide context and background on the textile industry, the sectors within it, and the social-environmental implications it entails. Additionally, various systems and solutions, as well as some relevant laws, have been examined as proposals for addressing the problem. Given the vast amount of information available on this topic, the study focuses on a selection of planned solutions, prioritizing those that appear most realistic from an objective standpoint.

3.6 Conclusion

This study employs a comprehensive approach to investigating the fast fashion industry, leveraging an inductive, interpretivism methodology to explore the intricate relationships between consumer behaviour, sustainability, and environmental impact. By integrating a range of qualitative data sources- including case studies, semi-structured interviews with fashion consumers, and extensive literature reviews- this research provides a nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

So, the interpretative approach was chosen to provide a deeper understanding of the meanings and experiences associated with fast fashion. This method focuses on understanding how individuals and groups perceive and interpret their experiences within a specific context. By employing this method, the research aims to uncover the underlying meanings and social dynamics related to fast fashion, offering insights into how different stakeholders, including consumers and industry actors, perceive and engage with the phenomenon. In contrast, the deductive method was not chosen because it is more suited to testing existing theories rather than exploring new or complex phenomena. Therefore, deductive reasoning is a top-down approach, while inductive is a bottom-up approach. In deductive reasoning, you start with general ideas and work toward specific conclusions through inferences. Based on theories, you form a hypothesis. Using empirical observations, you test that hypothesis using inferential statistics and form a conclusion.

The interpretive framework is particularly suited for this study as it allows for a deep dive into the subjective experiences and perspectives of participants, offering insights into how various factors influence consumer attitudes and behaviours regarding fast fashion. The descriptive research strategy supports this by utilizing multiple data sources to paint a complete picture of the industry's practice and challenges.

Ethical considerations were rigorously addressed, with informed consent obtained from all participants and personal identifiers anonymized to ensure confidentiality. The methodological approach combining primary and secondary data collection methods, enables a thorough analysis of the issues at hand and facilitates the development of practical recommendations.

In summary, this study's multi-faceted methodology not only aims to elucidate the complexities of the fast fashion sector but also to contribute actionable solutions grounded in robust, qualitative evidence.

4. Presentation and Discussion of the Findings

4.1 . Overview: Historic and social review of fast fashion.

A) Origin and Concept

The textile sector, like many other industries, has consistently reflected societal changes over the years. It wasn't until the 14th century that significant differences between the sexes emerged within the fashion world. This was due to the limited knowledge of anatomy at the time, resulting in gaps in understanding the human body (Liqueur, 1992, cited by Maioli, 2016). However, with the Renaissance period and a more educated society, fashion gradually began to incorporate small variations.

One of the major milestones in the textile industry was the introduction of the first ideas for sewing with a machine at the end of the 17th century. The key word in the history of the sewing machine is "Course." On July 17, 1830, Barthélemy Thimonnier, a tailor from Lyon, produced the first machine. Despite this significant innovation, which became indispensable for households at the time, it was haute couture that made the most significant impact. Charles F. Worth, its founder, shifted focus away from machine-made garments, favoring handcrafted clothing instead. Worth established the first fashion union in Paris, La Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture (Palmer, 2005), in the city where he resided. As he gained fame, Worth began including embroidered signatures in his designs and started showcasing his collections annually as a marketing strategy to boost sales. This has made him an undeniable influence on many of today's luxury brands.

Haute couture has evolved into a branch of the textile industry where most fashion houses must undergo rigorous examinations and meet a series of criteria before being established. This exclusivity turns haute couture into a segment of the industry that caters to a small, affluent group.

It wasn't until after World War II, due to the impracticality and inaccessibility of haute couture, that the need arose for new alternatives in the textile industry. This gave birth to what is known as ready-to-wear or prêt-à-porter. This type of fashion aimed to create clothing that visually resembled haute couture but was made from more accessible materials and without labour-intensive processes.

Prêt-à-porter has evolved into a fashion style that blends street fashion with Parisian haute couture. The author Braham (1997) goes further, asserting that a revolution has occurred where it is no longer just the upper classes that influence fashion. Instead, a reverse effect is taking place: many trends originate within the general population and are later adopted by the upper echelons.

Due to advancements in production methods, the textile industry has become a clear representation of these developments. The transition has moved from a mass production system known as Fordism to a far more efficient model, "just in time." Similarly, the fashion style has evolved from a more uniform and consistent approach to one that is more innovative and responsive to constant trends. The "just in time" approach has led to a significant shift in production, reversing the traditional supply-demand formula. This system eliminates the need for costly inventories, as orders are made in real-time. Stocks become unnecessary when social media and the internet provide a wealth of data indicating new trends. As a result, store employees gather customer preferences and track the most popular items (Quantic, 2017). All of this has contributed to a profound transformation of supply chains, which now adhere to Lean Production principles, where products must flow as efficiently as possible. This not only results in more satisfied customers but also allows more products to move quickly through the network of processes and storage points. This transformation has been so significant that the rapid response logic has enabled collections to change in as little as 15 days, a stark contrast to the traditional model of two seasons per year.

B) Emergence of Fashion Victims

The term "fashion victim" was first coined in 1993 by American writer Stephen Fried. Initially, Fried used this term to describe people working in the fashion industry, using "victim" negatively to highlight the hardships they faced in their jobs. Over the years, this term has evolved to represent completely different concepts. Fried mentioned the term only four times in his book *Thing Of Beauty: The Tragedy of Supermodel Gia*. A year later, various newspapers and magazines picked up the term and spread it worldwide.

Over time, the term has come to describe anyone with an obsession or strong inclination towards fashion and clothing. The meaning wasn't initially negative; it simply referred to an above-average interest in fashion. However, the term has since transformed into "fashion victims." With the current awareness within the fashion world, the term is increasingly used to refer to the negative social and environmental impacts of the industry. The author has since issued a public apology for cases where his term is used negatively or as an insult to certain groups.

A philosophy of fashion has also emerged, with various authors contributing different moral aspects. This has led to the distinction of three types of fashion victims, based on the three axes of anthropological space (Robredo, 2003): radial (environmental victims), angular

(animal victims), and circular (human victims). This work will focus on the first and last terms, viewing human victims as the consumers of this movement.

4.2 Stakeholders in the Textile Sector.

Before analyzing the various alternatives to excessive consumption, it is essential to identify and understand the key actors involved in this process. On one hand, there are the primary stakeholders: shareholders, employees, consumers, suppliers, and the local communities where the company operates. On the other hand, there are secondary groups: the media, public administrations and regulatory bodies, governmental organizations, unions, competitors, etc.

Each company must identify its specific stakeholders depending on the sector of the industry in which it operates (footwear, accessories, textiles, leather goods, etc.). In recent years, some of these groups have gained more importance than in the past, as consumers have become more concerned with the stakeholders companies engage with when making purchasing decisions. The relationships between companies and stakeholders are increasingly influenced by current consumption trends. These trends are shaped by the rise of the middle class, population growth, the low-cost era, changes in consumer behaviour, and heightened awareness of social and environmental issues.

Below is a table detailing some of the main stakeholders in the fashion industry, compiled from the data obtained.

Below, some of the main stakeholders in the fashion industry are detailed. For this purpose, a table has been prepared based on the data obtained.

Table 3: Stakeholders and Interest Groups in the textile industry.

GROUPS	INTERESTS
Shareholders	The increasing professionalization of the sector, which was led to the emergence of large corporate groups and the transformation of family-owned businesses, highlights the significance of maintaining strong relationships with current and potential shareholders who may take on partial or full ownership of the company. Additionally, in our globalized market, companies in this sector recognize the importance of offering their products worldwide, which often necessitates the pursuit of capital for international expansion.

Employees	Companies strive to establish effective communication channels and foster employee participation, as well as implement policies that promote work-life balance. Given high turnover rate in the fashion industry, retaining talented employees is a significant challenge. Therefore, businesses must focus on engaging their workforce by involving them in the company's mission, vision, and core values.
Customers/ Consumers	Companies aim to deliver high-quality products to their customers in the shortest time possible. Consumers today have access to a wide variety of products and brands, are well-informed, and possess powerful social platforms to share their opinions. Additionally, consumers are increasingly expecting companies to address social issues that they believe governments can no longer resolve. In recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in consumer awareness regarding environmental concerns and production processes. Establishing a close and transparent relationship with consumers will be crucial for the future success of companies.
Suppliers	Companies seek suppliers that can meet all requirements, and depending on their strategy, they may prioritize either higher quality services or faster delivery. The growth of fast fashion has fueled an increase in the number of suppliers in Asian countries, making it increasingly important to monitor production methods and working conditions across different regions.
Media	The advent of new technologies, the rise in the use of social media by consumers and other stakeholders such as bloggers, Instagram influencers and YouTubers, necessitates greater control over company relationships with these stakeholders. Today, information control no longer rests solely with the company but also with its consumers, making it essential to invest in managing these relationships. At the same time, it is important not to overlook traditional media outlets, such as magazines, which continue to hold significant influence in the industry.
Public Administrations and non-	The transformation of family-owned businesses into holdings and large companies with a global presence has strengthened the relationships with these stakeholders. The fashion industry is one of

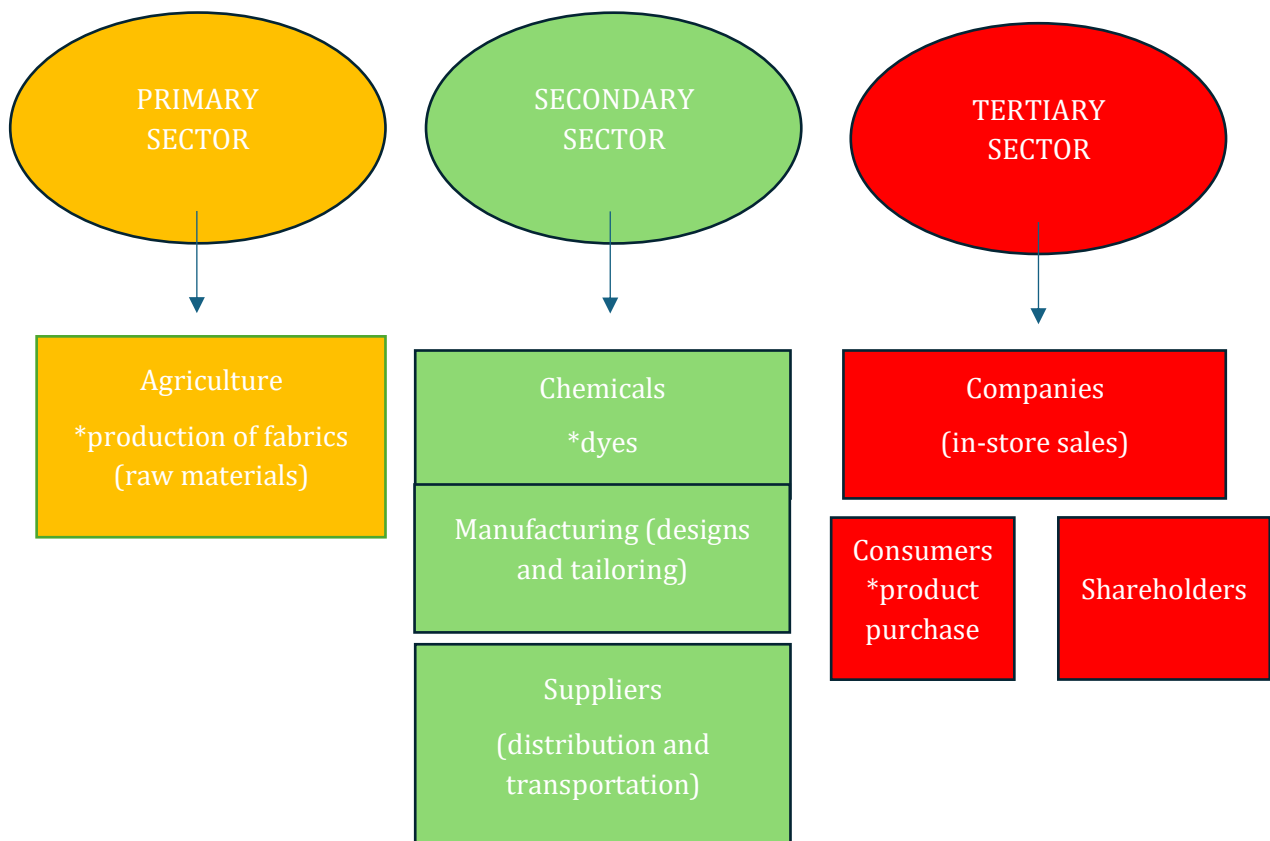
gubernamental organizations	the key contributors to Spain's economy, which has led to increased regulation and oversight in recent years.
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Source: Own elaboration based on the Fashion sector report in Spain by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (2016).

This table is essential for understanding all the parties involved in the textile sector. However, among these stakeholders, three tend to be particularly important: consumers, suppliers, and companies (including shareholders) for this reason, I will independently analyze the groups made up of suppliers and consumers, as they form the backbone of the textile industry. Additionally, it's important to consider the role that shareholders play within companies.

To keep things organized, these groups are arranged in the following diagram. The chart outlines the textile industry by production sectors and the stakeholders connected to each one. Throughout this work, I will evaluate the main needs and concerns within each group.

Figure 3: Diagram of the textile sector and the relationship between production sectors and their stakeholders.



Source: own elaboration based on online data.

4.3 Primary sector

A) From agriculture to the environment: firsts affected.

Ester Xicota, an expert consultant in sustainability and innovation, often addresses the key impacts of the textile industry in her lectures. She aims to raise awareness among entrepreneurs about their crucial role in mitigating environmental impact. Although environmental impact is the most visible in the media, consumers, as we will see below, also play an important role.

Xicota explains that the environmental impact of the textile industry starts from agriculture and the treatment of raw materials, and continues through transport and to the disposal of garments. This impact is measured in terms of gases emitted, such as CO₂, and the total amount of water used during the life cycle of the garment. In addition, the sustainability expert says there is a lot of misinformation in NGO and government reports, poor quality news sites, brand marketing and blogs. This is why it is important to have reliable and scientifically based data to measure how much impact the fashion industry has and what actions need to be taken.

There are no accurate statistics on how much fashion production pollutes water in China, let alone the rest of the world. What is known is that textile production is on par with paper and chemical production in terms of water pollution.

To produce all the clothing, footwear and household textiles purchased by EU households in 2020, some 4 billion m³ of blue water was required, amounting to 9 m³ per person, which put water consumption for textiles in third place after food and leisure and culture. Bluewater is used evenly in the production of clothing (40%), footwear (30%) and home and other textiles (30%) (European Commission, 2022). The term (blue water) is used to refer to water from surface sources such as rivers or lakes or groundwater such as aquifers. Green water, on the other hand, refers to rainwater that is absorbed into the soil and available to plants. In this context, about 20 billion m³ of green water was used to produce cotton. Green water is consumed in the production of clothing (almost 50%) and home textiles (30%), of which cotton production consumes the largest share. As stated in a report by the environment committee in the European parliament, it takes 2.700 litres of fresh water to make a cotton T-shirt, which is the equivalent of what a person drinks over two and a half years. (European Commission, 2022).

It is relevant to mention a report carried out by El Corte Ingles (a department store in Spain) in collaboration with the so-called Botín Foundation, entitled ‘Conclusions of the analysis on the responsible use of water in the textile sector: from raw material to garment’.

This study analyses the water footprint of standard jeans and divides its methodology into three parts: a) water transpired by plants, b) water extracted from natural resources and not replenished, and c) water used to dissolve chemicals.

Table 4. Water use per item of clothing (jeans)

	a) green water	b)blue water	c)grey water	Total
1 cotton jeans trousers (litre/trouser)	267	2833	205	3.305

Source: table from the study mentioned before.

Despite technological advances that have introduced more organic and less environmentally damaging fabrics, such as organic cotton, the water footprint remains significant. Organic cotton uses less water and avoids pesticides and chemicals, and its CO2 footprint in production is lower (1,000 kg compared to 1,800 kg for conventional cotton) (Textile Exchange, 2014). However, the water footprint remains high, so it is crucial to increase awareness and prudence among consumers.

Fashion is second only to basic needs such as food in terms of consumption priorities. However, the pollution produced by the sector does not fully justify its good figures. A 2014 study indicated that 20% of global water pollution comes from this industry, in addition to high CO2 emissions. Also, the biodegradability rates of the fibres used are alarmingly low. Toxic chemical dyes contribute to pollution, as seen in the colouring of rivers in Asia (Muñoz and Pérez, 2014).

Water use and pollution are just some of the environmental problems generated by the textile industry. In addition, there are other significant wastes in clothing manufacturing, as shown in the following table:

Table 5: Activities to produce materials and their environmental impact.

RAW MATERIALS	ACTIVITY	ENVIROMENTAL IMPACT
Oils/ fibers	Carding and combing	Dust, Lint, Threads
Mineral oil, emulsifiers, inhibitors, foam agents	Twisted spinning	Thread dust, Lint, Threads in emulsified liquid effluents
Starches, gums, softeners, preservatives	Weaving	Thread in liquiud effluent with suspended particles
Acids, soap and water	Cleaning	Acidic or basic water, soapy residues
Hypochlorites, peroxides	Bleaching	Solutions with toxic residues
Dyes, pyments and mordants	Dyeing	Suspendd particles, residual chemicals
Starches, glues , resin,oils	Finishing	Organic matter and emulsified effluents

Source: table developed from Pinto, J. Action Plans for Environmental Improvement: A Manual for SME Entrepreneurs, cited by Díaz (2012).

This table reveals that clothing production involves materials whose treatment and distribution generate environmental costs greater than the benefits of production. Garments made from synthetic materials, for example, have a decomposition time of over 30 years, while those made from natural materials decompose in approximately three months (Diaz, 2012).

A 2006 study by the University of Cambridge highlighted the environmental effects of laundry. Each wash requires the burning of fossil fuels to heat the water and air, as well as high water use. Microfibers released during washing, especially polyester, are released into the oceans, with each garment contributing approximately 1,900 microfibers (Noble, 2017).

In addition, discarded clothing also pollutes. Clothes that reach landfills are burned, releasing methane, a gas harmful to the atmosphere and human health (Roznev et al., 2011). In the European Union, almost 6 million tons of clothes are discarded every year, of which only 25% are recycled or donated. The rest, some 4.5 million tonnes, go to municipal landfills for incineration (Lacasse and Baumann, 2012).

The problem of overconsumption is reflected in the enormous amounts of waste we send out of our territory.

The remainder, some 4.5 million tonnes, goes to municipal landfills for incineration (Lacasse and Baumann, 2012).

Landfills in Africa, for example, have become the final destination for tons of discarded clothes, which are often burned, polluting the soil, water and air, and affecting the health of nearby communities.

The solution does not lie with consumers alone; major fashion brands must take environmental responsibility. They must fund recycling initiatives through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funds. Recycling companies must also be more transparent, as they often mask the trade in used clothing to reduce waste, but they also need structural reform. The new extended producer responsibility (EPR) law will oblige companies to manage their surplus, but without an obligation to publish their production levels, we will not know the exact extent of their impact. As we can see, pollution is not only produced once fashion is produced or marketed, but also from the primary sector, from the moment the raw materials to produce garments begin to be produced. (Slow Fashion Next, 2024).

4.4. Secondary sector.

4.4.1. Manufacturers and Suppliers

One of the key intermediate links in the textile production chain is made up of designers and manufacturing factories or workshops.

A) Modern Slavery and sweatshops.

The textile and garment industry has a considerable positive social impact, as it employs many people and is a key source of income in many countries. It is estimated that 26,5 million people work in this sector worldwide, and if we consider the 100 million workers dedicated to cotton cultivation, this number increase even further.

There are 36 countries worldwide where more than 100.000 people are employed in this industry, and 4 countries like China, this number exceeds the million with 7,5 million of workers in China. Europe has 2,25 million employees in 223,000 companies in this sector

However, not all the effects are positive. Numerous work abuses have been documented, including lack of union rights, gender discrimination (where 70% of workers are women in sewing roles and packaging, while supervisors are in the majority, men who receive better salaries), and child labour exploitation in several regions, especially Asia and Latin America. A tragic example of bad labour conditions is the collapse in Bangladesh when a building collapsed, and a lot of people lost their lives.

As the United Nations states, an average of 50 million people worldwide live in slavery conditions. This occurs in almost all countries across the world and cuts ethnic, cultural and religious lines (United Nations,2022).

In the garment manufacturing sector, many companies have moved towards decentralizing their operations. Large multinational corporations often set up their factories in regions where production costs are lower. This practice has sparked significant controversy, as these locations are typically developing countries in areas with high levels of poverty. Often, these factories operate clandestinely and employ children. According to data from the International Labour Organization cited by Williams (1999), it's estimated that over 73 million children between the ages of 10 and 14 are employed in the textile industry worldwide.

Williams also points out that this issue is not new. In the early 20th century, the United States managed to eradicate sweatshops and child labour, but intense global competition has led to a resurgence of these practices. A notable example mentioned before is the explosion at a textile factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 2003, where 64 people lost their lives. This tragic event highlighted the poor working conditions and lack of regulations, leading to widespread criticism of multinational companies for their lack of ethics and corporate social responsibility. In response, the Clean Clothes Campaign movement emerged in Europe, aiming to raise awareness of these issues and promote improvements in working conditions.

Bangladesh, the second-largest textile exporter after China and one of the poorest countries in the world, deserves special attention. Although the textile industry has significantly boosted its economy, it is crucial to meet minimum labour standards. Wages in garment factories are among the lowest, averaging \$38 per month. After several disasters, such as the one in Dhaka, the government intervened to negotiate a minimum wage of \$68, though this measure has been criticized as insufficient and has led some companies to relocate to regions with even lower costs.

No matter where it is estimated that 25 million people globally are employed under conditions in the textile industry so poor that they are considered a form of modern slavery. These unacceptable working conditions have sparked international pressure from NGOs, movements, and protests, leading to a consensus among textile companies in Europe and North America. As a result, an agreement was reached in 2017 to protect the rights and safety of workers in Bangladesh, which came into effect in May 2018. This agreement known as the ACCORD (Bangladesh Accord on Building and Fire Safety), has been signed by over 200 multinational companies, including Mango, Benetton, H&M, Inditex and Adidas. One of

the key points of the ACCORD is that it allows workers to refuse work in unsafe conditions and provides mechanisms for protest. While the agreement does not completely resolve the situation, it is a significant step forward, setting an important precedent in the industry. Before this agreement, companies could voluntarily adhere to certain ethical codes of conduct, but these were not legally binding (Hernandez, 2017).

Figure 4: Bangladesh building collapse



Source: Report on The New York Times by Jim Yardley (2013)

As mentioned, over the past decade, major brands have increasingly decentralized their suppliers' seeking countries with the lowest possible costs. It's worth noting that Inditex is an exception to this trend, as over half of its supply chain production is in Galicia or other parts of Spain (Murujosa,2014). This offers a legal advantage for its employees, ensuring more stringent compliance with regulations and better protection of their rights. For the company, this is a strategic move, reducing its dependence on external suppliers, unlike competitors (Felsted, 2017).

Thus, selecting appropriate suppliers is crucial. Today, major fashion brands must not only be accountable for their practices within their own facilities but also for the conduct and issues that may arise from their suppliers. Therefore, it is advisable to implement a supplier evaluation system that includes criteria related to sustainability and environmental impact. Additionally, in recent years, companies have found added value in this area. Those that can boast greater sustainability in their processes are viewed more favorably by consumers, creating competitive advantage over their rivals (Winter and Rainer, 2016).

4.5 Tertiary sector.

A) Companies and shareholders.

We arrive at one of the most significant stakeholders within a company's environment. One of the main tasks for businesses is to create value for their shareholders. This brings us to the well-known agency conflict. Often, the principal or business owner has different interests from those of the agent. In this context, the former relies on the actions of the latter, all influenced by their moral perspectives.

According to data from *El Economista*, the fast fashion industry recorded over 18 billion euros in revenue, an increase of nearly half a percentage point compared to the previous year. This industry continues to be one of the most dynamic in Spain, attracting numerous investors. A particularly interesting case is Inditex, which has established itself as the leading retailer of affordable fashion, although its shares have always been considered expensive. In recent years the value of its shares has grown by around 30% annually, a significant contrast compared to competitors like H&M, whose price-to-earnings ratio is nearly half that of Inditex (El Financiero, 2017). It has taken Spanish data as a reference since the major company Inditex originated in the same country.

The fundamental objective for companies in the textile sector should be to meet standards similar to those highlighted by Inditex in its 2023 annual report, where it emphasizes the viability and maximization of the company's long-term value at the interstate level, as well as it, warns, not only for all shareholders but also for all stakeholders, whose legitimate interests, whether public or private, converge in the development of business activities.

Other companies in the sector are attempting to follow the example of this textile giant in their efforts to improve corporate social responsibility. Shareholders, especially those with representation on Boards of Directors, play a crucial role by demanding not only economic performance but also benefits that positively impact society.

B) Consumers:

Over the centuries, there has been a vast amount of literature discussing the concept of consumption. It has been defined in various ways, with the simplest explanation being the act of using goods or services. However, one of the most pertinent definitions, especially for the context of this analysis, comes from Dr. Garcia Canclini in 1995, a disciple of Paul Ricoeur. In his work *Consumers and Citizens*, García Canclini describes consumption as the space where human common sense seems to fade away. This leads us to define consumerism. Derived from the term "consumption", the suffix "-ism" is added to indicate doctrines, movements, or attitudes and as the Oxford Dictionary states, "advocacy of the rights and interest of consumers" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024). Garcia Canclini offers a

critical view of this phenomenon, arguing that this type of consumption often results in unnecessary spending and compulsive, irritational behaviour. He bases his reasoning on psychological science, which links excessive consumption to dissatisfaction stemming from various causes. This dissatisfaction begins as a desire and eventually materializes in goods.

The economic crisis is a key point to highlight in this analysis due to its significant impact on consumers' habits. Naturally, the crisis led to a shift towards more moderate spending patterns. As a result, there was a rapid transition from a period of excess to one where consumers were forced to slow down their purchasing pace.

In an article published two years after the crisis, Alonso et Al (2011) describe the before and aftereffects of the economic downturn on consumer behaviour. There are various perspectives on the root cause of the issue, such as the irrationality of consumption or the economic limitations that a segment of the population views as unchangeable. However, the real problem lies in the absence of a critical and reflective discourse that questions the inherent practices of consumption. The widespread perception of consumption is that is a pillar of the economy and the welfare state. While there have been improvements and an enrichment that has reduced global income disparities, it is essential to reflect on how this system can continue to function without collapsing again, as it did during the crisis. The solution involves rationalizing and moralizing these habits, as will be discussed later.

In Spain, experts point out that the crisis was justified as a consequence of the country's uniqueness, with corruption being a central issue. Unfortunately, no real self-criticism has been conducted, and now that the country's economy is improving, the dangerous consumption habits are re-emerging. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct studies and research that warn of these dangers and question the long-term viability of the current consumer mode. It is essential to develop approaches that promote alternative, ecological and sustainable consumption.

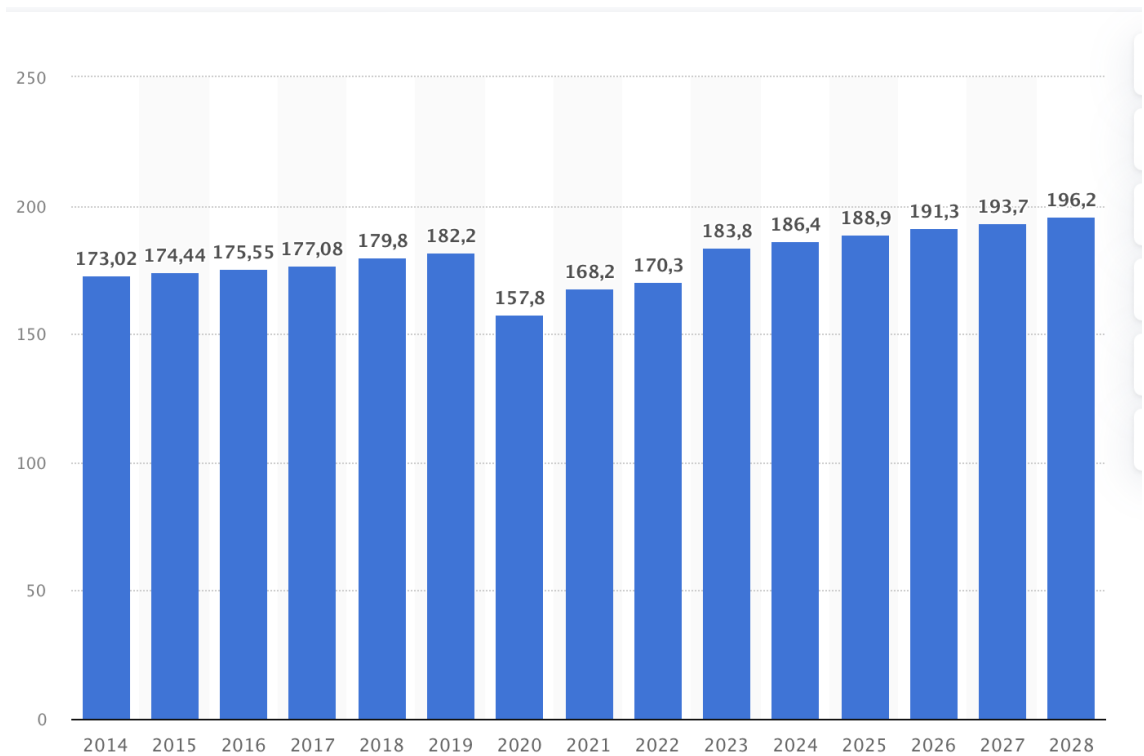
Consumption is closely linked to fashion. As mentioned, Spain is experiencing a recovery in consumption, returning to levels similar to those in 2007, according to the latest statistics.

According to recent data, Spaniards spend an average of 330€ per year on clothing. This is lower than the European average, which is 490€. Citizens of 17 other European countries spend more annually on clothing compared to Spaniards.

According to the Eurostat report, "Facts& Key Figures 2022" published by Euratex, Spanish households allocated 3.3% of their total expenditure to clothing and footwear in 2020. In comparison, the average expenditure on clothing and footwear across the European Union was 4.1%

Additionally, in 2018, Spain was the fifth largest consumer of clothing within the European Union.

Figure 5: Global Clothing Consumption from 2014 to 2028 (in billions of garments).



Source: data provided by Statista (March, 2024)

In 2023, global consumption of clothing reached a total of 183.8 billion garments, making an increase of nearly 14 billion pieces from the previous year. This upward trend is expected to continue over the next five years, with projects indicating that clothing consumption will gradually rise to approximately 196 billion pieces by 2028.

The fashion market encompasses all segments of clothing produced for private end consumers and is categorized into product lines: women's wear, men's wear, and children's wear.

C) Fashion for everyone: Consumption Regardless of Purchasing Power.

the consumer profile has evolved significantly over the recent decades, with an unprecedented level of fragmentation. This phenomenon is known as "the multiplicity of fashion" (Martinez-Barreiro, 1996:117), characterized by a wide range of styles, particularly among young people. Consumers now mix luxury items with those of lower

value without distinction. Some experts refer to this practice as “zarification” (D’Aveni, 2010, cited by Tartaglione and Antonucci, 2013).

Modern fashion aims to be accessible to everyone, breaking away from historical class distinctions. Today’s designs allow anyone to dress like the most influential people. This desire to keep pace with the consumption habits of the wealthy has led to the rise of fast fashion, an agile response to consumer demand.

In the fashion sector, various factors contribute to increasing the value of the final product, with marketing playing a crucial role. As the textile industry becomes more digitalized, marketing has evolved into a new phase known as Marketing 2.0. this evolution is essential for enhancing the business-to-consumer (B2C) relationship and gaining a competitive edge.

Communication methods have shifted from SMS to an extensive network of social media platforms. Before social media, blogs, which emerged from the digital communities of the 1990s, were influential in advertising clothing. However, the real revolution came with platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. These social networks introduced new professionals’ roles, such as community managers and influencers (Díaz,2014). Community managers handle the administration and strategy of social media, while influencers, who have amassed large followings, are highly valued for their content. Perez and Luque (2017) note that the situation has dramatically changed: consumers no longer just receive advertising but also participate in creating sharing content, making traditional advertising models less effective. Consumers are now more informed and have greater comparative power, making influencer recommendations a key element for brands.

Furthermore, companies are increasingly investing in e-commerce. Nowadays, most brands have an online platform, and some have been established exclusively online, gaining recognition through social media. An example is Pompeii, a Madrid-based shoe brand that has been selling online for over five years before opening its first physical store (Rodriguez, 2017).

Con el auge del internet en el siglo XXI y la popularización del movimiento fast fahsion, el mercado se trasladó al mundo virtual ya a comienzos de los 2000. Los consumidores antes del COVID-19 ya estaban familiarizados con este método de compra, aun así, durante esta época, debido a que era el único medio para comprar o a que el consumo de tecnologías aumentase, disparó el consumo de moda online, cuyos ingresos a cierre de 2022 superaban los 700.00 millones de dólares estadounidenses.

Figure 6: Forecast for Growth in Online Fashion Purchases



With this figure, we can see the projected size of the global fast fashion market in terms of millions of US dollars from 2020 to 2031. The bar chart represents a steady growth in the market over the years. There is an uninterrupted upward trend, indicating a steady increase in demand for fast fashion products. By 2031 it is projected to reach approximately USD 286397.47 million.

We cannot conclude this subsection without discussing sales and promotions, which are the purest form of fast fashion. Although it is not a new strategy within the industry, its effectiveness is now much greater. When shared on social media, there is increased consumer engagement, where exclusive discounts or giveaways are offered (Huerta, 2016).

4.6. Response to Interviews.

With a clear understanding of the objectives of this study, we will analyse the responses gathered from the interviews with fashion consumers.

What the interviews aim to analyse is the gradual transition towards sustainable fashion among consumers, although it is marked by challenges such as price and accessibility of more sustainable garments.

Critical attitudes towards fast fashion indicate dissatisfaction with current industry practices, but these do not always translate into a behavioural change due to economic and practical constraints. Continuing education and innovation in sustainable product offerings will be essential to drive a significant shift towards sustainable fashion.

The selected participants, aged between 22 and 52 years old, represent a diverse demographic. While most are financially independent, Goyo remains a student and is still economically dependent. Four of the participants are Spanish, with one being Irish.

1. Demographic Profile and its Impact on Purchasing Preferences.

Age and economic status seem to significantly influence purchasing decisions and attitudes towards sustainable fashion. Leah (22 years old) and Nuria (25 years old), both younger, show a greater inclination towards fast fashion due to its accessibility and convenience. Leah, for example, mentions that she bought clothes at Zara and H&M for a holiday, highlighting 'convenience' as a key factor.

Younger people, such as Leah and Nuria, seem to be more influenced by social media and fast fashion offers, reflecting a more practical and less critical approach to sustainability. This could be due to their life stage, where identity exploration and accessibility are priorities. On the other hand, more mature consumers such as Maria Jose (52) prioritise quality and durability, with a more critical approach to fast fashion, indicating that age and life experience may be correlated with a greater awareness of sustainability.

1. Impact of Economic Independence on Purchasing Decisions.

Economic independence plays a crucial role in purchasing decisions and the possibility to opt for sustainable fashion. Goyo (27 years old), who is still a student and financially dependent, mentions being more inclined to buy second-hand clothes to be sustainable, but this could also be motivated by the need to save money. Maria Jose, aged 52 and financially independent, can afford to prioritize quality over price, saying: 'If it's too cheap I won't buy it because I want the garment to last me'.

Financially independent participants, such as Sara (30 years old) and Maria Jose, tend to value quality and sustainability more, probably because they can afford to invest in garments that last longer and are ethically produced. Leah, being young and financially independent, shows a growing awareness of sustainability, but her practical approach to fast fashion indicates that affordability remains a determining factor. This suggests that while financial independence allows greater flexibility to make sustainable choices, life stage and personal priorities also play a crucial role.

2. Generational perspectives on fast fashion.

Opinions on fast fashion are influenced by generation and life experiences. Maria Jose (52 years old) shows a critical stance towards the industry, noting that 'too much clothing is produced and too little is recycled... we are killing the planet.' In contrast, younger

participants, such as Leah (22), recognise the negative implications of fast fashion but continue to shop at these brands for their convenience.

Older generations tend to be more critical of fast fashion, probably due to greater experience and awareness of its long-term effects. However, younger generations, although aware, are more influenced by fast consumer culture and affordability. This suggests that educational campaigns aimed at young people about the long-term consequences of fast fashion could be effective in changing consumption habits.

3. Attitudes and awareness about sustainability.

In the first question, the interviewees claim to be aware of sustainability in fashion, although the degree to which this influences purchasing decisions varies. For example, Sara mentions: “For me, it means being aware of the high quantities of products that are produced worldwide and its overproduction.” This reflects the negative impact of fast fashion.

As a conclusion for this question, sustainability is a relevant matter for fashion consumers, but its impact on making decisions for their purchases is mixed. While some, like Goyo, integrate aspects such as “CO2 emissions” and “buying second-hand clothes” into their decisions, others, like Nuria, admit that “information on the environmental impact of fast fashion does not affect (their) purchase decisions enough.

4. Purchase preferences and decisive factors.

Factors driving purchasing decisions include design, quality, convenience and price. Sara highlights that what is most important to her is ‘originality and longevity in terms of design’, while Goyo also emphasizes design and adds: ‘I have been increasingly interested in buying second-hand clothes that are in good condition’. However, cost remains a significant barrier for many, such as Maria Jose, who says: ‘I would love to buy eco-friendly, but it is indeed very expensive’.

Sustainable fashion is gaining traction, but for many consumers, price remains an obstacle. Purchasing decisions reflect a balance between the aspiration to be sustainable and economic realities.

5. Experiences with Sustainable Fashion.

Several interviewees have purchased sustainable fashion products, but these purchases are sporadic and motivated by factors such as design, quality or ethical awareness. Leah relates a positive experience: “A couple of years ago, I bought a pinstripe suit from a sustainable brand... it was the best purchase I ever made”. However, Maria José also points out

imitations: “As they are organic and mostly natural products, they were damaged by washing”

Sustainable fashion is seen as a valuable and desirable option, but widespread adoption is still limited. The perception of high quality and the desire to support ethical practices are key factors that could drive its growth.

6. The impact of Information about Sustainability.

Information on the environmental impact of fast fashion affects purchasing decisions but is not always decisive. Nuria admits: “Not enough, I’m not proud, but that’s my honest answer. I buy what I like and what impacts me”. Sara also mentions, that receiving that information helps me to buy a product, but it is not crucial in my decision.”

While education and awareness are essential in promoting sustainable fashion, they alone are insufficient to fully transform consumer behaviour. Additional incentives, such as competitive pricing and increased accessibility to sustainable products, are necessary to foster widespread change.

7. Challenges in the Implementing of Sustainability in Industry.

Companies face significant challenges in adopting high costs and the perception that consumers do not value sustainability enough. Sara comments about her company: “My company is trying to include some recycled leather for next season...but it is just in the interest of sales and marketing”

For sustainable fashion to become mainstream, it is essential to address economic and cultural barriers at both company and consumer levels. Initiatives that address the cost-effectiveness and accessibility of sustainable fashion will be key.

8. Textile industry professionals.

Nuria and Sara present two distinct perspectives: Nuria from a company that takes concrete steps to avoid waste, and Sara, from a more critical and realistic standpoint regarding the lack of commitment from many companies to sustainability.

Nuria states, “Our company does not mass-produce, i.e., we only produce what pre-sell”. This highlights a deliberate strategy to minimize waste, aligning with sustainability by producing only what has already been sold.

Sara, however, takes a more sceptical view: “My company and the company that I worked for last year don’t care much about it. My company. Is trying to include some recycled leather for next season in some of its shoes but it’s just because of a sale and a marketing

interest". Her response underscores the reality that, for many companies, sustainability is more of a marketing tool than a true commitment.

The responses from both reveal that, while there is growing interest in sustainability, operational and economic challenges, along with consumer perception, continue to be significant barriers to the broader adoption of sustainable practices in the textile industry.

Nuria also points out that "finding sustainable fabrics while respecting the quality and durability of the article" is a major challenge. She adds, "Most 'more sustainable' fabrics, such as vegan leather, do not last over time. The quality of these materials is neither good nor durable". This emphasizes the need for innovations in materials that are both sustainable and capable of maintaining or improving the quality and longevity that consumers expect.

Sara also highlights the difficulty of sourcing sustainable materials: "There's not a wide market to choose sustainable materials and they're quite expensive. I think companies (especially small ones) think that the consumer doesn't value sustainability enough yet, so they do not make an effort on it and they can earn some money too." This perspective suggests that the lack of strong consumer demand for sustainability may discourage companies, particularly smaller ones, from investing in sustainable practices.

4.7 Solutions.

After examining the problems and concerns at every stage of the textile industry, it is time to delve into finding solutions and possibilities that can address these issues. We are now entering the most crucial phase, which involves evaluating alternatives that could make the textile industry exemplary in all its aspects. Before discussing these solutions, it is essential to clarify the most emphasized concepts today, such as "sustainability" and "circular economy". However, the relationship and distinction between these terms are not always clear and tend to be confused. In recent years, both concepts have seen increasing interest in academic fields and the development of regulations by government institutions. We will now attempt to discern the purpose of each and, in doing so, provide the solutions developed and implemented by both concepts.

4.7.1 Sustainability.

Numerous definitions are attempting to define the term "sustainability" which can sometimes make it challenging to choose the most accurate one. However, to clarify, the definition established by the World Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations in 1987 is: "Sustainable development is the ability to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their

own needs” other definitions add the phrase “to ensure economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being,” which is referred to as the “triple bottom line of sustainability” (Econinteligencia, 2013).

The term “sustainability” originated from its use in forestry, a field focused on the management and conservation of forests (Wikipedia 2013). In this context, it was used to refer to an unwritten rule that advocated for ensuring that the amount of timber harvested did not exceed the volume that would naturally regenerate. Over time, this concept evolved to become a fundamental principle in ecology, advocating for respecting nature’s own pace of regeneration (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017)

4.7.2 Circular economy.

The circular economy is defined as a strategy aimed at “reducing the input of new materials and the production of virgin waste by closing the economic and ecological loops of resources” (Wikipedia). It arises as a counter to the “take. make-dispose” linear economy, aiming to utilize all possible resources and establish a cyclical model that is compatible with nature.

Figure: Clothing organization in the circular economy.



Source: Instagram account Gabriel Farias Barren (circular economy definition).

A fabric is circular when other aspects are considered. The most basic aspects are not met by most of the garments sold. Different fabric compositions cannot be used, nor can sewing threads of different compositions than the garment, nor can certain colours or dyes be used (Slow Fashion Next, 2024).

The European Union has been promoting and encouraging businesses across the continent to adopt methods that support a circular economy. The Robert Schuman Foundation emphasizes the importance of transitioning to this new model to reduce CO2 emissions and move towards greater energy independence (Frérot, 2014) it highlights the need to incorporate waste recovery as a core component of business models. It is also important to remove any ideological considerations, as this issue is crucial for all businesses and individuals.

The report also highlights the economic benefits of the circular economy, noting that companies implementing it will see increased productivity from natural resources. The goal is to achieve maximum efficiency in the use of water, raw materials, and energy.

In terms of practical applications within the industry, the current business models, especially those based on product sales like in the textile sector, inherently drive an increasing demand for raw materials. Conversely, business models centred on the service economy offer better material utilization and can mitigate the need for raw material extraction. A noteworthy instance of this transition is found in copier manufacturers. Previously, these companies sold their machines, but upon shifting to a rental model, they began designing machines for enhanced durability. This change significantly reduced the need for new raw materials.

However, the practice of offering discounts often masks two alarming realities: overproduction and overconsumption. Impulsive buying leads to an accumulation of clothing, much of which ends up in the second-hand market. This alternative is becoming increasingly popular due to the perception that it is more eco-friendly.

Yet, this trend might not represent a sustainable solution. It perpetuates a cycle of uncontrolled consumption. Consider these statistics:

- 61.8 million garments from Zara (with an increase of approximately 100,00 items daily).
- 59.7 million from H&M.
- 21. million from Shein.
- 21 million from Primark.

Are we genuinely making progress toward circular fashion? Is selling second-hand items truly a step forward in sustainability?

The data suggests otherwise. The large quantities of garments on second-hand platforms may be fuelling overconsumption rather than extending the lifespan of products. Simply selling clothes instead of disposing of them does not necessarily support a circular fashion model.

Circular fashion should prioritize maintaining products in use for as long as possible. Emphasizing reuse and recycling over unchecked overproduction. It is essential to manage the clothing lifecycle responsibly and educate consumers on the effects of their buying choices.

As the European Union Implements new regulations to promote durability, recyclability, and accountability in the fashion industry, remaining well-informed is crucial.

There are also successful examples of circular economy business models. For instance, Interface, which originally produced polypropylene carpets, now offers a rental service. They collect used carpets from customers, recycle them, and transform them into new products.

4.7.3 Solutions approach.

Por todo lo expuesto anterior, la primera solución que trataremos será conseguir una economía que cierre el ciclo, es decir, una economía circular.

To further explain the functioning of a circular economy, it is essential to reference the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the most internationally recognized organization for its awareness-raising efforts and pioneering projects in this field. The foundation primarily focuses on the fashion industry, making significant contributions and conducting research that is increasingly influencing major brands.

Their publications on the circular economy are highly influential among governments and businesses on these topics. Therefore, we will highlight their report Towards the Circular Economy (2013). The document emphasizes the need for a transition from a linear economy to a circular one and introduces what it considers the five fundamental principles on which the latter should be based:

- Zero Waste Design: this principle advocates for designs compatible with nature itself. Waste is “unnatural”, meaning that in nature, all materials undergo a biological cycle that ensures their continuity. It is necessary to create materials with a renewal cycle that are non-toxic and be composted. Composting refers to the agricultural technique that transforms waste into biological materials, which can be

reused in the soil, fully utilizing resources (Tortosa, 20089. Furthermore, it is essential to find designs that can be reused on their own without relying on recycling whenever possible. While recycling is a good alternative, it inevitably leads to a loss of quality and is costly to implement,

- Resilience and Diversity: this principle aims to promote systems with diverse characteristics that are flexible and versatile, capable of adapting to different circumstances. Highly efficient but rigid systems are prone to failure because they are less adaptable to change. In contrast, natural systems are created by industry.
- Reliance on Renewable Energy Sources: this principle involves the gradual introduction of renewable energy sources. This promotes the generalization of their use and consequently, their implementation in business production chains. Additionally, the benefits of using this form of energy are long-term, unlike the more commonly used energy types today, which are increasingly scarce.
- Systems thinking: the foundation refers to “systems thinking”, which is the ability to develop systems that complement each other in all their parts. Each part influences the next, making it necessary to avoid linear systems, which are more prone to failure, and instead favour those that are self-sustaining and regenerative.
- Waste is Food: the final principle seeks to close the product cycle. It is possible to reintroduce non-toxic biological products into the market. The goal is to achieve the reuse of products by first altering their composition to ensure they are entirely biological. Ideally, this is accomplished through a method known as creative recycling, or upcycling. This method involves taking used products and subjecting them to an ecological process to produce a higher-quality product (Borrás, 2017).

4.7.4 Real Alternatives.

When discussing the circular economy, it's common to think of it as a utopian concept. However, it has already been implemented in some countries and has been integrated into legal frameworks, providing a set of guarantees to ensure its compliance. To illustrate this, we can refer to a report by the law firm Roca Junyent, which highlights the case of China and its legal efforts to transition towards a circular economy.

China as the most industrialized country in the world, has engaged in some of the most aggressive practices, leading to undeniable economic growth. However, the consequences of these practices are becoming increasingly apparent, with the country facing a scarcity of natural resources and some of the most polluted cities globally. The Western linear economy model is unsustainable, prompting China to reconsider its approach and, in 2008, begin transitioning towards a circular economy.

The report emphasizes that this transition requires the involvement of three key stakeholders: private enterprises and their management, who must commit to the principles of a circular economy; industries within a sector, which need to collaborate to achieve sustainable changes by opting for biological products, sustainable alternatives and resource reuse; and local governments, which play a crucial role providing processes that help conserve resources. Once collaboration among these levels was achieved, a “circular economy law” was proposed to the country’s legislative body. Although initially significant because it acknowledges the fundamental principles of a circular economy. While responsible practices may take years to fully implement, the law sets a precedent for gradually raising awareness of the importance of the circular economy.

Further strengthening these global efforts, the European Commission, continuing its initiatives from 2015, has recently adopted a new Circular Economy Action Plan. This plan is a central element of the European Green Deal, Europe’s new strategy for sustainable growth. The 2020 Action Plan introduced initiatives across the entire product lifecycle, from design to disposal, aiming to promote the widespread adoption of circular economy practices. The plan’s objectives include making sustainable products the norm within the EU, empowering consumers and public buyers, focusing on resource-intensive sectors with high circularity potential-such as electronics, batteries, packaging, plastics, textiles, construction, food, water, and nutrients- reducing waste generation, ensuring circularity benefits regions, cities, and people, and leading global efforts in circular economy practices. (European Commission, 2020).

After reviewing the fundamental pillars of the circular economy, it is essential to explore the most viable methods for its implementation and the specific roles each stakeholder must play. Next, we will delve into the best alternatives proposed so far. In each of these approaches, participation is required from both the producer and the end consumer.

A. Licensing-Based Sales Model.

Drawing on insights from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, various strategies for integrating the circular economy into our lives can be explained. One of the most innovative yet feasible alternatives identified in this research is outlined in the report *Re-thinking the Future of Plastics* (2014) by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, in collaboration with McKinsey & Company. This concept, termed “re-thinking progress,” challenges the current manufacturing process. In nature, living organisms die, decompose, and provide nutrients for other life forms or the soil. All are powered by natural energy.

The Foundation questions the human-adapted “create, use, and dispose” model and suggests a return to a self-sustaining, natural cycle. One innovative solution is to change the concept of ownership of products. For example, rather than purchasing appliances outright, consumers would acquire them through a license, requiring them to return the items to the manufacturer at the end of their useful life. The manufacturer could then reuse most of the materials to create new products to be licensed again. Any remaining materials that cannot be reused would be biodegradable, ensuring they can naturally decompose if left in landfills or nature. This concept is also applicable to the fashion industry. When purchasing clothing, consumers would commit to returning the garments to the brand after use. This practice would not completely stop, but it would slow down, the negative environmental impacts of current consumption patterns. For this to be considered a viable alternative, all companies must begin modifying their business models. This philosophy must be incorporated across entire production chains to avoid it being limited to isolated cases aiming for a better future.

B. The Rag-Bag.

Private initiatives are increasingly overflowing with ideas to address the aforementioned problems. One of the most ingenious and potentially feasible ideas comes from Swedish entrepreneur Fredrik Wikholm. In 2014, he introduced his concept during a TEDx Talk in Gothenburg. However, before diving into this alternative, it is important to understand the context. Wikholm argued in his speech that if every European citizen recycled just one t-shirt, it would save up to 1.8 trillion litres of water, a staggering figure for such a small effort. From an economic perspective, he added that the circular economy allows us to tap into a new, underutilized business model, as it closes the loop and generates new revenue from products that have been produced, sold, purchased, and used. the key to success lies in harmonizing ethics, the environment, and finances.

The idea conceived by Wikholm is known as “The Rag Bag”. The concept involves a bag made from recycled materials, but its purpose extends beyond its eco-friendly composition. The process is simple: when a customer purchases an item of clothing, it is placed in this bag. Once the consumer gets home and removes the new garment from the bag, the next step is to flip the bag inside out and place an old or unwanted garment inside. The bag, now with its interior turned outside, features a different design that includes a postal address and a simple sealing mechanism. The consumers then place the bag with the discarded garment into any mailbox, where it is sent to NGOs or charitable organizations, giving the item a new life cycle. The shipping costs are covered by the clothing brand.

As can be seen, the explanation is longer than the actual process, which is easy to integrate into daily life. By simply recycling and reusing garments, we can inspire and dramatically

transform industries. This initiative has been gaining traction and is being solidified through a store created by Wikholm himself, called “Uniforms for Dedicated”, which distributes the bag.

Figure 8: The Rag Bag image.



Source: Image from “The Rag Bag”, website Nord DDB (2014)

C. C&A and Cradle to Cradle.

The clothing brand C&A has long been a major promoter of sustainable and circular economy practices. The company has introduced numerous initiatives to reduce water usage in production and launch entirely sustainable clothing lines.

One of their standout initiatives is the Cradle to Cradle (C2C certification, a label that most of their garments have earned. The term “Cradle to Cradle” has now become synonymous with the C2C certification. This concept was popularized by the influential book *Cradle to Cradle* by Braungart and McDonough published in 2002. The book introduced a constructive approach that contrasted with the prevailing environmentalist movement of the time, which focused primarily on reducing consumption through general awareness. Instead, Braungart and McDonough encouraged the development of completely sustainable processes and the creation of biological products to drive industry change (Castonguay, 2009).

Figure 9: Five Categories of Sustainability Performance to Achieve Cradle-to-Cradle Certified.



Source: C2C Platform. (accessed July, 2024)

As illustrated in the figure, each symbol represents the fulfilment of specific criteria in the product's manufacturing process. An increasing number of companies strive to incorporate this certification into their products to demonstrate social and environmental responsibility. Notably, C&A is the leading company in its sector in terms of investment in this area.

C&A's innovation lies in creating entirely organic t-shirts that, after use, can follow several pathways. First, as mentioned on their website, they can always donate them to European organizations dedicated exclusively to recycling textiles. The final and most important option is to use these garments for composting or domestic fertilization. Since these garments are made entirely from biological materials, they are ideal for completing the cycle, just as nature would. C&A's initiative encourages consumers to use these garments as domestic compost, applying them in their gardens to produce nutrients for the soil, thus completing the cycle naturally.

As a result of these initiatives, fashion multinationals view these strategies as a competitive advantage. In the rise of ecological, vegan, and sustainable trends, the multinational brand that aligns most closely with consumer expectations and meets the environmental demands of the new society will be more favourably received by customers. A notable example is H&M, which encourages customers to bring them to stores for recycling instead of discarding old or unwanted garments. This approach prevents clothing from ending up in landfills and helps close the textile loop (H&M, 2021). Similarly, organizations like Greenpeace, in collaboration with brands committed to sustainability, implement various

strategies such as the Detox Campaign. This campaign was a significant effort to reveal the environmental impact of the fashion industry, showcasing through multiple images the scale of toxic water pollution generated to supply the global market with fast fashion.

4.7.5. *Slow Fashion.*

Throughout this work, we have examined the complexities of the textile industry and the challenges humanity faces today. We've also discussed the most viable alternatives based on their acceptance by both the industry and consumers. However, as we have outlined, we are at a cultural crossroads, largely influenced by changes in production chains made by major brands to increase sales. This situation necessitates a reconsideration of our increasingly entrenched consumption habits. In response to this, and alongside the sustainable alternatives we've discussed, a movement has emerged that advocates for a shift from quantity to quality: slow fashion.

A. Concept:

As mentioned in the introduction, slow fashion is a movement that originated as an offshoot of the earlier Slow Food Movement, which gained prominence in the 1980s. Initially, it aimed to combat the fast-food industry, which was rapidly displacing seasonal and traditional food products. Over time, this movement has spread to various sectors, including tourism and the place of life in large cities. The focus of slow fashion is not on passivity but on appreciating natural resources and becoming more aware of the impact of our activities (Lazaro, 2014).

When trying to pinpoint a specific definition of slow fashion, we encountered a wide range of publications that did not fully align with a single thesis. However, they all share common characteristics, advocating for higher quality and balance in the textile production chain.

Slow fashion emerged as a response to fast fashion. The goal is to move away from systems that produce clothing at a rapid pace. Excessive consumption, driven by variety and low prices, encourages behaviour that would have been considered compulsive not long ago—buying more than what is needed. As we have seen, these habits lead to many garments becoming obsolete, making it difficult to manage the waste generated by the textile industry, as noted by Johansson (2010). In her report, Johansson argues that quality offers a range of benefits to workers' labour conditions and environmental impact. This shift in focus also helps avoid the need for temporary subcontracting to meet volatile consumer demand, which often results in workers facing long hours and tight deadlines.

Johansson explains that by embracing all the elements of slow fashion, stakeholders can reap several benefits: creating high-quality and environmentally friendly products,

improving labour conditions, and contributing to a reduction in consumerism. Additionally, suppliers benefit by gaining more time and precision in fulfilling orders, thus avoiding the need for poor working conditions often associated with rushed subcontracting.

B. Slow fashion vs fast fashion:

One of the most used frameworks for differentiating between slow fashion and fast fashion is one created from Amengual's (2018) analysis of slow fashion.

Table 6: Comparison between Fast Fashion and Slow Fashion by Amengual (2018)

Fast Fashion	Slow Fashion
Promotion of diversity	Promotion of self
Globalization	Global and local
Emphasizes Image and Novelty	Emphasizes Craftsmanship and Maintenance
One-Way Relationship	Mutual Trust
Lack of Awareness of Impact	Awareness of Impact
Costs Associated with Labor and Materials	True Price
Large Scale	Small and Medium Scale

Source: own elaboration with data from Amengual (2018), Franca Magazine.

4.8 Conclusions of the Findings:

Upon completing this research, several conclusions have emerged. Regarding the first objective, the findings indicate that the rise of fast fashion is a direct result of advances in the industry. Over the past thirty years, more efficient systems and profitable business models for companies have been developed. This has led to a framework established by multinational corporations that has indirectly reduced the current population and attracted new generations, creating a consumer dependency that has disrupted normal consumption habits.

The second point aimed to explore the components of the textile production chain and reveal what happens behind each piece of clothing. In the early stages of obtaining and creating the product, the profit margins for individuals are minimal. This is a hurdle that most multinationals struggle to overcome due to their goal of reducing costs for end consumers. The economic and labour conditions in these stages are not only significantly improvable, but the impact also extends to third parties through environmental harm.

The research uncovered a wealth of documents that critically analyse these process phases. However, we chose to discuss the current situation in Bangladesh due to its high media profile and illustrative nature. This case can be analogously applied to many other regions and the practices followed by fast fashion companies over decades.

In summary, these practices challenge the textile sector and question its current supply chain. Existing systems make the situation increasingly unsustainable, leading to the depletion of natural resources and precarious employment conditions.

Finally, the third objective involves examining the most suitable options to reverse or improve the situation. This section analyzes steps towards change that emphasize the importance of caring for and using nature respectfully.

As observed, numerous proposals exist, ranging from measures taken by governments to those from prominent organizations and entrepreneurs. It is challenging for most authors to explain why these alternatives are not immediately and widely implemented if they are feasible at present. We are in a situation that requires a real change, but for now, everything remains secondary while awaiting a solution that meets the high expectations of customers.

Therefore, we believe that the missing ingredient is a greater willingness and proactive attitude from all citizens... multiple sources emphasize the terms “collaboration” and “everyone”, referring to a change that necessitates the unavoidable participation of all involved parties. The effort must start with government offices where more influential measures are needed. Companies also play a crucial role in genuinely committing plans that prevent negligent behaviours. Lastly, it is essential to gradually instil these issues in each culture to ensure that these ideas are not only viable but become the only alternative before reaching a dangerously close point of no return, projected for 2035.

However, a critical reflection reveals several unresolved challenges. Firstly, the slow pace of change raises concerns about whether the proposed solutions are genuinely practical or merely aspirational. While the necessity for a shift towards sustainability is universally

acknowledged, there remains a lack of concrete, large-scale implementations that demonstrate the feasibility of these ideas in real-world contexts. The reliance on theoretical models and small-scale initiatives, though promising, does not provide a robust framework capable of driving industry-wide transformation.

Additionally, the success of these initiatives heavily depends on a level of global collaboration and individual commitment this is currently unprecedented. While the concept of shared responsibility is appealing, it may underestimate the complexities of aligning the interests of governments, corporations, and consumers on a global scale. The power dynamics within the industry, along with the economic benefits of maintaining the status quo, present significant obstacles to achieving the widespread adoption of sustainable practices.

Furthermore, the expected growth in the clothing markets of China and India, surpassing the combined market size of the U.S. and Europe by 2025, highlights the challenges ahead. While emerging economies will drive market growth, the difference in per capita spending on clothing between developed and developing nations suggests that consumption patterns will remain uneven. This global shift complicates efforts to implement sustainable practices across the industry, as the focus on expanding markets may conflict with the urgency of environmental considerations.

Additionally, the projected timeline for avoiding a "point of no return" by 2025 adds urgency and emphasizes the critical gap between awareness and action. Without more aggressive policies and stronger enforcement mechanisms, it is questionable whether the proposed incremental changes will be sufficient to alter the trajectory. In addition, our research noted the existence of numerous essays and books criticizing the consumerist practices of fast fashion and their impacts on various groups. Many proposed ideas seek to offer long-term solutions or improvements to this situation. However, there are hardly any real-world cases to support the theoretical accounts. To date, initiatives have been on a small scale without causing a significant change. Despite this, interest in sustainable practices is growing, and in a few years, literature will likely evolve around a variety of real business models based on sustainability.

The fashion industry has made progress in transitioning to more sustainable practices, but many challenges lie ahead. Practical and scalable solutions are urgently needed to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Without these solutions, the industry may struggle with the same issues, failing to fulfil the promise of sustainability.

5. Concluding Thoughts on the Contribution of this Research, its Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research.

Since the research has been based on previous studies and analysis of existing theories, the conclusions on the results have been developed in detail in previous sections. The study has been carried out by conducting an exhaustive analysis of the different sectors of the textile industry, categorized into primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, to unravel the complexities involved in textile production. This integrated approach has allowed for a deeper understanding of the processes and challenges faced by the industry.

Within the broad landscape of the textile industry, the fast fashion movement has been identified as a key factor in examining the tensions between sustainability and the social issues suggested by this business model. Fast fashion, characterized by the rapid and low-cost production of garments, raises serious environmental concerns due to its resource-intensive approach and its contribution to textile waste. They have also been criticized for perpetuating precarious working conditions in several regions of the world.

Analysis of this phenomenon has led to many solutions that both companies and individuals have begun to implement to mitigate the negative impacts of fast fashion. These solutions include initiatives towards sustainable fashion, the development of stricter corporate social responsibility policies, and a shift in consumption patterns towards more ethical and conscious choices. This study, therefore, has not only explored the problems associated with fast fashion but has also provided a platform to discuss viable alternatives that seek to balance the demands of the industry with the urgent need for sustainability and social justice.

5.1 Implications of Findings for the Research Questions.

The results that have been found in this research show that fast fashion has been driven mainly by generational changes and advances in society and textile production technology. These factors, therefore, have increased consumerism in society and planned obsolescence within the fashion industry. This answers the research question by identifying the key drivers behind the phenomenon and how they have shaped current trends in fashion consumption. In addition, relevant parts of the process of this study have been to investigate or unravel from the minute 0 in which raw materials start to be produced until they reach the hands of consumers to see the level of impact it has from their origin to the end. That is why we also answer the question of what long and short-term solutions can be adopted. We have discussed some of the solutions both from companies and at a general level, whether it is the circular economy or projects such as The Rag-Bag to moderate the

effects of associated consumption. The practical implications of the findings suggest that more stringent policies and a change in consumption patterns are required to mitigate the environmental and social impacts of fashion.

5.2 Contributions and Limitations of the Research.

This research has contributed significantly to the current social context, especially by raising awareness among young consumers about the implications of consuming fast-fashion clothing. The analysis and disclosure of the reality behind these companies, has revealed how these brands manage to offer garments at extremely low prices, exposing questionable practices in terms of environmental sustainability and social responsibility. The research highlights that while access to affordable clothing may seem beneficial at first glance, this phenomenon has profound and often negative repercussions, both for the environment and for the communities involved in textile production.

Nevertheless, the research faces certain limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the subject of “fast fashion” is extremely broad and complex, which implies that to address it comprehensively it would be necessary to analyse many problems, proposed solutions, and companies involved in this phenomenon. This research has chosen to focus on a more specific analysis of the textile sector and how fast fashion impacts society from an environmental and social perspective. However, this focus may have limited the scope of the findings and the variety of solutions explored.

5.3 Recommendations for Practice.

Following the findings of this research, several practical recommendations are presented for the main actors involved in the textile industry. As for companies, a good proposal would be to adopt sustainable practices at all stages of production, from the choice of materials to waste management and to invest in developing new technologies by switching to cleaner ones. On the other hand, consumers should be educated about the consequences of fast fashion and encouraged to change their consumption habits, opting for more sustainable choices and supporting more responsible brands.

In addition, governments must play a crucial role in regulating the industry, implementing policies that promote sustainability and penalize harmful practices. Non-governmental organizations and activists are also responsible for monitoring, denouncing and collaborating with the industry to drive positive change towards more ethical and sustainable fashion.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research.

This research has opened multiple directions for future studies related to the fast fashion phenomenon. Although our focus was on analysing the current dynamics and the social and environmental implications in specific contexts, several areas could benefit from further study. For example, future research could focus on a comparative analysis across different geographic regions to better understand variations in the impacts of fast fashion globally. In addition, to mitigate possible biases in respondents' answers, future research could include a focus on government actors and non-governmental organizations to obtain a more balanced view free of private sector influences.

As mentioned above, to avoid generalizations. Studies could also be made on whether there is room for people to have easier access to garments with sustainable materials due to the economic situation of each one, because in this case, after conducting interviews, consumers who claim to be aware of sustainability in the textile industry, also confirm not being able to afford it.

5.5 Final Conclusion and Reflections.

Completing this research has been one of the most important milestones in my educational career. Throughout this project, I faced challenges that not only tested my knowledge of the subject but also demanded a significant improvement in my reasoning and data analysis skills. As this was the first time that I was faced with such extensive and laborious work, it has been a long process but at the same time, I can say that I have enjoyed it a lot. I have dealt with topics such as the world of the textile industry which I like so much and sustainability which is also very present in my life but of which I have many gaps in content as well. This project allowed me to strengthen my understanding of the complexity of the fast fashion phenomenon while improving my communication skills by interacting with industry experts. Reflecting on the whole process, I can say that this research has not only allowed me to grow as a student but has also given me the confidence to face future academic and professional challenges with a more critical and informed perspective.

I have also been able to find out more about sectors of the industry that we forget once we leave school, at least talking about the education system in Spain. Another fundamental part

of the work has been having to face hard work and consequent corrections because at the beginning of the way to the dissertation, I did not know how to approach the topic I wanted to deal with as it is a very broad topic and there is a lot of information about it. also, I was used to doing law papers, so they were more about essays than research. I guess that can be seen in some confusion or misunderstandings about the subject. I guess that can be seen in some of the confusion or in having chosen a topic that does not involve so much practical analysis but rather theoretical analysis.

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Appendix A -

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
2. Are you economically dependent?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. How old are you?
 - a. Between 20-25
 - b. 25-30
 - c. More than 40
4. Have you ever worked or are you currently working in a job in the textile industry?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Appendix B

Questions for interview:

1. CONSUMERS:
 - A) Shopping habits:
 - a. Which factors do you think are most important when you buy clothes and why?
 - b. Could you describe your last shopping experience? What drove you to choose those clothes?
 - B) Attitudes and awareness about sustainability
 - a. What does sustainability mean in the context of fashion?
 - b. How much does the information you receive about the environmental impact of fast fashion affect your shopping decisions?
 - C) Fast fashion and sustainable fashion perceptions
 - a. What do you think about fast fashion brands? Which are the positive and negative aspects you associate with them?
 - b. Have you ever bought from a sustainable brand? What drove you to do so and how was the experience? Could you give me an example?
2. TEXTILE INDUSTRY PROFESIONALS:
 - A) Industry practices:
 - a. Could you describe how your company addresses the sustainability in its daily operations?
 - b. What are the principal challenges that you face when trying to implement sustainable practices in clothes production?
 - B) Tendencies and innovation.
 - a. What technological innovations and processes do you believe could help reduce the environmental impact in fashion?
 - b. How do you envision the future of the textile industry in terms of sustainability?
 - C) Consumer relation.
 - a. How do you perceive consumer demand for sustainable products compared to fast fashion products?
 - b. What is your outlook on the future of the textile industry in sustainable terms?

Appendix C –

Transcribed interviews.

- CONSUMERS:

A) Shopping habits:

- a. Which factors do you think are most important when you buy clothes and why?

Goyo: As a fashion lover many factors inspire my decisions. While it is true that the design itself, the materials used in the fabrics or the brand vision of expressing are my main factors in buying clothes, secondary aspects such as the country of origin (which relates to emissions of CO2 for example) are always on my mind. Also, I have increasingly been interested in buying second-hand clothes that are in good condition to promote a more sustainable way of buying fashion.

Nuria: I believe that the factors that play a major role when it comes to buying are novelty and necessity. Most of the things we buy we don't need in a literal sense, it's just psychological thinking that makes us think we need it when we just want to treat ourselves. It also depends on the person, but in my case, since I love fashion and it's my passion, I usually can't resist buying something I like. We also must consider that social networks, of course, play an important role in our minds, and create needs that we didn't have before.

Maria José: Quality of the garment and price. If it's too cheap I don't buy it because I want the garment to last. Indeed, I am not willing to pay a lot of money for a garment when I know that I can find it cheaper elsewhere. But what I always pay attention to is the quality of the product, I know that if it is good, it will last me for many years.

Leah: There are several factors I consider when buying clothes. These include convenience, price, quality, and most importantly, compatibility with and integration into my wardrobe. Finding pieces of clothing that I feel represent me and my style is what I find most important when it comes to buying clothing. (And makes it fun).

Sara: Personally, originality and longevity in terms of the design of the clothes or accessories I'm interested in. Also, quality is gaining much importance when deciding on a purchase.

- b. Could you describe your last shopping experience? What drove you to choose those clothes?

Goyo: Some months ago, I had a buying experience with a pair of white bamboo leather shoes. Of course, the design had to do with my decision but the material being animal-free was an attractive factor that led me to buy them

Nuria: The last thing I bought was a Valentino bag. I bought it in the sale because I had a good opportunity, I bought it with my aunt's employee discount and that was the main reason. Also, I had been wanting a metallic bag for a long time and I found it.

Maria José: It was a pair of leggings and a jumper for winter that was on sale. I thought it was a stylish garment. In this case, for example, I didn't pay attention to the quality, as it was an online purchase.

Leah: For my last shopping experience, I had to purchase a few things for a holiday in the sun. Being Irish, shorts and dresses don't occupy a large portion of my wardrobe. I picked up a few pieces from Zara and H&M. Going back to the factors I deemed important when buying clothes, convenience took the top place of my priorities that week. Although I know these clothes won't be in my wardrobe forever, it was easy to grab a few things I will only wear a couple of times without breaking the bank.

Sara: I bought at Zara a few clothes which I consider basic for my style and which I think that I'm going to use for quite a long time. Sales season and its low price also helped me to decide to buy them.

3. Attitudes and awareness about sustainability

- a. What does sustainability mean in the context of fashion?

Goyo: In the context of fashion sustainability is strictly related to significant aspects to bear in mind. Firstly, the materials used by big fast fashion corporations are far from being considered green. Also, the emissions and big footprint imply the transportation and global exchanges in the fashion industry. Furthermore, the fast fashion waste that rapidly accumulates threatens nature and future sustainable societies

Nuria: In my opinion, it means producing products in a way that does not harm our planet and the people who live on it.

Maria José: I am giving more and more importance to sustainability. I like to shop in shops whose sustainability policies are in line with my values and principles. For example, HYM

makes a lot of clothes from recycled materials. I would love to buy eco-friendly products but it's indeed very expensive. I try to buy clothes that are made of linen or cotton rather than polyester.

Leah: For me, sustainability means quality over quantity. Buying one pair of jeans that are more expensive but will last a long time is worth more than having to buy 3 pairs of cheaper jeans that have a shorter shelf life. Sustainability is choosing to purchase from companies that pride themselves on the manufacturing and quality of their products when you are in the position to do so.

Sara: For me, it means being aware of the high quantities of products that are produced worldwide and its overproduction. It's indeed quite difficult to reject fast fashion these days but reducing its consumption is crucial. Another point I consider very important is the production of sustainable materials.

- b. How much does the information you receive about the environmental impact of fast fashion affect your shopping decisions?

Goyo: Even though I still buy fast fashion clothes, I must admit that my level of consumption has decreased significantly, replacing those clothing options with second-hand stores or hand-made brands. However, this last option is still expensive for most of us and that's an advantage that big fashion corporations have.

Nuria: Not enough, I'm not proud, but that's my honest answer. I buy what I like and what makes an impact on me.

Maria José: I am giving more and more importance to sustainability. I like to shop in shops whose sustainability policies are in line with my values and principles. For example, HYM makes a lot of clothes from recycled materials. I would love to buy eco-friendly products but it's indeed very expensive. I try to buy clothes that are made of linen or cotton rather than polyester.

Leah: Honestly, there is a lot I don't know about the impact of fast fashion on the environment. Of course, I am aware that is it one of the biggest factors of climate change, but it is something I need to educate myself on a lot more. I try, when I can, to buy from slow fashion brands and buy second-hand, but as mentioned above, sometimes it is not always possible. It is something we can all work on, and all should work on.

Sara: It does, and it helps me to buy a product to have that information but it's not crucial in my decision.

4. Fast fashion and sustainable fashion perceptions

- a. What do you think about fast fashion brands? Which are the positive and negative aspects you associate with them?

Goyo: My overview of fast fashion companies is more negative than positive. Even though some of them have introduced ways of using more sustainable products, or buying pre-owned clothes, many of them use strategies to greenwash their practices.

Nuria: I think fast fashion brands are hurting luxury brands, who have creativity and strive to create unique designs. I understand their positive side, which is to make fashion accessible to everyone, whether they have money or not. But besides being a danger to the planet, it hurts the brands because of its copies.

Maria José: a. Too much clothing is produced too cheaply. Too much clothing is produced and too little is recycled, and with these actions, we are burdening the planet. To do this we should increase the price of clothes a little and buy less.

Leah: We all know by now that fast fashion brands are infamous for their carbon emissions, so why do people still buy from them so often? Although the pros include cheaper prices, functionality and convenience, are you getting value for the money you are spending? Cons include poor quality of clothing, items that don't last through the washing machine and of course, the environmental impact.

Sara: I've always tried to reduce my fast fashion consumption and there was a time when I almost just bought second-hand clothes (especially because of their low price and unique design) but it's true that as time goes by and as I work 40h per week and have less free time I've realized that I consume more fast fashion (it's easier to reach to)

- b. Have you ever bought from a sustainable brand? What drove you to do so and how was the experience? Could you give me an example?

Goyo: I have. Several times. I have previously bought hand-made sustainable pret-a-porter and a couple of vegan shoes. Supporting good practices by consumers may help force big companies to adapt their policies to ecological transition and nature-friendly products

Nuria: The only sustainable brand I usually buy from is Stella McCartney, honestly it wasn't because of sustainability, but because of the design of some of their shoes.

Maria José: Yes. I have bought sustainable clothes, recycled polyester, from ECOALF, the brand that I had used ecological dyes to print the prints on the shirts, they were good, but the quality was a bit expensive, as they are ecological and mostly natural products, they

were damaged by washing. That is why in the end I can understand that people choose to produce cheaper products and therefore, of poorer quality and composed of chemicals that are not at all favorable to the environment.

Leah: A couple of years ago, I bought a pinstripe suit from a sustainable brand that made these suits from deadstock materials. Although it cost a lot more than one from ASOS, it has been the best purchase I have ever made. It is extremely versatile and can be worn in so many ways with other items from my wardrobe. The quality is amazing, and I receive so many compliments on it. I am happy to be able to share and recommend this small business when I can. I know I will have this suit for years. I guess that is the difference!

Sara: Second-hand clothes are the most sustainable I've bought. I've been interested in brands such as ECOALF but I cannot afford its prices easily.

5. TEXTILE INDUSTRY PROFESIONALS:

D) Industry practices:

Could you describe how your company addresses sustainability in its daily operations?

Nuria: Our company does not mass-produce, i.e. we only produce what we pre-sell.

Sara: That's quite a thing. My company and the company that I worked for last year don't care much about it.

My company is trying to include some recycled leather for next season in some of its shoes but it's just because of a sales and marketing interest.

a. What are the principal challenges that you face when trying to implement sustainable practices in clothes production?

Nuria: Above all, finding sustainable fabrics while respecting the quality and durability of the article. Most "more sustainable" fabrics, such as vegan leather, do not last over time. The quality of these materials is neither good nor durable.

Sara: There's not a wide market to choose sustainable materials and they're quite expensive. I think that companies (especially small companies) think that the consumer doesn't value sustainability enough yet, so they do not make an effort on it and they can earn some money too.