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**YOUNG CONSUMERS' MOTIVATION BEHIND PURCHASING  
SUSTAINABLE FASHION IN ESTONIA**

Bachelor's thesis

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

The document length is 8777 words from the introduction to the end of the conclusion.

Aleksandra Skramkova .....

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sustainable fashion has gained increasing attention in recent years due to its potential to address environmental and social issues in the fashion industry. However, consumer motivations for sustainable fashion consumption are not well understood. The study is important as there is a lack of understanding regarding consumer motivations for sustainable fashion in Estonia, which can help inform sustainable fashion marketing strategies.

This thesis aims to explore the factors that motivate young consumers' purchasing of sustainable fashion in Estonia using Self-determination Theory as a framework. Data is collected through semi-structured interviews with seven participants and analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings reveal that intrinsic motivations, notably the emphasis on quality, comfort, and the enhancement of personal well-being have a greater effect on consumers. Environmental concerns also emerge as a significant factor for some consumers, reflecting a deeper commitment to sustainability.

This research emphasises the importance of understanding consumer motivations behind the sustainable fashion in Estonia and highlights the need for producers to align their practices and communication strategies with these motivations to better connect with and serve the needs of consumers in the sustainable fashion landscape.

Keywords: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, sustainable fashion, consumer motivation.

# INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world and it contributes significantly to global problems such as climate change, water and air pollution. The growing impact on the environment, along with increasing awareness, is mainly due to the rise in clothing consumption and textile production. (Niinimäki et al. 2020) The fashion brands are now producing double the amount of clothing than 20 years ago and are set to reach the consumption of 102 tonnes of clothing by 2030. The significant rise in textile production and fashion consumption has given rise to fast fashion. Fast fashion is a business model focused on providing consumers with trendy, low-cost products more frequently. Fast fashion encourages frequent purchasing and impulsive buying by creating a sense of urgency. (Ibid.) However, the environmental impact of the fashion industry extends beyond production, purchase and use of clothing by consumers. The impact continues through the whole cycle from wearing and cleaning, which usually ends in the landfill.

All of these problems have brought attention to the need for sustainable fashion. Sustainable fashion is a complex term that combines a range of practices, including eco-friendly materials, ethical production methods, fair labour practices, and circular business models. It also aims to reduce the negative impact of the fashion industry on the environment and people, while promoting economic growth and social well-being.

The **research problem** addressed in this thesis is the lack of understanding regarding why young consumers in Estonia are motivated to choose sustainable fashion. Existing studies have primarily focused on consumer attitudes rather than research into the underlying motivations, which drive the sustainable clothing choices. (Bianchi and Gonzalez 2021) Thus, while the consumer attitudes towards sustainable fashion have been studied extensively, there remains a gap in exploring the motivations affecting consumer behaviour, particularly through the scope of self-determination theory.

As the fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world, understanding the motivations of consumers is crucial in promoting sustainable fashion practices and reducing the negative impact of the industry on the environment. Therefore, this study is needed to find and understand the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that influence Estonian consumers' engagement in sustainable fashion practices. In addition, it will provide insights that can inform strategies for promoting sustainable fashion in Estonia. This information can be used to develop targeted strategies to promote sustainable fashion consumption. Moreover, lack of understanding about Estonian consumer motivations could result in missed economic opportunities for businesses that could meet the preferences of consumers, which could lead to slower growth in the sustainable fashion market.

The **aim of this thesis** is to explore the factors that motivate young consumers' purchasing in the area of sustainable fashion in Estonia and develop recommendations for supporting the development of young consumers' intrinsic motivations.

The following **research questions** were developed in order to fulfil the aim:

- Which intrinsic motivational factors play a role for the young consumers' purchasing behaviour in the area of sustainable fashion?
- Which extrinsic motivational factors play a role for the young consumers' purchasing behaviour in the area of sustainable fashion?
- How can producers of sustainable fashion support the development of young consumers' intrinsic motivation to purchase their products?

These research questions will help to identify the factors that influence consumer motivation in the area of sustainable fashion in Estonia. Understanding of these factors can help businesses and brands to develop effective marketing strategies, which would be appealing to environmentally conscious consumers. Similarly, this thesis will also provide the information about the factors driving sustainable consumption in Estonia, which then could be used to inform policy decisions and will help in promotion in sustainable fashion practices.

Qualitative approach will be used to collect data through semi-structured interviews with a sample of seven interviewees. The interviews will be conducted through video calls as it is the most convenient method for both parties. Each interview will last around 30-50 minutes each. The data collected will be transcribed and then put together into codes. The analysis will be using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in data. This approach will allow a deep exploration of participants' thoughts, experiences and motivation in terms of sustainable fashion.

The rest of the thesis will be structured as follows. Chapter 1 will review the existing literature on consumer motivation and Self-Determination theory, followed by sustainability and sustainable fashion. This chapter will be finished with the consumer motives behind buying sustainable fashion. Then Chapter 2 will provide a detailed description of the research methodology, including data collection and analysis. Chapter 3 will focus on the results and findings of the thesis investigating the motivations of interviewed individuals. Conclusion will bring together all of the chapters of this thesis, summarising the key aspects and discuss limitations.

The author wants to show gratitude to all participants of the online interviews and their contribution to help conduct this research. The author also expresses gratitude to the supervisor Merle Küttim, who guided and helped the author during the thesis.



# **1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

In this part, the author will provide some theoretical background on sustainable fashion. Then the author is going to focus on consumer motivation and Self-Determination theory, which will follow up with the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that have an influence on purchasing of sustainable fashion. Lastly, the author will discuss other factors that affect consumer motivation in the sustainable fashion industry.

## **1.1. Consumer motivation and Self-Determination Theory**

Motivation is a very versatile, but important driver of consumer purchasing behaviour. It is like an invisible force that guides a consumer to the end-goal. However, there are quite a few types of motivation as the consumer motivations are complex and diverse. Consumers activate multiple motivations that often interact in complex ways during the decision-making process. (Xiao et al., 2022) These motivations can either support or conflict with each other in influencing consumption choices. (Ibid.) For example, when consumers consider purchasing environmentally friendly products, they might be motivated by a variety of factors such as ethics, saving money, comfort, and excitement. (Moisander, 2007; Steg et al., 2014) There also must be a balance between these factors.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is one of the theoretical frameworks that can help to better understand the motivation of the consumers. SDT suggests that human behaviour is motivated by three psychological needs. These needs include autonomy, competence and relatedness. (Deci & Ryan, 2000) Autonomy refers to the ownership of behaviour, whereas competence is the need

to achieve desired outcome, and relatedness is having connection with others. If all these three needs are met, the intrinsic motivation will increase and people voluntarily participate in the activity. (Ibid.)

Moreover, motivation varies in the quality and source of the origin with different levels of self-determination. (Baxter & Pelletier, 2020) These various sources go from non-self-determined motivations, such as amotivation, to self-determined motivations, such as identified and integrated (Ibid.) For example, some studies have shown that external factors that support the feeling of self-determination tend to enhance motivation more effectively than external factors that urge feelings of non-self-determined behaviour. (Deci & Ryan, 2012) Therefore, according to SDT when psychological needs are strongly controlled or regulated, it leads to lowering intrinsic motivation. This can lead to extrinsic motivation or amotivation, (Schulze & Janssen, 2024) Amotivation comes from failing to fulfil the basic needs of one's autonomy, competence and relatedness in terms of participation in a behaviour. (Ibid.)

SDT also suggests that there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. (Deci & Ryan, 2000) Intrinsic motivation involves engaging in an activity purely for its enjoyment, such as getting pleasure from fun, entertainment, and experiences. Intrinsically motivated actions come from a genuine interest and pleasure in the activities, whereas extrinsically motivated behaviour comes from satisfaction from accomplishing a goal. (Ibid.) Furthermore, SDT suggests that behaviour driven by intrinsic motivation is more reliable and less influenced by external motivation factors. (Koestner et al., 2008)

## **1.2. Sustainability and sustainable fashion**

Sustainability is a complex concept about navigating the intricate and evolving environmental conditions that impact human lives and welfare. It involves balancing ecological, economic, and sociopolitical factors, both on a global scale and within local communities. (Joy et al., 2015)

The concept of sustainability in the fashion industry became widely known following in the 1990s during Rio Earth Summit. Brands began seeking ways to minimise their environmental and social impacts. (Ray & Nayak, 2023) Nowadays, sustainable fashion is a growing movement

within the fashion industry, which combines a holistic approach to clothing manufacturing, consumption and production. Sustainability in the fashion industry is gaining more attention as consumers are increasingly concerned about the environment. (Bianchi & Gonzalez, 2021) Sustainable fashion involves combining social and environmental principles, such as fair labour conditions or using biodegradable materials in the production of clothing. (Ibid.) Additionally, sustainable fashion combines together such terms like - environmental, eco-friendly, green, recycled, organic” and “natural . (Thomas, 2008)

On the other hand we have fast fashion, which refers to the rapid production and consumption of inexpensive and disposable clothing, characterised by short product life cycles, low prices, and high volume (Joy et al., 2015). It has been criticised for its negative impact on the environment, such as water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and waste generation. Fast fashion has changed how people shop for clothes by offering cheap, trendy items that are quickly discarded. But behind the low prices are hidden environmental and social problems. Fast fashion side of industry has serious consequences - from using lots of water to grow cotton to polluting water with dyes and mistreating workers. (Bick, et al., 2018)

When it comes to young consumers of Hong Kong and Canada, Joy et al. (2015) have found that sustainable fashion is not a primary concern for them. Most of the data indicate that young individuals tend to disconnect fashion from sustainability. While they endorse the concept of sustainability in general, they do not consistently apply these principles when it comes to sustainable fashion. (Joy et al., 2015) However, in Europe it has gained attention, with some smaller businesses producing clothing from organic cotton obtained through fair trade practices. (Ibid.)

Sustainable fashion is a key component of the current movement known as slow fashion (Bianchi & Gonzalez, 2021). This movement embodies a philosophical approach centred on sustainability principles, including fair working conditions and minimising environmental harm. It advocates for slower production processes and decreased consumption of fashion items. Slow fashion

encourages consumers to prioritise quality over quantity, shifting their mindset towards more thoughtful consumption habits. (Ibid.)

### **1.3. Consumer motives behind buying sustainable fashion**

Consumer behaviour towards fashion is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. As mentioned in Chapter 1.1, intrinsic motivation refers to the internal factors that drive individuals to make fashion-related decisions based on their personal desires, values, and beliefs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the fashion industry, these forms of motivation can be a very powerful driver of consumer behaviour. People often use fashion as a means of self-expression and the reflection of one's personality and identity, beliefs, and values. (Szczepaniak, 2015)

In the context of sustainable fashion, SDT can be used to examine how consumers' motivation to purchase sustainable fashion is influenced by their perceived autonomy, competence, and relatedness. (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, the consumers who choose to buy sustainable fashion may feel a sense of autonomy and control over their decision of buying sustainable fashion. Furthermore, consumers who believe that purchasing sustainable fashion is a way to demonstrate their awareness about environmental issues, may feel a sense of competence. Finally, those consumers who prefer sustainable fashion might find a way to connect with similar individuals and contribute to the sustainable movement. In this case, they may feel a sense of relatedness.

Consumers who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to make fashion decisions based on their personal preferences and they are not affected by the opinions of others. (Deci & Ryan, 2000) For example, a person who is passionate about sustainable clothing and helping the environmentally conscious, will still choose to buy sustainable fashion, even if it is not considered fashionable by other people. Moreover, intrinsically motivated consumers are more likely to make sustainable fashion choices based on their values and beliefs. In this case, extrinsic motivators like peer pressure will not influence their purchasing behaviour. (Ibid.)

Intrinsic motivation can act as a powerful force of consumer behaviour in the sustainable fashion industry. Making a positive impact on the environment can be considered a key intrinsic motivation to drive the consumer motivation towards sustainable fashion. It was found that personal values influence ethical fashion consumption. (Fritzsche & Oz, 2007) Therefore, those consumers who are environmentally conscious and support sustainability are more likely to purchase clothing made from recycled or natural materials, such as organic cotton.

In addition to the basic psychological needs outlined in SDT and intrinsic motivation factors, extrinsic factors can also influence consumer behaviour towards purchasing sustainable fashion. Extrinsic motivation refers to external factors, such as rewards, recognition, or social pressure, that influence an individual's behaviour. (Deci & Ryan, 2000) Extrinsic motives include stimulus like sales and discounts, or social pressure to support sustainable fashion.

While SDT suggests that intrinsic motivations are more effective at driving sustained behaviour change, extrinsic motivations can still be useful in adoption of sustainable fashion, especially in the early stages of behaviour change. For example, the businesses can offer additional discounts to promote sustainable fashion and this might lead a person to try sustainable clothing. However, extrinsic motives may also have negative results. They can create a dependence on rewards and decrease intrinsic motivation over time. Therefore, it is important to try and strike the balance between both intrinsic and extrinsic motives, which would help to create a society that values sustainability and encourages conscious consumption.

An example of intrinsic motivation in the context of buying sustainable fashion would be that a person enjoys or has an interest in sustainable fashion. However, an extrinsically motivated consumer is choosing to buy sustainable fashion items because he or she understands the importance of sustainable consumption in terms of contribution to preserving Earth's natural resources. (Gilal et al., 2019)

A study by Shahid & Paul (2021) indicates that today the consumers pursue luxury consumption to enhance their inner self through luxury experiences. (Shahid & Paul, 2021) Sustainable

fashion often comes at a higher price point than fast fashion. It is because of the higher cost of processes related to recycling and production of sustainable materials and fair labour practices.

Consumers are often hesitant to pay more for sustainable fashion items if they perceive the cost to be too high. (Malik et al., 2017) Yet, a study of Italian consumers made by Dangelico et al., (2022) has found that environmental concern and perceived value have a positive impact on the willingness to pay a high price for fashion made of eco-friendly materials. (Dangelico et al., 2022) However, not all consumers are able or willing to pay a higher price. Therefore, the price will remain an important consideration in their purchasing decisions.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The second chapter of the thesis focuses on the description of the research conducted by the author. In this part, the author focuses on research design and sample, data collection and analysis.

### **2.1 Research design and sample**

Collected data will help the author to find consumer motivations towards purchasing sustainable fashion in Estonia and gain insights into the role of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, and other factors that might influence the consumers motives.

This study used a qualitative research design that allowed for an in-depth exploration of consumer motivation towards sustainable fashion. The qualitative research method is commonly used to understand complex phenomena, such as individual behaviour and attitudes, and provides an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences (Bryman, 2016). The qualitative method was applied through semi-structured interviews with mainly open-ended questions. The use of a qualitative approach allowed for a detailed exploration of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that drive consumers towards sustainable fashion.

The research is conducted to answer the research questions about intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate consumer behaviour, and identify the factors on how producers of sustainable fashion support the development of consumers' motivation to purchase their products.

As mentioned in the introduction part, the aim of this study is to find out the factors that motivate consumers' consumption in the area of sustainable fashion in Estonia. Therefore, the participants were selected based on whether they have purchased sustainable fashion or they consider buying sustainable fashion, as well as all interviewees residing in Estonia.

The sample size for this study is 7 participants. This sample size is justified by the nature of the research design and the focus on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of consumers towards sustainable fashion. Qualitative research designs typically have smaller sample sizes as they focus on in-depth exploration of individual experiences and the analysis process is manageable and feasible. (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Additionally, the focus on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations requires a detailed exploration of individual experiences and attitudes, which is best achieved through a smaller sample size (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

<b>Participants</b>	<b>interview 1</b>	<b>interview 2</b>	<b>interview 3</b>	<b>interview 4</b>	<b>interview 5</b>	<b>interview 6</b>	<b>interview 7</b>
<b>Age</b>	25	24	28	23	28	23	27
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Occupation</b>	Finance analyst	Product developer	Business developer	Sales assistant	Finance analyst	Finance	Primary education

Table 1 Demographic factors of the participants in the interviews

Source: Composed by author, 2024

Table 1 shows the demographic data of the interviewees. Among the participants, four of the participants are female and three are male. The age of the participants is 23-28 years old, with the average age being 25 years old. Four of the participants live in Tallinn, one in Pärnu and two in Narva. According to collected demographic data, three participants work in finance, two in the business field, one in product development and one in primary education.

All the participants were informed about the aim of the study and how the data will be used. The identities are kept confidential. Only the gender, age and work position is visible to the reader. The data is stored securely and the privacy of all participants is protected. Permission to voice



record the interview has been given by all participants and they were informed that they can withdraw from the interview at any time.

## **2.2. Data collection and analysis**

The data collection method used in this study was semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions for approximately 30-50 minutes. Semi-structured interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, attitudes, and motivations towards sustainable fashion. The use of semi-structured interviews also provided the opportunity to probe and clarify responses, which allowed for a more detailed understanding of participant experiences (Liamputtong, 2013). The interview guide was developed based on the research questions and the literature review. It has also focused on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of consumers towards sustainable fashion.

Interviews were conducted via video communication channels such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, which was quite convenient for all parties involved. The interview started with a quick introduction of self such as name, age, location within Estonia and a work field.

Thematic analysis approach was chosen to analyse the collected data and the results are presented in this section, which is a common qualitative data analysis method. Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns or themes within the data through a process of coding, categorising, and interpreting the data. The aim of the thematic analysis is to identify the underlying meanings and patterns in the data and to develop a deep understanding of the motivations of Estonian consumers towards sustainable fashion. The data was transcribed and then analysed using an iterative process of familiarisation, coding, searching for themes, reviewing, and defining themes. The process will involve identifying key concepts and patterns in the data related to the research questions and objectives. It also presents the findings of this study which were structured around the most important ideas that came up repeatedly during the analysis.

The coding process will involve labelling different segments of the data with descriptive codes, which will be grouped together to form themes. The codes and themes will then be reviewed and refined, and the relationships between them will be examined. The analysis will be conducted using manual coding. The final output will be a set of themes that summarise the key findings of the research. The themes will also be supported by examples from the data to illustrate their significance.

The interview questions were based on previous research made on consumer motivations of purchasing. The questions were designed to explore participants' motivations for purchasing sustainable fashion in Estonia. Questions were aimed at understanding what factors drove participants decision-making, such as personal values, environmental concerns, and social influence. The total of 19 questions were formed to help to answer the main research questions. The questions were divided into a few sections. First section focused on the awareness of sust

The questions were also designed to align with self-determination theory, which proposes that individuals have inner psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Questions were aimed at understanding how participants felt about their fashion choices, whether they felt in control of their decisions, and how their choices contributed to their sense of self. In addition to intrinsic motivational factors, it is also important to explore extrinsic motivational factors that may influence consumers' decisions to purchase sustainable fashion. The questions were asked about social pressure, advertisement, discounts and promotions.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter of the thesis presents the findings of the study. The interview was divided into three parts. First part consisted of questions that were about the understanding and the attitude towards sustainable fashion. In this part, the participants expressed their knowledge of sustainable fashion and consumption in general, as well as slightly described their purchasing habits. In the second part, the interviewer asked questions to gather information about the intrinsic motivation factors.

#### **3.1. Results of data analysis**

This sub-chapter presents the results of the interviews. The results were divided into codes. Then codes were grouped into the themes. Altogether there were ... codes and ... themes. The themes were formed to help answer the three main research questions:

- Which intrinsic motivational factors play a role for the young consumers' purchasing behaviour in the area of sustainable fashion?
- Which extrinsic motivational factors play a role for the young consumers' purchasing behaviour in the area of sustainable fashion?
- How can producers of sustainable fashion support the development of young consumers' intrinsic motivation to purchase their products?

Therefore, the main four themes were grouped as follows: intrinsic motives, extrinsic motives, other motives and support strategies for producers.

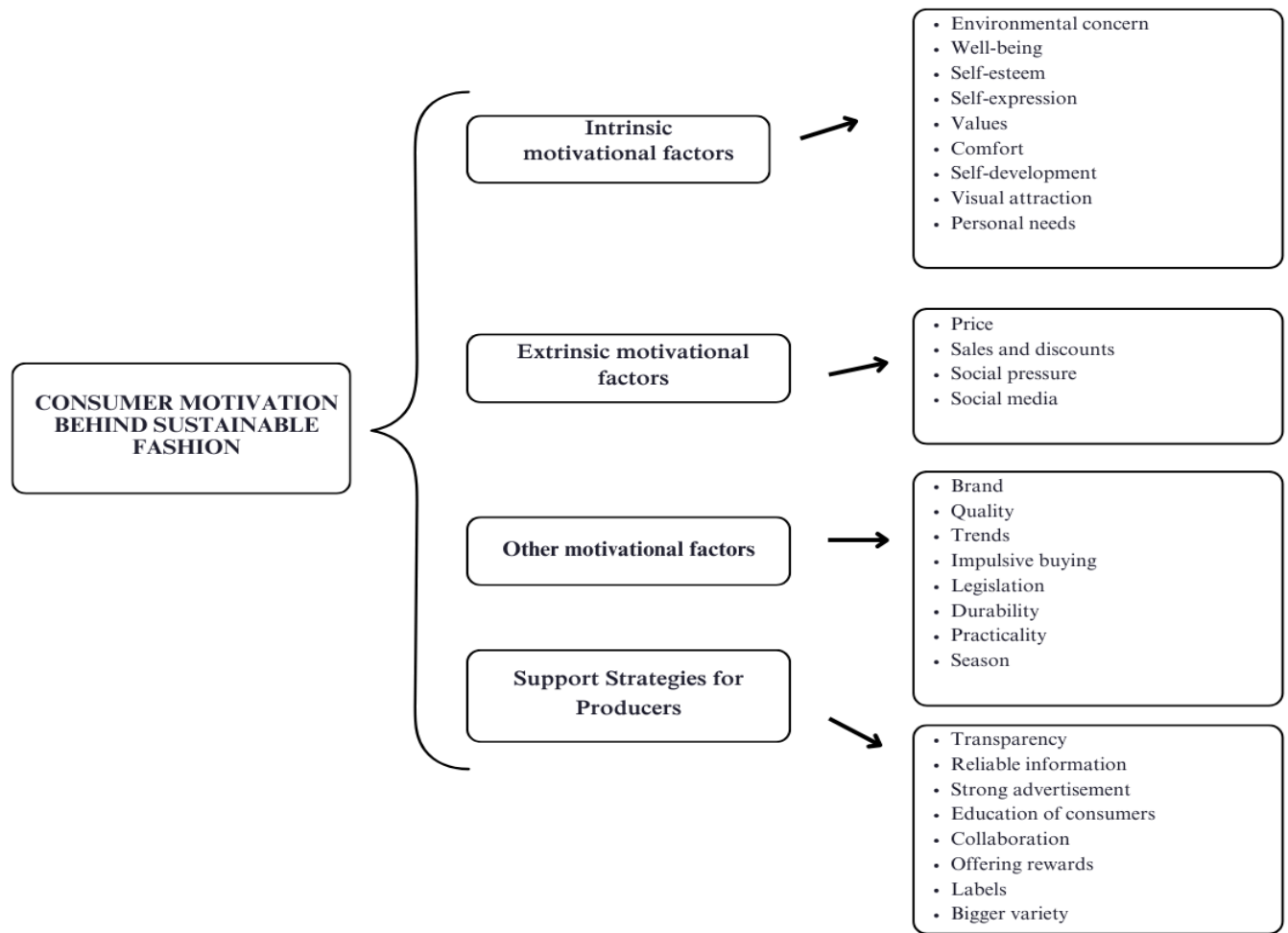


Fig.1 Coding tree of the research

Source: Composed by author, 2024

### 3.1. Intrinsic factors influencing purchasing behaviour

This part presents intrinsic motivational factors that were found during the reviewing of codes and themes during the interviews. Main questions were focused on detecting how sustainable fashion makes an impact on interviewees' internal feelings. This theme consists of nine codes: environmental concern, well-being, self-esteem, self-expression, values, comfort, self-development, visual attraction, personal needs.

Overall, the intrinsic motivational factors were present in all interviews. However, the female interviewees seemed to be more intrinsically motivated than male interviewees. Sustainable fashion was notably positively affecting self-esteem, overall well-being, personal needs and values. Whereas male interviewees were more affected intrinsically by factors such as comfort, visual attraction and personal needs.

Environmental concern was present in all interviews, which indicates the level of awareness and sensitivity towards ecological problems. Some interviewees expressed environmental concern directly about sustainable fashion and conscious consumption - "Speaking about me, I am more of a sustainable and conscious consumer and I am for sustainable purchasing, and I want my things to serve me for a long time." (Int\_1) This factor may significantly influence the decision-making of these interviewees, when choosing what kind of fashion to buy and align with conscious consumer behaviour. Moreover, two interviewees stated that it has made them feel "...like I am saving the world" (Int\_2), when she buys fashion made from recycled and sustainable materials, which is linked to the contribution to save the environment.

However, some interviewees expressed more concern towards other environmental issues and sustainable practices, such as separating waste and recycling of plastic bottles. This concern was more noticeable in young males and the author also expressed interest in what could be more important than consumption of sustainable fashion - "Separating trash, recycling, CO2 emissions, anti-pollution of the ocean." (Int\_4). Thus, the consumers contribute to helping the planet, but feel the absence of personal responsibility to consume sustainable fashion - In general it is important, but for me it would be like a drop in the ocean. If only 1-2 people will try to inspire and talk about buying sustainable sneakers, sustainable hoodies, sustainable socks, 1-2 people are a drop in the ocean. Nothing is going to change. However, if 90 people from 100 people do it, then there's some purpose to it." (Int\_6).

As mentioned above, intrinsic motivation affects self-esteem and well-being. Three females display a stronger sense of internal motivation and personal identification. Sustainable fashion helps them feel more confident and good about themselves - "Speaking for myself, I am 100%

confident that it boosts my self-esteem. I don't know , it kinda works this way that you just wear this sustainable and high quality piece of clothing, that is made in good ethical conditions, that is also adequate for this price...You just feel more comfortable and maybe not successful, but you get internal self-confidence.” (Int\_1), “I feel better because I feel like I contribute to saving the planet.” (Int\_2). However, male participants expressed that sustainable fashion does not have any effect on their self-esteem - “It does not have any impact on me, like at all. I am a very self-confident person, and the sustainability of my clothing does not make me feel more or less confident or have any other impact on self-esteem.” (Int\_3).

Another aspect of personal identification that was displayed in all participants was self-expression. Self-expression includes such factors like personal style, how the clothing looks on the body and how it fits - “The first thing that I look at, I would say is how the item looks, style and colour, and then the price.” (Int\_5), “I could say that I bought a shirt made from linen, but I wouldn’t say that it’s about sustainability. This would be about being high quality and being in my style.” (Int\_6).

Some interviewees have admitted to the urge of impulse buying behaviour, which directly links with visual attraction to clothing. These claims also contradict sustainable fashion consumption. This connection was more clear in the youngest interviewees - participants 2 and 4. “Sometimes I have impulse purchases of course and I think to myself “Oh it looks nice ,I will take it”.” (Int\_2), “Motivation behind this purchase was the visual aspect, the sneakers were beautiful, which you could say was more of an impulse purchase.”(Int\_4).

Comfort was listed as one of the top factors to influence the purchasing behaviour of the interviewees. All seven participants find comfort to be on top of the list along with the quality. In the sense of consumption of sustainable fashion, comfort relates to personal experience with clothing, such as physical touch of the material - “ One of the first things that I consider when choosing a fashion item is comfort and how the material feels to the touch” (Int\_4). It is likely that interviewees’ emphasis on comfort reflects the desire for clothing that feels good to the skin as well as ease of movement in them - “I am not very interested in fashion trends, I just need

clothing that could be warm and comfortable.” (Int\_7). “ I think the comfort will go before the price. Because it’s important for me to have clothing that fits my figure and sits well, and I would feel comfortable in them.” (Int\_2). “In the first place I would put comfort, then sustainability and longevity, and trends would be last on the list.” (Int\_1).

### **3.2. Extrinsic factors**

This section of the results brings out the next theme - extrinsic factors that influence the consumption of sustainable fashion. Four factors such as price, sales and discounts, social pressure and influence of social media. were identified during the interviews. Only four codes were detected.

Price was mentioned in every interview as a top factor of concern for the majority of the interviewees. This factor seems to be the drive either to buy, or put aside the purchase. Five out of seven interviewees were sensitive to the price, expressing that sustainable fashion tends to be on a more expensive side than unsustainable or fast fashion - “Sustainable fashion is more pricey, than usual fast fashion. I understand that the cost of recycled items is higher and there are more processes that make sustainable items sustainable. Yeah, so it is usually more expensive.” (Int\_2). This comment indicates the acknowledgement and the justification as to why the price could be higher in sustainable fashion than in other variations of fashion. This attitude to the price of sustainable fashion could potentially slow down the adoption of it even for those, who express the environmental concern.

The author found an interesting take of some participants, who stated - “Maybe if a store has both options: sustainable and unsustainable, then maybe they should just stick to sustainable fashion, so the consumers wouldn't have to choose from any of those items, and then the price difference wouldn't be that noticeable. Also, I think that the bigger brands actually could make all of their produced goods from recycled materials, for example, because people will buy their things anyway.” (Int\_5). This suggestion brings to light another perspective on how to make consumers less sensitive to the price. This means that companies could only offer sustainable

fashion choices to their consumers and not have unsustainable options at all. This idea was supported by the comments of other interviewees - “ If sustainable clothing is the same price as any other type of clothing, then why not buy it. If it is the same comfortable and looks good as non-sustainable clothing...” (Int\_3).

Moreover, some participants would pay a higher price for specific product categories such as bags, jackets, shoes for their potential to serve longer - “ It really depends on what the item is. Definitely depends on an item. I like more practical things to be more expensive and higher quality such as jackets, shoes,bags.” (Int\_2). The investment in long-lasting pieces justified the price - “The only thing that I tend to invest in is shoes.” (Int\_7).

Sales and discounts tend to influence three out of seven interviewees, which also affects their purchasing behaviour and sometimes leading to impulse purchasing - “ I think because of sale or discount definitely yes. If a thing suits me and it is on sale, then it’s definitely a good motivator.” (Int\_6). However, it was also noted by some people that they try to limit their buying, justifying that “less is more” (Int\_7) and “quantity over quality” - “I have changed my perspective and have more awareness now, I think that quality should be over quantity.” (Int\_1) which is also closely linked to the intrinsic motivation of environmental awareness and sustainable consumption. The same interviewee expressed her strong disliking of sales in general - “ I don't like the idea of getting a lot of clothing for a cheaper price, because usually there is so much chaos that comes with it.” (Int\_1).

Social and influencers in particular don't affect the extrinsic motivation of the interviewees and some express their negative feelings associated with them “Speaking of influencers, I do not like them and I don’t watch their content, at least willingly.” (Int\_3).

The author tried to gather the information on social pressure of the interviewees, however, only one male participant claimed that he is socially pressured at times - “I feel that I am being pressured by some people and marketing people, and overall politics, who always put ecology and sustainability up my face.” (Int\_3). Other participants stated that they are not pressured by



anyone or purely by the brands - “Also not at all. I am surrounded by people, who are not really pushing into that direction. Everybody is doing their own thing and nobody is forcing. It happens only from the brands’ side.” (Int\_4)

### **3.3. Other factors**

This group was combined from the factors that are not intrinsic, or extrinsic. The other factors include such factors as: durability and practicality. These also include brand, quality, trends, legislation and the season.

The most common determinant for choosing sustainable fashion was quality. All interviewees mentioned quality during the interview, and it has a huge impact on their purchasing decisions. The connection between quality and features is very close and - “I realised that it is better to buy one item, but which will be high quality, rather than many cheaply made ones and they will fall apart.” (Int\_5). This indicates that the link between the high quality and the features of sustainable fashion is essential for consumers. More practical fashion choices ensure that the wardrobe meets their everyday needs without any sacrifice. Moreover, such features like durability can contribute to cost-effectiveness - “Patagonia would be a more suitable example. It’s about them. Meaning, it is durable and high quality clothing, which is expensive, but cost pays off over time.” (Int\_6).

Brands came up quite frequently also during some interviews and some interviewees associate specific products such as shoes, outerwear bags with a higher quality and prefer to buy those brands for a longer period of use. This could be because of the personal preference for a brand and also because of some trends - “Brand reputation is a strengthening force for me and I usually tend to trust my favourite brands”. (Int\_4). This shows that the reputation of a brand can play a big role for some consumers, especially, if they already favour the brand.

### **3.4. Support strategies for producers**

During the interviews the main factors to influence the consumer motivation to support strategies for producers and business were detected as need of transparency, providing reliable information, strong advertisement techniques, educating the consumers, collaboration, labels and bigger variety of products.

When it comes to sustainable fashion, people assume that it is not as visually striking as fast-fashion or unsustainable fashion - “In my opinion, when they make reusable fashion it is usually very basic clothing, which doesn’t catch the attention and be like WOW!” (Int\_2). Moreover, it was mentioned in an interview, that while some bigger and well known brands can provide a greater variance of products, there are still not as many options as consumers would like - “There are limited options of items for men. If we talk about bigger brands such as Nike, Adidas , may have a greater variance of products, but smaller not as much.” (Int\_6). This should raise a concern for undiscovered product gaps for smaller businesses, which could result in lost opportunities.

Additionally, all the interviewees were asked about the future of sustainable fashion and how they see it. The responses varied from needing bigger selection to more affordable pricing of sustainable fashion - “Well, the future is about getting a bigger assortment and bigger selection of clothing.” (Int\_6).

Some people think it is yet another trend, which will go away with time “Int\_3: I think it is a trend at the moment, but it will pass. ” (Int\_3) Some think that it will gain more and more popularity and concern with time “ I think it will gain more popularity and more attention altogether. I think that fashion brands will try to move towards sustainable production and processes.” (Int\_1).

Quite a lot was said about the transparency. The businesses need to gain the trust of the consumers by educating them, publishing honest and transparent yearly reports and showing the consumers that they don’t only through loud-speaking claims, but also show that they care with

their actions - “companies can make any claims about anything they put in their product, and consumers will not have any way of proving it.” (Int.3)

### **3.2. Discussion and suggestions**

The main focus of the interviews was to find what intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence the participants' purchasing motivation, along with finding the ways to support strategies of producers and businesses.

The study shows that three main intrinsic factors that affect the consumer's motivation towards buying sustainable fashion are environmental concern, self-esteem, self-expression, personal needs and of course comfort. This was also shown in the study of Szczepaniak, (2015) as people often use fashion as a means of self-expression. Three significant motivational factors impacting the consumer motivation behind sustainable fashion were environmental concern, comfort and visual attraction to the items. Comfort was a top priority factor for the majority of interviewees.

If we look at the extrinsic factors, then the most influential were price and it was affecting motivation of all of the interviewees.

Other-Also, young consumers often prioritise such important features like durability and practicality over fleeting trends.

Comfort was one of tThey search for clothing that will serve them for a long time and wh

During the research, three significant intrinsic motivational factors were identified, such as pursuit of quality, comfort, and the link between sustainable fashion and personal well-being. Consumers in Estonia often prioritise durability and comfort over fleeting trends. They want clothes that last and feel good, aligning with their personal standards. Also, some consumers showed a link between sustainably made clothing and their well-being. When it comes to sustainability, some consumers deeply care about the environment. For them, buying sustainable fashion is a way to contribute positively, aligning their actions with their commitment to protecting nature. Therefore, the environmental concern of some consumers is clearly shown in this thesis, which also could be connected to their well-being and self-esteem.

When it comes to extrinsic factors, there are way less that influence consumer motivation. Some factors were brought up in the study, such as sales and discounts, marketing practices and social and peer influence. This study has shown that sales and discounts do not hold enough sway to buy sustainable fashion items or change their buying habits, indicating no interest in sales and discounts.

Traditional marketing such as advertising and social media promotions might not uniformly influence sustainable fashion purchases. However, the potential effectiveness of visually striking and memorable advertisements can be impactful for some consumers.

External pressures, like societal norms and peer influences, play a role in shaping consumer behaviour. Yet, the impact of these external factors varies widely among individuals. Some might be influenced by societal expectations regarding sustainable fashion, while others might remain relatively unaffected.

When analysing the interviews, the author could outline some suggestions to marketers and producers of sustainable fashion:

- Highlight the superior quality and comfort in sustainable fashion items to drive consumer motivation for purchase.
- Ensure and show durability and functionality clothing items.
- Create visually striking advertisements to gain young consumers attention
- Create trust by giving transparency and honest communication.

With these things in mind they can attract customers who prioritise these aspects, strengthening intrinsic motivation to purchase.

Moreover, educating consumers about the benefits of sustainable fashion beyond environmental impact is crucial. Marketers can help the producers to educate the consumer about the benefits of sustainable choices that contribute to personal well-being.

Additionally, the marketers should be focusing on more visually striking advertisements bringing some awareness about the product or a fashion line, as well as build trust by giving full transparency about materials used, labour and manufacturing. Clear and honest communication about sustainability in their practices create a sense of authenticity, which helps to enhance consumers' confidence and motivation to support such brands. This can help consumers to connect with the brand or product.

Learning about consumer motivations behind sustainable fashion in Estonia has unveiled a landscape shaped by intrinsic, extrinsic and other factors. Consequently, this research underscores the need for further empirical studies and scholarly inquiry that specifically focus on the motivations guiding sustainable fashion consumption among Estonian consumers.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to explore the factors that motivate young consumers' purchasing in the area of sustainable fashion in Estonia and develop recommendations for supporting the development of young consumers' intrinsic motivations.

The following research questions were developed in order to fulfil the aim:

- Which intrinsic motivational factors play a role for the young consumers' purchasing behaviour in the area of sustainable fashion?
- Which extrinsic motivational factors play a role for the young consumers' purchasing behaviour in the area of sustainable fashion?
- How can producers of sustainable fashion support the development of young consumers' intrinsic motivation to purchase their products?

Qualitative approach was chosen to collect the data through semi-structured interviews with seven interviewees. The interviews occurred in November 2023 through online video calls with all interviewees. All interviewees are residents of Estonia.

The data was analysed through the thematic analysis, having previously put the data into codes and codes were put together into the themes.

The research has investigated intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors behind sustainable fashion within young Estonian consumers and it has provided crucial insights into the nuances of purchasing and consumption within this field.

This study was set to find which intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors play a role for the consumers purchasing behaviour in the area of sustainable fashion in Estonia. The study found that intrinsic factors have more influence on the interviewees than extrinsic. Comfort was the

most influential intrinsic factor along with environmental concern. On the other hand, extrinsic motivational factors had a smaller influence on Estonian consumers and were not affecting young consumers as much, yet the sales and discounts could lead to impulse purchasing of the sustainable products.

This thesis found helpful motivational factors that could support the producers in the development of the intrinsic motivation of young consumers to promote and purchase their products. Firstly, businesses need to be transparent about what practices they use in regards to sustainability. This could help to build trust with their consumers and likely attract the new ones to their business. Secondly, businesses need to focus on educating the consumers about sustainability, what materials they use, the unique features of their products as well as create more visually striking advertisements.

This study has certainly some limitations. The research has a sample size of only seven interviewees with very similar demographic factors. The sample consists mainly of young people between ages of 23 and 28. A greater diversity in socio-demographic factors and sample size would help the comprehension regarding the factors that influence consumer motivation of sustainable fashion among Estonian residents. Also, the educational status of the interviewees could have an effect on the data collected.

In conclusion, young consumers in Estonia demonstrate a strong favour towards intrinsic motivations such as environmental concern, self-esteem and visual aspects. Environmental concern in young people indicates growing awareness and possible commitment to sustainable practices. Moreover, there is an expectation from young people for businesses to be more transparent and provide insight into their sustainable practices. This would ensure loyalty and gaining trust among this demographic. Addressing intrinsic and environmental concern will be crucial to retain young consumers in Estonia.



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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Interview questions

1. How do you understand sustainable fashion? Describe in your words what it means.
2. How much importance do you place on sustainability when purchasing fashion?
3. Can you describe a recent sustainable fashion purchase you made? Can you remember what motivated you to buy it?
4. What factors usually do you consider before purchasing sustainable fashion?
5. Were there changes in your attitudes towards sustainable fashion over the past few years?
6. How do you get the information about if a fashion brand/clothing is sustainable?
7. What are some challenges you face when you try to purchase sustainable fashion?
8. Do you feel that wearing sustainable fashion has a positive impact on your self-esteem or well-being?
9. Have you ever bought sustainable fashion because of personal interests or hobbies?
10. How can people be motivated to buy sustainable fashion?
11. Do you feel a sense of personal responsibility to support sustainable fashion?
12. What can be the key benefits to wearing sustainable fashion?
13. Have you ever been influenced to purchase sustainable fashion because of a marketing campaign?
14. Have you purchased sustainable fashion because of sales and discounts or because it was promoted by an influencer/celebrity?
15. Have you ever felt pressure from society to buy sustainable fashion? If yes, did it affect your motivation?
16. What role companies and brands play in promotion of sustainable fashion to consumers?
17. Do you look at the labels before buying clothing? What information do you look for?
18. How do you see the future of sustainable fashion? What changes would you like to see in this industry?
19. What steps can companies take to increase consumer interest for sustainable clothing?

## **Appendix 2. Interview Transcriptions**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ObpAZDudp5JkEBNIMmfx\\_G8CXcXUCzc9C4q8w1xZQ-8/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ObpAZDudp5JkEBNIMmfx_G8CXcXUCzc9C4q8w1xZQ-8/edit?usp=sharing)

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