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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUSTAINABILITY AND FAST
FASHION: THE AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES OF YOUNG
KAZAKH FEMALE CONSUMERS**

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ABSTRACT

The world today is coping with different environmental issues, including climate change. There are multiple factors affecting environmental degradation, one of the major ones being fast fashion. In fact, fast-fashion business chains have been proven to negatively influence environmental sustainability, yet they represent a globally successful business phenomenon that has expanded sharply during the last two decades.

The research problem of this thesis is that consumers purchase fast fashion items regardless of their unsustainability and the damage it brings to the environment. The aim of the study is to provide a piece of brief information about young Kazakh women's awareness of the environmental sustainability issues of fast fashion and to demonstrate issues affecting their purchase decisions, and the extent to which they might feel social pressure to avoid buying fast fashion clothing. There are three research questions constructed to answer the research problem, and the author uses a qualitative approach by conducting semi-structured online interviews.

According to the research, young Kazakh women have a limited understanding of the environmental sustainability implications of fast fashion. Additionally, the survey found that, due to a lack of knowledge, sustainability is a secondary consideration for young women when shopping for clothing, and their attitude toward the issue is only partial. Additionally, it can be noted that while youngsters do not experience societal pressure to avoid fast fashion, they believe that it will be achievable in the future.

Keywords: sustainability, fast fashion, consumer behavior

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the journal *Natural Science* published a report that dyeing and finishing fabrics are the second greatest source of freshwater pollution after agriculture (Kant, 2012). Production of clothing, footwear, and accessories significantly harms the environment. These are pesticides and chemicals that enter the water during the cultivation of cotton and then when dyeing fabrics, and the release of harmful gases during the production of synthetics and the transportation of finished products (Kant, 2012). So, by 2018, this industry sector emitted 1.2 billion tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere - this is more than all the aircraft and ships in the world produced during the same period (United Nations Climate Change, 2018). The fast fashion industry also accounts for one-fifth of all freshwater pollution on the planet (United Nations Climate Change, 2018).

150 billion pieces of clothing are produced every year in the world - this makes the fashion industry one of the most harmful industries (Leonova, 2018). Mass-market items fall into disrepair faster than people realize their harm to the planet (every second). Fast fashion plays a significant role in this: mass-market companies can have up to 52 seasons a year instead of four so that new items can arrive in stores every week. Clothing that someone may want to throw away after a couple of washes needs a huge amount of resources, and after it falls out of use, it is left to decompose very slowly in landfills, while polluting the environment (Leonova, 2018).

According to Leonova (2018), the concept of sustainability - "sustainable development" - came into novelty in the fashion industry in the late 1980s thanks to companies such as Patagonia and Esprit. Yvon Chouinard, the founder of Patagonia, was one of the first entrepreneurs to think about the ethical production of clothing. However, the real popularity of the sustainability movement has been increasing during the last two decades, mostly due to the fact that the mass-market brands themselves have begun to declare the importance of a sustainable approach. So, social responsibility has enormous topicality today.

The motivation for choosing this topic arises from issues related to the unsustainability of fast fashion and the future of the environment. Fast fashion has been extremely unsustainable, and yet, consumers still do purchase mass-market clothes. The author would like to investigate this phenomenon regarding consumers' attitudes towards this matter.

The research problem is there is a lack of studies conducted on attitudes and awareness of specifically Kazakh women towards fast fashion, therefore, it needs to be studied to understand the extent to which young Kazakh women are aware of this issue. There are more and more fast fashion retailers expanding in the territory of Kazakhstan, however, the attitudes and awareness of young Kazakh female consumers regarding fast fashions' unsustainability remains unclear. The author's purpose here is to dig deeper into these gaps and establish clarifications regarding the research problem. In this thesis, the author will explain the concepts of fast fashion, and sustainability and focus on the issue between these two. The thesis will scrutinize younger female Kazakh consumers' awareness and attitudes towards this matter.

The aim of this thesis is to establish the extent to which young Kazakh females are aware of the fast fashion's sustainability issues and their attitudes towards it through providing specific information derived from qualitative research results. The research questions go as follows:

- How aware are young Kazakh female consumers of the negative environmental impacts of fast fashion?
- How do environmental issues affect young Kazakh consumers' purchase decisions?

These questions were specifically formed to gain in-depth data from the research and understand the whole picture of young consumers' awareness and attitudes toward fast fashion.

To gain qualitative data on the topic, the primary data will be held via semi-structured face-to-face online interviews. The interviewees will consist of 18-23-year-old Kazakh university students, who are all female and live in the capital area. The primary data will provide theoretical information regarding participants' fashion consuming habits and obtain a more detailed understanding of their attitudes concerning fast fashion and sustainability. Secondary data will be derived from scientific articles and books. Altogether, both primary and secondary data will help the author answer her research questions.

The first chapter of this thesis is a literature review, where the author will briefly explain the concepts of fast fashion and sustainability. In addition, fast fashion's sustainability issues and the factors influencing consumer behavior are presented, including studies related to the topic. The second chapter represents the research methodology: the theoretical foundation of the research

demonstrates the important concepts connected to the research subject and different authors' viewpoints with a comparison and contrast. In addition, in the methodological part – the research object is introduced, which are interviewees, and the research methods are described as well as their selection justified. By the end of the second chapter results, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations are provided. The third chapter presents the results of the study and presents proposals. The thesis will end with a conclusion, where a summary of the issues discussed in the study, the procedure by which they were resolved, the major findings are provided, and a list of references.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the author demonstrates the related literature regarding the topic of this study. The literature review has three main parts: sustainability, fast fashion, and consumer behavior. The relevant factors affecting consumer behavior will be briefly investigated and the terms “fast fashion” and “sustainability” are specified. The author also describes fast fashion’s challenges regarding sustainability. Moreover, some existing studies related to the research topic will be introduced and discussed. The purpose of this chapter is to help the reader to understand the results of the paper and make this process smoother.

1.1. Factors affecting consumer behavior

The marketing perspective is to let the consumer know they want your product, even if they may not initially (Gaijar, 2013). Therefore, it is important for marketers to understand how consumers behave when they are exposed to certain advertising methods and messages. Theories of consumer behavior, such as the diffusion process of innovation, are vital to marketers as they allow us to understand how different market segments that have different buying and thinking characteristics can decide whether or not to buy a product (Gaijar, 2013).

According to Gaijar (2013), consumer behavior refers to the process through which individuals select, acquire, and consume products and services in order to fulfill their desires. Consumer behavior is composed of several processes. The consumer begins by determining which commodities he wants to consume and then narrows his selection to those that provide the most usefulness. After picking the items, the customer estimates the amount of money he has available to spend. Finally, the customer analyzes current commodity prices and chooses which goods to consume. Meanwhile, a variety of other factors influence consumer purchases, including social, cultural, personal, and psychological ones (Gaijar, 2013).

Cultural elements such as culture, subculture, and social class have a significant impact on consumer behavior (Ramya, 2016). To begin with, culture is the most essential influence of an individual's desires and actions. Culture has an effect on purchasing patterns and decision-making patterns. Marketers must investigate cultural influences and develop marketing strategies specifically for each type of culture in order to increase sales of their goods or services.

Second, with regards to **subcultures**, each culture is composed of smaller subcultures that give individuals with more particular identification and socialization. Numerous subcultures make up significant market sectors, and marketers must adjust products and marketing plans to their specific demands. Finally, social class is a reasonably stable and organized division within a community comprised of individuals who share similar beliefs, interests, and behaviors. As a result, marketing managers must carefully examine the link between social classes and their consumption patterns and take necessary efforts to appeal to the members of those socioeconomic classes for whom their products are intended (Ramya, 2016).

A human being is a social creature. As a result, our behavior patterns, preferences, and dislikes are heavily impacted by the individuals around us. Family, reference groups, and roles and status are all three **social factors** that influence consumer behavior (Ramya, 2016).

In terms of the social family aspect, the buyer's life is categorized into two kinds: nuclear families and joint families. Nuclear families are those in which individuals have greater decision-making freedom, whereas, in joint families, collective decision-making takes precedence over individual decision-making. Family members can have a significant impact on the buyer's behavior: their interests, preferences, dislikes, and lifestyles, for example. Second, there is the reference group, which is a collection of individuals with whom a person interacts. It is a group of people who have a significant direct or indirect impact on a person's views, values, and behavior. Finally, there are roles and status, which may be used to describe a person's place within each group. A role is made up of the tasks that an individual is required to complete. People select things that indicate their social position and rank. Marketers must be conscious of the possible status symbolism associated with products and brands (Ramya, 2016).

Buyer behavior is influenced by **personal factors** as well. Age, profession, wealth, and lifestyle are all significant personal factors that impact buying behavior (Ramya, 2016). People purchase different things at various times of their lives and, as a result, their tastes, preferences, and so on vary as well. As an outcome, age is a significant personal element. Additionally, purchasing considerations and decisions vary significantly by occupation. As a result, marketing managers must develop distinct marketing tactics tailored to the purchasing motivations of various professional groups. Income has a significant role in determining purchasing power. Thus, people's purchasing habits vary according to their financial level. Finally, lifestyle refers to a person's pattern or way of life as reflected via his activities, hobbies, and opinions, all of which depict the "complete person" interacting with his surroundings. Marketing managers must

develop customized marketing tactics for each customer based on their unique lives (Ramya, 2016).

Consumers' purchasing behavior is impacted by a variety of internal or **psychological factors**. Among the most essential are motivation and perception (Ramya, 2016). Motivation is an internal impulse that drives a person to make purchases in order to fulfill both fundamental and secondary wants. Thus, motivation is the driving factor behind goal-directed conduct. When a need is stimulated to a certain degree of intensity, it becomes a motivation. There are two sorts of wants: biogenic needs, which are triggered by physiological states of stress such as thirst or hunger, and psychogenic needs, which are triggered by psychological conditions of tension such as the desire for recognition or respect. When it comes to perception, human beings possess far more than five senses. Apart from the fundamental five senses (touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing), there are further sensations of direction, balance, and a distinct awareness of which way is down. Any holes will be filled in by imagination and experience, and hence the cognitive map is a fictitious construct. Subjectivity, categorization, selectivity, anticipation, and prior experience all have an effect on this mapping. In most customers' judgments, there are large positive correlations between price and quality, as well as between brand name and quality; although the store name is less significant, it still has considerable weight (Ramya, 2016).

1.2. Fast fashion

Fashion is described as an expression that is generally accepted by a group of individuals throughout time and has been characterized by various marketing criteria, including limited predictability, high impulsive purchases, a shorter life cycle, and high market demand volatility (Bhardwaj, 2010). According to Bhardwaj (2010), to remain successful in the business, fashion clothing retailers must adopt a 'speed to market' strategy in order to profit from fashion that is not yet available in their competitors' stores. Additionally, retailers' profit margins are increased by market responsiveness, and responsiveness is achieved through quick absorption of consumer desires into the design process throughout product creation. (Christopher, 2004). In the past, fashion runways and fashion shows have been the primary source of inspiration for the fashion business. Additionally, these trend exhibitions were mostly attended by designers, buyers, and other fashion industry executives. However, beginning in 1999, fashion presentations became a public spectacle, with images of recent shows appearing in publications and on the web,

demystifying the fashion industry (Mintle, 2008). As a consequence, fashion-forward customers were exposed to exclusive runway designs and trends. Businesses such as Zara, H&M, Mango, and Top Shop were quick to embrace such designs in order to attract consumers and bring runway interpretations to stores within three to five weeks (Barnes, 2006). Using the principles of rapid response, the fashion clothing business transitioned from projecting future trends to analyzing real-time data to better understand consumers' requirements and aspirations (Jackson, 2001). Difficulty to foresee or predict future trends properly (Christopher, 2004) or inability to swiftly duplicate and make fashion clothes as shown on runways might result in the danger of lengthier lead times and hence failing to attract fashion-conscious consumers. By utilizing real-time data, this potential danger may be eliminated.

The fashion clothing sector has grown significantly during the previous two decades when the industry's borders began to expand (Christopher, 2004). Since then, the fashion industry's changing dynamics, such as the decline of mass production, growth in the number of fashion seasons, and altered supply chain structural characteristics, have compelled retailers to seek low costs and flexibility in design, quality, delivery, and time to market (Doyle, 2006). Along with time-to-market and design, marketing and capital investment have been identified as critical factors in the fashion garment industry's competitiveness (Barnes, 2006). Jackson (2001) proposed that the important technique for sustaining a profitable position in a continuously dynamic and demanding market is to 'sense and respond.' In this context, a critical defining quality of fast reactivity and increased flexibility is the maintenance of stronger ties between suppliers and customers (Jackson, 2001).

Given that fashion is viewed as a temporal cyclical phenomenon accepted by consumers for a limited period of time (Barnes, 2006), this became clear that fashion has a very short life cycle. Since the 1980s, a typical fashion garment life cycle has included four stages: introduction and approval by fashion brands; growth and expansion in public acceptability; mass conformity (maturity); and lastly, fashion decline and obsolescence. Additionally, the fashion cycle during this era was dominated by fabric exhibits, fashion shows, and trade events, which followed the general pattern of spring/summer and autumn/winter collections, which often resulted in the development of a seasonal collection in a single calendar year.

Consumers are becoming increasingly demanding and fashion-savvy, compelling fashion businesses to give the correct product at the right moment – in other words, to provide fast

fashion (The Economist, 2005). Due to the fragmentation of the consumer market in terms of consumption habits, fast fashion is getting popular among customers. With these advancements, researchers should be able to characterize the whole range of consumer attitudes about rapid fashion. The research on fast fashion emphasizes different areas of supply chain management, backed up by supply chain theory, in order to help fashion merchants improve their business models. It's worth noting that few studies have examined rapid fashion as a consumer-driven phenomenon, making this a relatively unexplored topic. Globalization has accelerated the flow of information and trends, allowing customers to have more alternatives and hence buy more frequently (Christopher, 2004). Changes in lifestyles as a result of sociocultural influences and a desire for uniqueness need fashion merchants to continually refresh inventory in order to compete in an increasingly competitive market (Bhardwaj, 2010). Consumers' continual, varied needs have shifted the forecasting and product planning process toward more regularly duplicating iconic patterns and styles from magazine covers and runway shows in small numbers (Christopher, 2004).

1.3. The sustainability concept

Sustainability, as a central concern of the twenty-first century, has a plethora of meanings. The word "sustainability" was introduced in 1987 in the Brundtland Report, and its actual definition is "meeting present requirements without endangering the needs of future generations" (Keeble, 2003). Since then, sustainability has been expanded to include three dimensions: environmental, economic, and social, together referred to as the "Triple Bottom Line" of sustainability (Hacking, 2008). Sustainability is defined in current literature as actions that can be sustained indefinitely without causing damage to the environment, the way you expect to be treated and how you treat everyone else, and the recognition that meets the needs of the current generation without jeopardizing the needs of future generations (Fletcher, 2013). Sustainability, as defined by Seidman (2007), is about much more than our connection with the environment; it is also about our engagement with ourselves, our communities, and our institutions. Indeed, because the term "environment" is defined implicitly in terms of human beings, sustainability is fundamentally about trade-offs between disparate groups of people, such as the affluent as well as the poor, young and the old, labor and entrepreneurs, and developed and developing countries. Sustainable development entails complex and dynamic connections between affecting millions of people and the environment. It penetrates all spheres of life, ecological, economic, social, and political, on a

local, regional, and global scale (Langenwalter, 2010). As a result, Joy et al. (2012) characterize sustainability as a "social compact" between a firm and the broader community.

Textile and garment manufacturing procedures in the fashion sector present several problems regarding sustainability. For example, significant amounts of energy and water are used, greenhouse gases are emitted, hazardous waste is generated, and toxic effluent comprising dyes, finishes, and auxiliaries is discharged into the ecosystem (Niinimäki, 2011).

Sustainability is frequently associated with corporate social responsibility, which really is critical to a business's strategy. Corporate social responsibility is commonly recognized to have a major impact on a firm's competitive advantage and market share (Weber, 2008). Thus, while many dimensions of sustainability are business-related, they are intricately linked to customer preferences and values. As a result, it is critical for fashion brands to recognize the consumer trend toward sustainable fashion in order to compete in the market. To obtain a better understanding of how customers make purchasing decisions about fashion items, it is necessary to do a thorough analysis of the consumer behavior model in economics, psychology, and management.

1.4. Sustainability and fast fashion

Globalization and the development of a global economy have resulted in the internationalization of supply chains, relocating fiber production, textile manufacture, and garment construction to places with lower labor (Bick, 2018). Increased demand fuels the creation of low-cost apparel, which is maintained affordable by outsourcing manufacturing to low- and middle-income nations (LMICs). Each year, 80 billion new items of apparel are purchased globally, totaling \$1.2 trillion for the worldwide fashion business (Bick, 2018). Most of these items are manufactured in China and Bangladesh, despite the fact that the United States purchases more clothes and fabrics than any other country.

Firstly, fast fashion poses hazards to the environment during manufacturing. Textile manufacturing is the initial phase in the global textile supply chain; this is the process through which natural and synthetic fibers are created. Around 90% of clothing marketed in the United States is composed of cotton or polyester, both of which have substantial health consequences

related to their manufacturing and production methods (Khan, 2013). Polyester, a synthetic textile made from oil, is produced without the use of pesticides, whereas cotton requires large quantities of water and pesticides to be created. According to Khan (2013), additional dangers arise from textile dyeing since untreated wastewater from dyeing is frequently released into nearby water systems, releasing toxic metals and other environmental toxins that can have a negative effect on the health of animals as well as neighboring inhabitants.

Second, there are additional hazards to employees during production. Garment assembly, the final phase in the worldwide textile supply chain, employs about 40 million people worldwide (Siegle, 2011). 90% of the world's apparel is produced in LMICs. Occupational and safety norms are frequently not implemented in these LMICs as a result of a lack of political structure and organizational management (Siegle, 2011). As a result, a variety of occupational risks arise, including respiratory hazards associated with inadequate ventilation, such as cotton dust and synthetic air particles, and musculoskeletal hazards associated with repetitive motion jobs. The health dangers that drove the establishment of textile labor unions in the early 1900s in the United States and the United Kingdom have now spread to work environments in LMICs. In LMICs, debilitating and life-threatening illnesses such as lung disease and cancer, endocrine dysfunction, unfavorable reproductive and fetal outcomes, unintentional accidents, overuse injuries, and mortality have all been described (Sant'Ana, 2012). Periodic headlines of worldwide tragedies, such as the 2013 Rana Plaza factory disaster in Bangladesh, serve as harsh reminders of the health risks faced by garment workers. However, these disasters have had no noticeable impact on the safety requirements for employees in LMICs (Sant'Ana, 2012).

Finally, there is the problem of textile waste, which is disposed after the whole process of manufacturing. While delivering finished clothing to clients in high-income nations is viewed as the fashion industry's final goal, environmental injustices remain long after the clothing is sold. Consumers are encouraged to perceive clothing as disposable under the fast fashion model. Indeed, the average American discards almost 80 pounds of clothes and textiles every year, accounting for nearly 5% of landfill area (House of Commons, 2019). Clothes that are not destined for the garbage bin frequently find their way into the secondhand clothing market. Each year, the United States exports around 500,000 tons of worn apparel, the majority of which ends up in LMICs (Sant'Ana, 2012). In 2015, the United States exported secondhand clothing valued at more than \$700 million (Joy, 2012). Second-hand clothing that is not sold in the US market is compressed into 1000-pound bales and shipped overseas to be "graded" (processed, classified,

and re-baled) by low-income labor in LMICs and sold in second-hand marketplaces. Clothing that is not sold in markets becomes solid garbage, blocking rivers, greenways, and parks and posing extra health risks in LMICs without effective municipal waste systems.

1.5. Previous studies

In this sub-chapter, the author dived into two previous scientific studies that were exploring the same issue- the issue of fast fashion's unsustainability. The first study to be covered is the study is an empirical test of the triple bottom line of customer-centric sustainability: the case of fast fashion by Hyejune Park and Youn-Kyung Kim (2016); and study on consumer attitude towards sustainability of fast fashion products in the UK by Bo Zhang, Yaozhong Zhang, and Peng Zhou (2021).

Park et al. (2016) used fast fashion to undertake an empirical investigation of the triple bottom line of consumer-centric sustainability. To address these concerns, Park's study adopts the triple bottom line (TBL) model, which provides three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social sustainability, in order to assess consumers' perceptions of fashion firms' sustainability.

Environmental and social concerns may not always result in consumers reducing their fast fashion consumption (Joy et al. 2012). Why do many customers, despite their understanding of contemporary society's sustainability concerns, have a favorable attitude toward fast fashion brands? Numerous causes are suggested in the literature. To begin with, customers may believe that the benefits of fast fashion businesses outweigh the negative parts of the industry's unsustainable nature. Second, there is a widespread lack of consumer knowledge regarding the consequences of fast fashion items' unsustainable manufacture and use (Park, 2016).

Interestingly, environmental sustainability, which is the primary emphasis of most contemporary firms' sustainable management and marketing (Niinimäki, 2010), was not really an important predictor of brand connections for either fast fashion or sustainable fashion brands. This finding implies that, even though many fashion houses highlight the environmental aspects of their sustainable management in their sustainability marketing communications, environmental sustainability alone may not always elicit positive brand relationships such as brand trust or

loyalty. While this finding for fast fashion brands is consistent with previous research indicating that consumers' desire for new fashion frequently surpasses their attitudes toward sustainability (Joy et al. 2012), it is worth noting that the same finding (i.e., the insignificant impact of environmental sustainability on brand outcomes) was discovered for sustainable fashion brands. This finding suggests that, even for customers who buy at sustainably produced fashion companies, the simple fact that brands are ecologically sustainable may not be sufficient to build strong brand ties.

By and large, this study makes important and valuable contributions from an academic and administrative standpoint. Theoretically, this study advocates for the use of the TBL framework to ascertain consumers' opinions of fashion brand sustainability. Additionally, the findings of the authors of this study contribute to the understanding of how consumers perceive the sustainability of a fashion brand and its function in creating brand relationships for both fast fashion and sustainable fashion firms. Additionally, from a management standpoint, this study demonstrates how customers view economic, environmental, and social sustainability in fashion firms, regardless of whether they are fast or sustainable.

Another study regarding the topic of the thesis, conducted by Zhang (2021), focuses on customer viewpoint and tries to paint a clear and current picture of how consumers are making choices with varying degrees of sustainability knowledge. As a result, the work makes two significant additions to the literature: a theoretical one and an empirical one. On the one hand, many threads of literature are evaluated in order to provide a cohesive conceptual framework for examining the components and aspects that influence attitudes toward sustainability. On the other hand, a questionnaire is carefully developed to gather a representative sample and scientifically analyze the current state of the fast fashion industry's attitudes toward sustainability in the United Kingdom. The research's primary contribution is the use of econometric analysis to quantify the impacts of various factors on the three components of attitude regarding sustainability.

Three significant findings refer to the cognitive component of sustainability attitudes. To begin with, females are less aware of social equality concerns than males, which confirms the basic correlation analysis but are not statistically different from males concerning child labor and environmental issues (Manchiraju, 2014). Second, working individuals are more aware of sustainability challenges than unemployed individuals (Chan, 2012). Third, awareness declines as budget allocation and understanding of fast fashion goods increase, corroborating both the

consumer theory of economics and the information search theory of marketing literature (Zhang, 2021).

When exploring the behavioral characteristic of a sustainable mindset, Zhang's (2021) first finding of concern was the gender aspect. Females purchase less fast fashion with sustainability elements, but they are more steady in their ability to pay a higher price and their response to a pay increase (Shen, 2012). Second, people that work tend to behave differently than those who do not when it comes to acquiring fast fashion goods. Individuals with a better income, perhaps, worry more about sustainability than those who are unemployed (Kim, 2021). Third, consumption decisions are influenced by both the cognitive and emotional indices. This verifies several elements described in the literature in economic, psychological, anthropological and marketing theories. This is a novel finding in the field of sustainability. However, age, country of origin, and religion continue to be unimportant. Additionally, it is unexpected that the present generation is unaffected by friends or social media, as previous empirical work has demonstrated (Kong, 2021).

Unexpectedly, the results on the affective component of sustainability attitudes are somewhat different from those on the cognitive and behavioral dimensions. To begin, gender is a significant component in explaining the distinction between cognitive and behavioral issues. Second, cultural and religious backgrounds significantly influence how consumers feel about the sustainability of fast fashion items (Kim, 2021). Europeans, for example, are more concerned about environmental and labor issues than Americans, who do not associate fast fashion businesses with sustainability qualities. Third, employment information remains a significant determinant, and, once again, people with a better income flow place a higher value on sustainability (Chan, 2012). Additionally, they are far more interested in fast fashion firms that have a sustainability component. Generally saying, they have a greater likelihood of becoming the intended buyers. Fourthly, and most critically, the cognitive index contributes greatly to the effectiveness of the questions. If a person is more educated and knowledgeable about sustainability, they are more likely to have a strong opinion about items that are anti-sustainable. Additionally, they are more inclined to provide moral credit and express interest in fast fashion firms that promote sustainability. As a result, the connection between cognitive and emotional pathways is established.

It is noted that age has no substantial effect on any of the three components. In comparison, work positions can account for a sizable portion of the disparity in attitudes toward sustainability. Additionally, the authors observe that while cognitive and behavioral components converge across cultures and faiths, the emotional component remains distinct. While various topics receive varying degrees of attention, there is a growing tendency among the younger generation to prioritize sustainability while purchasing fast fashion items (Zhang, 2019). Finally, but certainly not least, affectional considerations outweigh cognitive aspects in influencing how fast fashion items with sustainability elements are purchased.

Of course, this article has several limitations that will require further research to address. The first consideration is data coverage. Due to financial restrictions and the epidemic of COVID-19, surveys were not gathered face to face. If it is possible to do the interview in person, then the response rate is typically greater. This study's sample size is not large, yet it is sufficient to derive statistically valid findings. Second, this questionnaire is sent solely to college students and alumni in Wales, which may not accurately reflect the attitudes of the younger population. However, young university academics are undoubtedly the primary purchasers of fast fashion items (Siegle, 2019). As a result, the findings reported in this study are generalizable and dependable. The third constraint is imposed by the quantitative approach used in data analysis. Regressions may have been used to separate the effects of various factors. Thus, different approaches such as in-depth interviews and experiments may be employed to investigate the formation and transmission of attitudes.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the author explains the objective of the research and describes the nature of the research- both form and design. The methodology and methods within the methodology for data collection and analysis are thoroughly explained, and the credibility of the study is demonstrated. The research is conducted via a qualitative approach and specifically through semi-structured online interviews with a sample size of ten Kazakh female respondents.

2.1. Planning the research

The objective of this research is to find out how informed are young Kazakh females with regard to fast fashion and its environmental sustainability issues, and furthermore to discover the connector between these issues and the factors influencing their purchasing decisions.

The research is conducted via a qualitative approach as the research aims to provide analysis results related to factors that can not be numerically measured, such as behavior, opinions, attitudes, and emotions: thus, the topic and the research questions require qualitative measurement.

Well-conducted quality research requires evidence-based research, where the findings of studies are observed truthfully and in a non-biased way. A considerable amount of attention must be given not only to the outcome of the study but the rigor of the research as well. According to Heale (2015), the rigor of the research refers to the extent to which the author made an effort to enhance the quality of the research. Thus, in the following quantitative research for this study, rigor will be observed through two key measurements: validity and reliability. In research from Heale (2015), validity refers to the extent to which accurate measurements are conducted in quantitative research, whereas the latter is responsible for the accuracy of observation. Speaking precisely, it is the level of consistency of a research instrument, where it will always give the same results if it is observed in the same situation repeatedly (Heale, 2015).

The sampling to be used in the study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where decisions concerning the respondents are based on a variety of researcher's criteria which includes previous deep knowledge of the research matter (Dudovski,

n.d.). This sampling method was chosen as its main goal is to focus on specific characteristics of a target audience of interest, which will be the best to answer research questions. As Dudovskiy (n.d.) states, inside of the purposive sampling, the research is going to be a homogeneous purposive sampling type, which aims to achieve a homogeneous sample: respondents share the same or similar characteristics. The chosen method gives more power to the author to perform and find out the best data from the target sample.

In regards to the method, the sample consisted of young Kazakh undergraduate female students. The characteristics and traits that all share are the facts that all of them are Kazakh women in the age range of 18 to 23-year-old, and they all have lived in the capital city of Kazakhstan, which is Nur-Sultan. The sample size was ten respondents.

This specific sample was chosen as a younger aged group of people make up the majority of fast fashion brands' clientele. They are more exposed to the influence of the mass market's fashion style, and social media, than any other age group. Females were chosen due to the fact that they make up most of fast fashion brands' consumers, as they are more interested in fashion and styling in general. Many bachelor's students have entered an adult life, where they work, earn money, consume and make their own purchases, whether it's buying a new t-shirt or getting a bulk of bread from the store. This sample is more exposed to social media, where they follow fashion and lifestyle influencers, that set the trends and followers follow these trends, basically influencing the purchasing decisions. Currently, people aged 18-23 live in a time when sustainability and environmental awareness are a major focus in most possible industries. Thus, the author is interested to explore and analyze whether or not the sample knows about fast fashion's unsustainability issues and whether they are taking any actions towards this matter.

2.2. Data collection and analysis

For this thesis, data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Due to the fact that secondary sources can't reveal the full information regarding Kazakh young women's attitudes towards the mass market's unsustainability issues, the author conducts semi-structured interviews as a tool for gaining primary data.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for research conduction by the author as the most convenient method of primary data collection. The explanation for this choice goes as follows - this method allows the author to collect primary data that pushes to explore respondent's thoughts, feelings, and views about the topic of this research and to dive deeply into issues of the study (DeJonckheere, 2019). There are various ways of conducting semi-structured interviews, such as mainly face-to-face, telephone, individual, and group, each having its own advantages and disadvantages. According to DeJonckheere (2019), one of the limitations of this method is, semi-structured interviews have one common issue with interviewing- not all interviewees are great participants. There might be an issue that some interviewees find difficult to engage in conversation or they might be reluctant to share their opinions and thoughts. This difficulty, consequently, might influence the quality of the interview and might fail in exploring the topic. Thus, in order to avoid this situation, the author asked follow-up questions, actively listened, and had a well-developed interview guide (DeJonckheere, 2019). Except for these pitfalls, semi-structured interviews are an effective tool to collect qualitative data from respondents.

Regarding the key characteristics of semi-structured interviews, the author created the format details for interviews for this specific research, such as the flexible structure of an interview, only individual participants, scheduled and invited in advance, basic information gathered by the author in advance, deep exploration of participant's thoughts and experiences (DeJonckheere, 2019).

The overall aim of conducting semi-structured interviews for data collection for the thesis is to gather information from sample participants who have personal experiences with fast fashion, attitudes towards fast fashion's unsustainability, perceptions, and views related to the topic of matter. The author used semi-structured interviews to collect new and exploratory data related to a research topic, which hasn't been conducted in Kazakhstan before.

In order for the interview to go smoothly, the author followed specific steps to design the semi-structured interview, which are determining the purpose of the study, naming the participants, considering ethical issues, planning the time and place, developing the interview guide, establishing rapport, conducting the interview, memoing and reflection, analyzing the data, demonstrating the trustworthiness of the research and presenting findings in a convenient way in the discussion section of the thesis.

According to DeJonckheere (2019), there are 5 components that are responsible for the successful audio recording of interviews, which were taken into account and taken into action by the author: clarity (audio-recording device should clearly capture the interview), reliability (audio-recording device should be reliable and have high usability), familiarity (the author should be familiar with the recording equipment), backup (presence of at least two recording devices), and note-taking (this can ensure that all interview questions were covered).

The author used 3 types of questions for a semi-structured interview for a smoother and more convenient interview process, which are grand tour questions, core questions, and planned follow-up questions. Grand tour questions are aimed to initiate the interview and help the respondent to start, core questions' purpose is to answer the main study questions and assist a participant to openly talk about the issue in an exploratory way, and finally, planned follow-up questions are asked to obtain deeper and more brief aspects about responses. It's important to note that the author hesitated from asking unplanned questions, due to uncertainty and possible inaccuracy reasons.

For the thesis, the author chose Zoom as a platform for conducting an online interview since this platform is considered to be one of the most convenient, usable, and trustworthy to use in the means of research, as the meeting is fully encrypted. However, it does have its own pitfalls, such as the narrow bandwidth of internet communication. According to Evans (2008), compared to a face-to-face interview, an online interview provides a limited range of visual and aural cues that go along with the exchange of words, which in turn might affect the quality of the interviewee's answers. To possibly avoid this con, the author actively engaged in creating an open and relaxed interview environment. Another possible disadvantage is that both two sides of an interview should be able to and willing to use the chosen interview platform and be aware of its characteristics (Evans, 2008). In this case, the author made sure that Zoom was previously used by the interviewees, that they do not hesitate to use the platform, and that they are fully aware of its characteristics. Although this was taken into account, previously before the interview the author sent interview guides to each participant and a manual on how to download and enter Zoom. The final possible disadvantage is possible technical issues, which include internet shut down, wi-fi log-off, and recording disruption. Therefore, the author made sure in advance that everything functions perfectly before the interview and includes this factor in the interview guide, where the interviewee shall pay attention to these factors.

The interviews were conducted online using the Zoom platform and lasted on average ten minutes. The author conducted the interviews in Russian as this is a common language for the author and the participants, therefore providing every interviewee with the opportunity to fully express their thoughts, views, and experiences. The interviewees were notified of the ethical aspect of the interview, regarding the recording of the interview, anonymity of responses, and explanation of the key terms such as fast fashion and sustainability. Interviewees were free to ask questions during the interviews in case of personal or interview matters. The interviews started with a grand tour of questions, followed by core questions and planned follow-up questions, after which the author proceeded to a conclusion and thanked the interviewees for their effort and participation. In general, the interviews consisted of 13 questions prepared in advance (Appendix 1.), including the introduction, main part, and conclusion. All conducted interviews were recorded using two devices, and the author implied note-taking techniques during and after the interviews. The following figure demonstrates the types of questions asked during the interview related to the research goals of this thesis.

The following figure (see Figure 1) illustrates the distribution of the interview questions:

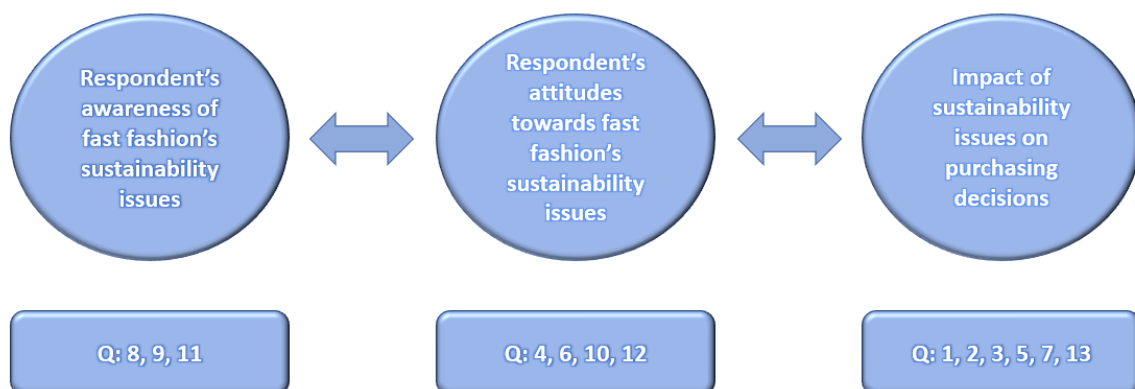


Figure 1.

Source: Prepared by the author

The idea of qualitative research is to explore respondents' thoughts, feelings, and views about the topic of this research and to dive deeply into issues of the study, thus creating a bigger picture of a phenomenon. In this case, the author performs qualitative content analysis by transcribing interviews and analyzing text-formatted material afterward. In research from Löfgren (2013), it was advised to perform the analysis as follows: reading the transcripts, labeling relevant pieces, deciding on the most important codes and categorizing by bringing several codes together,

labeling categories, and deciding on the most relevant ones and connecting them, deciding if there is a hierarchy among the categories and summarising the results, and finally, writing the results and explaining them. The author quickly browsed through all transcripts, made notes about the first impressions, and read the transcripts again, one by one. After that, the author started to code by labeling relevant words and phrases from respondents' answers. It was followed by deciding which codes are the most important and creating categories by bringing several codes together. It was done by scanning and skimming all the codes created in the previous step and grouping the most important codes into categories. According to the next step, the author labeled categories and decided on the most relevant ones, and described a connection between categories. Finally, the author demonstrated the hierarchy among the categories and drew a figure to summarise the results. Under the heading Results, the author made an effort to describe the categories and their connection, where it was important for the author to use a neutral tone. Afterward, the author wrote out an interpretation and discussion of the results of the research under the heading Results and Discussion.

It is essential for the author to keep ethical conduction of interviews, that is, to be unbiased, open-minded, stay close to the data, and do not hesitate to code plenty of phenomena, as it is a piece of new knowledge about the world from the perspective of the participants in the author's study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will summarize the findings of the study by going through each research question individually. The author's personal study and a review of the literature are used to demonstrate the findings. After presenting the findings, the author will provide some recommendations for future studies on the subject.

Within the interviews that were conducted, there was a lot of varying spectrum of awareness and care for this topic. The interview generally showed young Kazakh women expressed different levels of awareness and attitudes toward fast fashion's sustainability issues.

3.1. The awareness of fast fashion's unsustainability

The author discovered specific trends and ideas among young Kazakh women, as well as their understanding of fast fashion's unsustainable aspect, based on all of the interviews done. By and large, all respondents appear to have a basic awareness of the environmental difficulties surrounding fast fashion: each participant could recall at least one unsustainable component associated with it. The most often stated topics in the literature review were the use of natural resources and water, as well as remarks regarding emissions in general, which was also noticed during interviews.

“First of all, they not only pollute, but also the production of some kind of T-shirt, in my opinion, requires a specific amount of liters of water” – Interview 4

“It takes a lot of resources to grow all this cotton or any other materials for production - fabric, etc. and it takes a lot of resources to produce clothes” – Interview 6

“A huge amount of resources is used for the production of mass-market clothing, and secondly, the use of labor is simply colossal” – Interview 7

Interestingly, just two interviewees identified societal difficulties, such as bad working conditions and huge labor use. This confirmed the author's concerns that young people are more concerned with the environmental sustainability of fast fashion than with social issues. Thus,

more education is needed in this regard. There was a general consensus among the interviewed young women that they have witnessed this issue as something that wasn't really affecting them or their choice. There were many who outwardly expressed they didn't think about this topic at all and aren't really ready to change the purchasing habits they have now. This pattern of not being interested in sustainable consumption draws a sad picture of youngsters toward the environment. If awareness is increased and a call for action is welcomed, then this situation is probable to change.

“I don't think about it at all, it doesn't really interest me” – Interview 1

“I wouldn't say that, I don't pay much attention to it” – Interview 3

“I'm not too aware in terms of sustainability of clothes” – Interview 5

When discussing the matter of what happens to garments after they are being thrown and the disposal of their clothing, as it's one of the parts of sustainability awareness, the participants did demonstrate that they didn't know much about what process goes on when they throw away clothing. However, interestingly, all women stated that they never throw away clothes, but they give them to second-hand stores and pass them on to their relatives. This pattern shows that youngsters still think about sustainability, by not letting their clothes pollute the environment, but rather prolonging their life and making them serve a little longer.

The author was surprised when only two respondents were mostly aware of the facts related to fast fashion's sustainability issues, stated in Question 9, which revealed some statistical data regarding emissions and pollution of fast fashion (See Appendix, Interview Guide). Statistically, the absolute majority of young women were not aware of the emissions and the environmental damage that fast fashion brings to our planet. It, all again, demonstrates the extent to which youngsters are unaware of fast fashion's unsustainability issues, and it should be studied and youngsters shall be educated in this matter.

Finally, as social factor influences the awareness and purchasing habits of youngsters (Ramya, 2016), family and friends play a big role in this pattern. Oddly enough, only one interviewee expressed the support that comes from parents in this matter, *“Parents also know, since together we often take clothes for recycling or hand them over to some help centers, etc., in this regard,*

they also support it”- Interview 7. However, the rest absolute majority expressed ignorance of their friends and family environment, which demonstrates a huge extent of unawareness. These answers clearly show the gaps in awareness of young women and the reasons for the limited knowledge in this matter.

3.2. The attitudes towards fast fashion’s sustainability issues

According to the interviewees’ answers, it can be clearly seen that every one of them had at least heard of the mass market’s negative environmental impacts that come from fast fashion consumption. They have a general understanding of the fact that mass-market production uses a lot of resources, however, it doesn’t shape their attitude towards fast fashion’s sustainability issues. To understand the stance taken by each participant it was asked if they have witnessed or heard of any negative environmental impacts related to consuming fast fashion clothing items. When asked about their personal experience regarding the negative impact related to consuming fast fashion clothing items, most of them have answered they personally haven't encountered the issues.

“In my experience, no” – Interview 4

“Well, I can't say from personal experience” – Interview 5

“Specifically, I did not have such experience” – Interview 9

It was tragic to see such attitudes and disinterest of respondents towards this matter, which again shows that this topic needs to be addressed and studied, and young people need to be educated on this matter.

The participants expressed a lot of concern about the expendable nature of the clothes. Having concerns about their disposal and what environmental costs that would bring on. They showed they were aware of the nature of how it is produced is bad but also how getting rid of it is also an issue, as one participant talked about the decomposition of such products with synthetic fabric. She is right as synthetic fabrics are materials used to create a plastic bottle and will not decompose.

“Maybe due to the fact that clothes are constantly changing, and this uses a lot of resources” – Interview 1

“For example, since the mass market creates a huge amount of clothes, it is most likely sent to some garbage dump and it pollutes our environment” - Interview 2

“They not only pollute but also the production of some kind of T-shirt, in my opinion, requires a specific amount of liters of water” – Interview 4

It was interesting to see that one of the participants was very vocal about the negative social impacts the industry had when discussing the human production labor costs people have to go through as well as the transportation people.

“Firstly, a huge amount of resources is used for the production of mass-market clothing, and secondly, the use of labour is simply colossal” – Interview 7

“In fact, there are a lot of them... For me, delivery was such a bad factor as they deliver in their transport devices” – Interview 8

There is a lot of understanding that there are effects of these products produce a negative for the environment. In the end, however, this most likely isn't a big enough deterrent for the young women to stop them from going back and making a purchase at fast-fashion mega-corporations. It was also a very sad discovery that the interviewees were talking about the fast fashion box:

“For example, I know that there is such a service in H&M, you can turn in old things and you get a discount when buying new ones” – Interview 3

“I know that when you donate things to H&M, they are sent for recycling” – Interview 3

It was very disheartening to see that this participant was buying from companies that are greenwashing their image. Greenwashing is defined as the synthesis of two separate corporate behaviors: advertising a favorable environmental effect while demonstrating poor environmental performance (Ranada, 2022). It happens when a big company states that they are doing “green”

ecological activities for their brand image, when in reality it's not true. The reason for bringing up this topic is that there have been numerous allegations against such big fast fashion companies as ZARA and H&M as being the biggest culprits in the market (Ranada, 2022). This, in turn, makes the young women feel less guilty and promotes them to buy more and more as they get the discount on their donated clothes. Donating clothes is a good thing and it helps decrease the number of clothes contributing to the land waste but donating to fast-fashion chains gives the wrong impression that any clothes they have donated will be recycled. According to Clendaniel (2017), less than 40% of donated clothes will be recyclable and from there 20% will have the possibility of a new life in someone else's wardrobe. This system as in H&M only gives more incentive for young women to shop more as they see it more as a good deed. This information is not widely spread and makes the situation of mass production and fast consumption's sustainability harder and harder.

When talking about respondents' attention to the sustainable behavior of fast fashion brands, such as marketing efforts and sustainable clothing collections, the interview answers were split into two camps by half - the ones that pay attention, and the ones that don't. Exactly half of the respondents gladly shared their opinion by stating that even though there is a lack of marketing efforts from such brands regarding sustainability, they notice sustainable collections, the tags on clothes that say "20% recycled" or "100%" recycled. It was followed by saying that these actions indeed gain respect, commitment, and trust from consumers.

"I have a lot of respect for brands that follow the rules and etiquette of the 21st century, maintaining the environment" – Interview 2

"The other day I noticed that in Zara there was a conveyor for collecting old clothes - I then thought "yes, well done!" – Interview 6

"In fact, yes, also relatively recently. That is precisely the sustainability of what these things consist of" – Interview 8

However, the rest showed noticeable ignorance and suggested, that the possible reason for this is a lack of awareness, poor marketing efforts, and intransparent sustainable collections.

Interestingly, all participants demonstrated their confusion, sadness, regret, and shock because of their lack of knowledge regarding fast fashion's sustainability issues. The author in the ninth question of the interview provided participants with facts related to the mass market's unsustainability and its environmental damage, where participants had to say whether they were aware of these facts or not. Finally, after major unawareness of colossal damage, interviewees showed their changed attitude toward fast fashion consumption.

"I probably feel a little confusion and sadness about how things really are" – Interview 2

"In fact, this is quite sad" – Interview 3

"Shock. First feeling" – Interview 6

They felt bad for not being more aware and believed that there should be greater public discussion regarding fast fashion's unsustainable character. The author was glad to witness these reactions, as one of the goals of the interviews was to monitor the participants' sentiments and attitudes grow over time.

Finally, every participant clearly stated that the interview definitely provided them with new information regarding fast fashion and its issues with the environment. Generally, interviewees are now aware of the colossal amounts of waste from the mass market, which somehow increased the awareness of fast fashion's sustainability issues. Three out of ten respondents stated, that this interview pushed them to be more responsible and sustainable, and this was achieved with the help of statistical facts that were provided during the interview on Question 9 (See Appendix, Interview Guide). The small-scale research conducted by the author indeed made a small difference in the respondents' attitudes regarding unsustainability issues.

3.3. The impact on purchasing decisions

Overall, the majority of participants did not consider sustainability as something that greatly affected their decision to purchase clothes. Multiple reasons can be the cause of this, including a lack of interest or awareness of the subject: *"I am not in any way disposed towards sustainability and, in principle, do not dive deep into this topic"* – Interview 4; a feeling that an individual

choice to make a sustainable purchase will not really change much: *“It seems to me that just one of my actions will not change a lot of things, taking into account our mentality and our people”* – Interview 1; and a lack of options when it comes to sustainable products: *“As far as I know, unfortunately, we don’t have such stores, which are 100% environmentally friendly.”* – Interview 10.

Some participants also expressed a desire to eventually lead a sustainable lifestyle but added that this was not possible for them at the moment, either due to financial reasons, lack of knowledge, or lack of societal acceptance. These participants also viewed switching to a sustainable lifestyle as something that they would need more time to consider and implement:

“This whole sustainable lifestyle - you can’t forcibly shove people there and you need to do it all fast and I will slowly but surely come to sustainable lifestyle someday” – Interview 6.

Personal preferences such as quality of fabric and taste in style played a greater role in influencing the decision to purchase. Of particular note is the fact that some participants who claimed to not care about sustainability still had sustainability in mind when they were buying clothes, and preferred to buy things that would last a long time: *“I prefer the basic things that are needed at any time of the year, there are things that never go out of fashion”* – Interview 3.

When discussing whether the interview would have any impact on their purchasing habits in the future, this sentiment appeared again: *“I will try to choose in such a way that clothes serve me for a long time...”* – Interview 8. This shows that in general, most participants had a sense of awareness of whether their consumption habits were sustainable or not, regardless of whether the clothes they bought were explicitly labeled as “eco-friendly”, so it will not have a great impact on their purchase.

Interestingly, coming back to the literature review, then the same patterns from the factors of consumption can be noticed in the interview answers. That is, according to Ramya (2016), there are following four factors that affect consumer purchase: cultural, social, personal, and psychological (Ramya, 2016). Elements such as personal and psychological factors prevailed, specifically wealth, lifestyle, and motivation. Amongst the essential ones were psychogenic needs, which are triggered by psychological conditions of tension such as the desire for recognition through wearing trendy clothes and the affordable pricing.

3.4. Discussion

Overall, the study's findings indicated a single bigger pattern that each participant appeared to follow. The most compelling physical characteristics of fast fashion were affordable costs, a diverse assortment, and constant garment renewal, combined with a lack of knowledge, inner motivation, and social pressure, resulting in an unsustainable consumption. This observation is illustrated in the following figure.

The following figure (see Figure 2) demonstrates the equation of the unsustainable purchase decision.

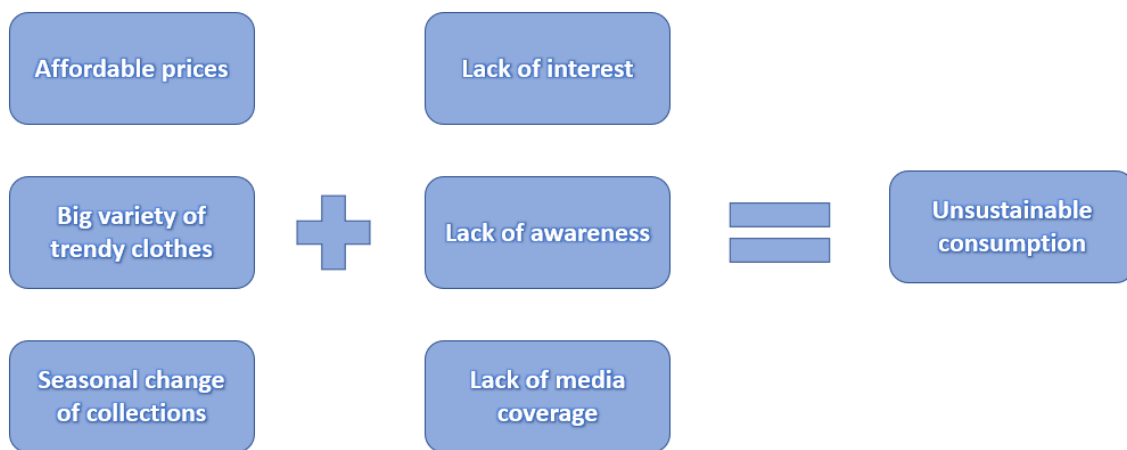


Figure 2.

Source: Prepared by the author

The entire pattern is founded on the issue of youth's lack of knowledge and, consequently, lack of interest in sustainability. This research confirms the findings of Zhang (2021) and Park (2016): awareness about environmental concerns, as well as environmental concerns, has a poor connection with youth' sustainable buying behavior, owing to the information is so limited. Additionally, both of these research established a high correlation between social impact and young women's sustainable purchase behavior.

The study has revealed that the major factors because why respondents can't give up on fast fashion clothes: cheap prices, wide selection, and seasonal changes in the clothing collection. On the other hand, it can be concluded, that the lack of interest in sustainability, lack of awareness

and knowledge, and lack of media coverage of these issues is another important factor, that leads to unsustainable consumption.

The study's findings revealed disparities between young women's opinions and actions. They claimed to have a favorable attitude toward sustainability, but their actions and conduct did not reflect that approach. As a result, their mindset had nothing to do with their actions. Additionally, although expressing a good attitude toward sustainability and a sustainable lifestyle in general, however, the author saw considerable disinterest in leading a sustainable lifestyle regarding cloth purchases during the interviews, meaning that interviewees are not going to completely switch to sustainable cloth purchases in the nearest future.

According to the findings, it is suggested that fast fashion retailers engage in the future in teaching youth and other consumers about the environmental sustainability challenges associated with fast fashion clothes disposal. The lack of knowledge and interest in the topic was disturbing in light of the issue's effect on climate change and the environment in general. It would be crucial for fast fashion companies to contribute to women's post-purchase behavior as well.

The study has revealed the major factors why respondents can't give up on fast fashion clothes: cheap prices, wide selection, and seasonal changes in the clothing collection. On the other hand, it can be concluded that the lack of interest in sustainability, lack of awareness and knowledge, and lack of media coverage of these issues is another important factor that leads to unsustainable consumption.

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The majority of young people had previously observed sustainable clothing collections, mostly those from H&M, and claimed that they would show greater respect and commitment to the company's brand image. However, it turns out that there was a lack of understanding,

demonstrating ineffective marketing initiatives for fast fashion businesses' sustainable collections. Through social media and brand transparency, emphasizing the relevance and beneficial environmental benefits of a sustainable purchase may encourage the consumption of sustainable collections. This suggestion is also applicable to schools.

The final recommendation would definitely be for the next study about greenwashing awareness, as this term is tightly interconnected with the subject of study, and it would have changed respondents' attitudes toward fast fashion brands that are actively using greenwashing. This, in turn, has a probability of increasing awareness of the sustainability issues of fast fashion.

Due to the fact that the study is the first one to be conducted in Kazakhstan among young Kazakh women, there is still much more to be explored and researched. Therefore, the lack of scientific articles and studies regarding the demographic position might have had an impact on the study.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to give more detailed information regarding young Kazakh women's understanding of fast fashion's environmental sustainability challenges and to ascertain how these issues influence their purchasing decisions. As a result, the author was tasked with three research topics. The author recognized a clear trend in the data and visualized an equation that resulted in unsustainable buying decisions for young women.

The aim of this thesis was to establish the extent to which young Kazakh females are aware of the fast fashion's sustainability issues and their attitudes towards it through providing specific information derived from qualitative research results. So, the aim was met, as according to the discussion and results, the extent to which young Kazakh females are aware of the fast fashion's sustainability issues is extremely poor. Moreover, the attitude that they own towards the fast fashion's sustainability issues hasn't greatly changed, due to cheap prices, wide selection, and seasonal changes in the clothing collection on one hand, and the lack of interest in sustainability, lack of awareness and knowledge, and lack of media coverage, on the other hand.

Two major research questions were addressed and answered throughout the whole study in order to get a specific information and data for results representation. Regarding the question of how aware are young Kazakh female consumers of the negative environmental impacts of fast fashion, then with the results provided in the Results and Discussion part, young Kazakh women are poorly aware of detrimental influence that fast fashion has on environmental sustainability. Secondly, referring to the latter research question, then sadly enough, environmental issues don't really affect young Kazakh consumers' purchase decisions.

These questions were specifically formed to gain in-depth data from the research and understand the whole picture of young consumers' awareness and attitudes toward fast fashion.

To gain qualitative data on the topic, the primary data was collected via semi-structured face-to-face online interviews, which consisted of the interviewees of 18-23-year-old range Kazakh university students, who are all female and lived in the capital area. The primary data provided theoretical information regarding participants' fashion consuming habits and presented a more detailed understanding of their attitudes concerning fast fashion and sustainability.

Secondary data was derived from scientific articles and books. Altogether, both primary and secondary data helped the author answer her research questions and draw the conclusion.

Sustainability has been shown mostly to be a secondary consideration for Kazakh young women when choosing to clothe. It's because other variables, such as low pricing, a diverse assortment, and regular change of wardrobe, along with a general lack of understanding, eclipsed sustainability during the purchase process. The author concluded from these findings that this trend stems from a lack of awareness: with no further knowledge and better comprehension, the youth's interest in the subject was also poor.

A significant concern is a lack of interest in sustainability problems. Youths are the generation of tomorrow and are uniquely positioned to affect a positive impact on the world. Thus, future research should focus on youth attitudes and awareness about sustainability, particularly in the sphere of fashion. The literature is still fairly poor, especially in regards to fast fashion's sustainability issues in Kazakhstan or Central Asia, despite the fact that it contains critical information on which themes and concerns should be addressed more to educate young people more effectively. Another idea would be to do research involving focus groups face to face in real-time to stimulate more discussion and obtain fresh insights into how youth behave when other people are present during the interview, as opposed to being questioned alone.

Speaking of the number of recommendations for the next studies, then greenwashing concept awareness and attitudes towards this matter could be studied in Kazakhstan. This study has proved that greenwashing is widely common in Kazakhstan, even though the respondents were not aware of it. Through social media and brand transparency, emphasizing the relevance and beneficial environmental benefits of a sustainable purchase may encourage the consumption of sustainable collections. This suggestion is also applicable to schools.

To summarize, young Kazakh women's knowledge of the environmental sustainability implications of fast fashion is astonishingly poor, resulting in impulsive fast fashion buying decisions. Due to a lack of in-depth awareness of the issues, youths' attitudes on sustainability are highly inconsistent with their practice, and they do not view sustainability as the main consideration in fashion. Additionally, the target group of this research does not majorly sense social pressure to avoid fast fashion, yet fast fashion has been identified as a social phenomenon associated with their environment.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview guide

- 1) Where do you usually buy your clothes? (introductory content question)
- 2) What factors do you take into account while purchasing clothes there? (content question)
- 3) Is sustainability an important factor while purchasing for you? (content question)
- 4) According to your experience, are there any negative environmental impacts related to consuming mass-market clothing items and fast fashion? (content question)
- 5) How do negative environmental consequences influence your purchasing decision? (content question)
- 6) Do you pay attention to the sustainable behavior of fast fashion brands (e.g. their marketing efforts and sustainable collections)? (content question)
- 7) If you face sustainable and unsustainable clothing items inside of a fast-fashion store, which one will you prefer? Will it matter to you? (situational content question)
- 8) Have you ever considered where the clothes you dispose of end up? (content question)
- 9) I will state a few facts about the unsustainability of the fast fashion industry and you'll have to tell me which one of these were you aware of, which not. (content statement questions)
 - “1. 2,700 litres is used to produce one cotton t-shirt”
 - “2. Textile waste ends up as millions of tonnes each year”
 - “3. Less than 1% of clothing is recycled”
 - “5. In average, people wear fast fashion items for approximately 2 years”
 - “6. The mass market brands produce approximately 10% of all global emissions”
 - “7. Washing fast fashion items might release microplastics”
 - “8. Textile and apparel sectors contribute to 20% of global production waste”
 - “9. Fashion industry's production uses around 8,000 synthetic chemicals”
- 10) How does that make you feel? (follow-up question)
- 11) Are your friends and family aware of fast fashion's environmental unsustainability and how does that affect your own consumption of fast fashion? (content question)
- 12) Did this interview provide you with new information regarding fast fashion and its issues with the environment? (concluding question)
- 13) To what extent have you changed the way you feel about mass-market brands, and how will it affect your future purchasing decisions? (concluding question)

Appendix 2. Interview transcripts

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kPHdopMXtEv6_oAus9h8x04vwFqvy3ii?usp=sharing