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Dissertation on

**Sustainability versus Fast Fashion:
Do Fashion brands utilise social media to promote
Sustainability?**

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ABSTRACT

The current research examines sustainability and fast fashion centring on how fast fashion brands such as Zara, H&M, and GAP embrace social media to promote sustainability. The study implements both primary and secondary data to answer the research questions on whether fast fashion enterprises engage in sustainability. Besides, the study expounds on the types of social media that fast fashion brands use to promote sustainability. Lastly, this paper answers how fast fashion enterprises use social media. The results from the study indicate fast fashion companies such as Zara, GAP, and H&M practice sustainability by availing of environmentally friendly products and following guidelines of sustainability. Furthermore, the fast fashion brands such as Zara, H&M, and GAP use YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok to promote sustainability by posting videos, tags, images, and posts for customers to view their sustainability activities and products before making decisions based on sustainability information.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Nowadays organisations focus more on the reduction of costs, increasing profits and competition rather than ensuring sustainability (Osterwalder et al., 2010). That is one direction that has been affecting the environment negatively over the years, which must be turned around.

For instance, the fast fashion sector is the second leading contributor to pollution of the environment after the oil industry. Pierson (2021) indicates that the fast fashion sector goes beyond pollution of the environment to failing in ensuring social responsibility by exploiting employees leading to their deplorable living conditions. Such harsh lives are noted in Bangladesh whereby the fast fashion sector pays women only \$ 96 per month less than what can sustain them to live decent lives. Instead, the sector should engage in activities that reduce environmental pollution and improve the living standards of its workers. Such behaviours enhance the preservation of the environment, conservation of resources, and increasing investments of the current generation to better conditions that would help the next generation meet their needs.

The term “sustainable development” can be explained as progressive development that serves the needs of the current generation without compromising the needs or possibilities of the generations that follow (Kang and Kim, 2016). Therefore, sustainability in the fashion industry relates to the capabilities of the fashion brands to source materials, design garments, and manufacture the end product, in a way which offers maximum benefits to the consumers along with a minimum impact on the environment (Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir, 2019). According to Quental et al. (2011), ensuring sustainability in the fast fashion industry involves limiting wastes, preventing environmental pollution, conservation of essential

resources, environmental protection, management of renewable sources of energy, and balancing the environment.

Social media plays an integral role when it comes to consumers' awareness about the fashion industries, such as current trends, activities, brands, and the various measures that support sustainability (Kang and Kim, 2016). Kuhlman and Farrington (2010) affirm that companies operating within the fast fashion sector create awareness among consumers concerning ways they implement preserving resources, and coordinating environmental, social, and financial demands. Besides, the companies inform customers about environmental conservation, ensuring social responsibility, fostering ethical business engagements, and production of the environmentally friendly garment using renewable sources of energy (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010).

Lastly, the needs and preferences of consumers to use environmentally friendly garments and other fast fashion products transform the behaviours and actions of fast fashion companies to provide only products and services that suit the preferences of the consumers. First, the companies use social media to create awareness of the sustainable activities they do among the customers. According to Reiter and Kozar (2016), contemporary fast fashion companies conform to the preferences of consumers on sustainability. In such cases, companies engage customers using social media and communicate their brand efforts regarding sustainability and increase the consciousness of consumers concerning the brand image. Besides, social media helps fast fashion companies to monitor and offer quick feedback from customers concerning environmentally friendly products resonating with the desires of the customers (Reilly and Hynan, 2014, p.747). Moreover, fast fashion companies use social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook to show consumers how they engage in environmentally friendly designs, packaging, and other sustainable activities (Zhao et al., 2022).

Problem Statement

The fashion enterprises within the sector engage in the source of raw materials, manufacturing process, designing garments, marketing, and the consumption of the products by the consumers while monitoring adverse impacts on the environment (Fletcher, 2010).

Social media enhances the interaction of fashion businesses and consumers making the social media platforms the best channels to access trends and become aware of the environmental aspects of the fashion industry and how the different fashion enterprises enhance sustainability (Han et al., 2017).

The fashion industry continues to develop in contemporary society. Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir (2019) noted that the growth of the fashion industry is associated with unhealthy impacts on the surrounding environment. The fashion sector provides both slow and fast fashion based on their sustainability aspect in the business environment (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). Slow fashion forms the holistic fashion that considers all aspects of the product life cycle without viewing products as disposable (Fletcher, 2010). Contrastingly, fast fashion engages in the rapid design, production, and marketing of high volumes of garments. In such cases, the fast fashion companies leverage low-quality materials, and replication to provide cheap styles to the consumer (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). Therefore, the companies exhibit intense pressure to reduce the cost of production and speed the production time leading to neglect of environmental conservation initiatives by engaging in activities that involve exploitation of employees, waste energy, usage of toxic chemicals, and other forms of environmental pollution (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010).

The demand for sustainability continues to rise in both fast and slow fashion whereby more consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable garments or products (McNeill & Moore,

2015). Therefore, it is important to examine how the fast fashion sector utilises social media to inform consumers how they enhance sustainability to assure their commitment to the preservation of the environment.

Significance of the topic

The fast fashion industry always has a negative reputation concerning sustainability (Brewer, 2019). Restricted information exists that associates social media and fast fashion regarding their sustainable practices. Therefore, the study adds more information to the body of literature on how fast fashion uses social media to advertise its sustainable activities. The research will make use of information obtained on the tactics utilised by large and strong organisations, as well as client feedback. As a result, smaller fashion enterprises may be able to access and implement this work inside their operations.

Purpose of the Research

The research purpose is to investigate the relationship between sustainability and fast fashion focusing on whether fast fashion brands like ZARA, GAP, and H&M utilise social media to promote sustainability.

Aim of the Study

The study meets the purpose by aiming at examining sustainability and fast fashion, narrowing down how the fast fashion brands use social media to promote sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine whether fast fashion brands promote sustainability or not
2. If yes then, to explore whether fast fashion brands use social media to engage sustainability
3. To investigate how fast fashion brands use social media

Research Questions

1. Do fast fashion enterprises provide sustainability?
2. What types of social media do fast fashion promote sustainability?
3. How does fast fashion use social media?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review enables a researcher to expound and analyse the various studies concerning sustainability in the fast fashion sector. A comprehension of sustainability arises from the point of view of etymology, and the environment.

The literature review, therefore, will address the theory of planned behaviour, speech act theory, the business triangle model within the SCP cycle, the social media and fast fashion, and the link between social media and sustainability in the fast fashion sector.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour

The concept helps in understanding and predicting the behaviours, positing that such behaviours are determined by the intentions under given situations. Factors such as attitude, behaviour, behaviour control, and the subjective norm determine the behavioural intentions. In such cases, the intentions capture the motivational factors influencing the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, they are indicators of how people are developing a strong intention to engage in a given behaviour.

The adoption of the theory of planned behaviour can help in predicting and exploring options of behaviours regarding the use of social media in creating awareness of sustainability in the fast fashion sector including pollution, conservation of the environment, use of renewable sources of energy, and recycling among others (Ajzen, 1991). The attitude aspect is the extent to which an individual values good behaviour or bad behaviour leading to a negative outcome of the behaviour on sustainability.

The Speech Act Theory

Enterprises embrace Speech Act Theory (SAT) to provide meaningful communication using words. Searle *et al.* (1980) note that the SAT assumes that a speaker shows the meaning and the intentions within the words and sentences used in communication. The speeches give the audience the chance to gain understanding of a subject and the speaker's purpose. The context of the speech reveals the motivation and meaning of the words (Searle *et al.*, 1980). Thus, SAT expounds on how the sentences and words provide meaning to what people should achieve.

The SAT provides five categories of speeches that include directive, expressive, commissive, assertive, and declarative. Fast fashionists use an expressive group of speech from the concept to provide phrases that reveal the desire for an item, appreciation, and opinions of the consumers. Moreover, fashionists use words of comfort, and mannerism, to describe items and appreciate the consumers to enhance their persuasion to buy products. Social media helps to convey information at ease to the consumers based on the framework indicated below. (Villarroel Ordenes *et al.*, 2019)



Figure 1. Source: Developed from scratch (Designed by Vladislava Markova, 2022)

The application of the SAT is imperative because it links the intention of fast fashion enterprises towards sustainability and their actions. Thus, the speech act theory offers the best way to promote sustainability among enterprises and consumers. Moreover, the act theory works alongside the colour theory when words are used alongside the visual information such as images in an advertisement posted using social media platforms to create awareness of sustainability (Villarroel Ordenes *et al.*, 2019). The combination of different aspects of colours in images/videos used for advertisement relay information associated with brands that foster sustainability.

Application of Business Model Triangle within the SCP Cycle Model

Enterprises for a long time have been working on speed to offer quality products within the shortest time possible for customers. Businesses are concerned about what to offer to customers, how to create value proportion, the target customers, and how to create revenue. Nevertheless, issues have been arising concerning sustainability because the businesses do more harm to the environment while striving to answer the questions indicated above. The enterprises now address issues of sustainability and incorporate such activities within their operations using the Sustainable Production and Consumption Cycle (SCP) model surrounding a business model triangle (Bianchi and Birtwistle, 2012). Companies then communicate their actions to consumers using social media concerning sustainability and educating the customers on sustainability measures (Bianchi and Birtwistle, 2012).

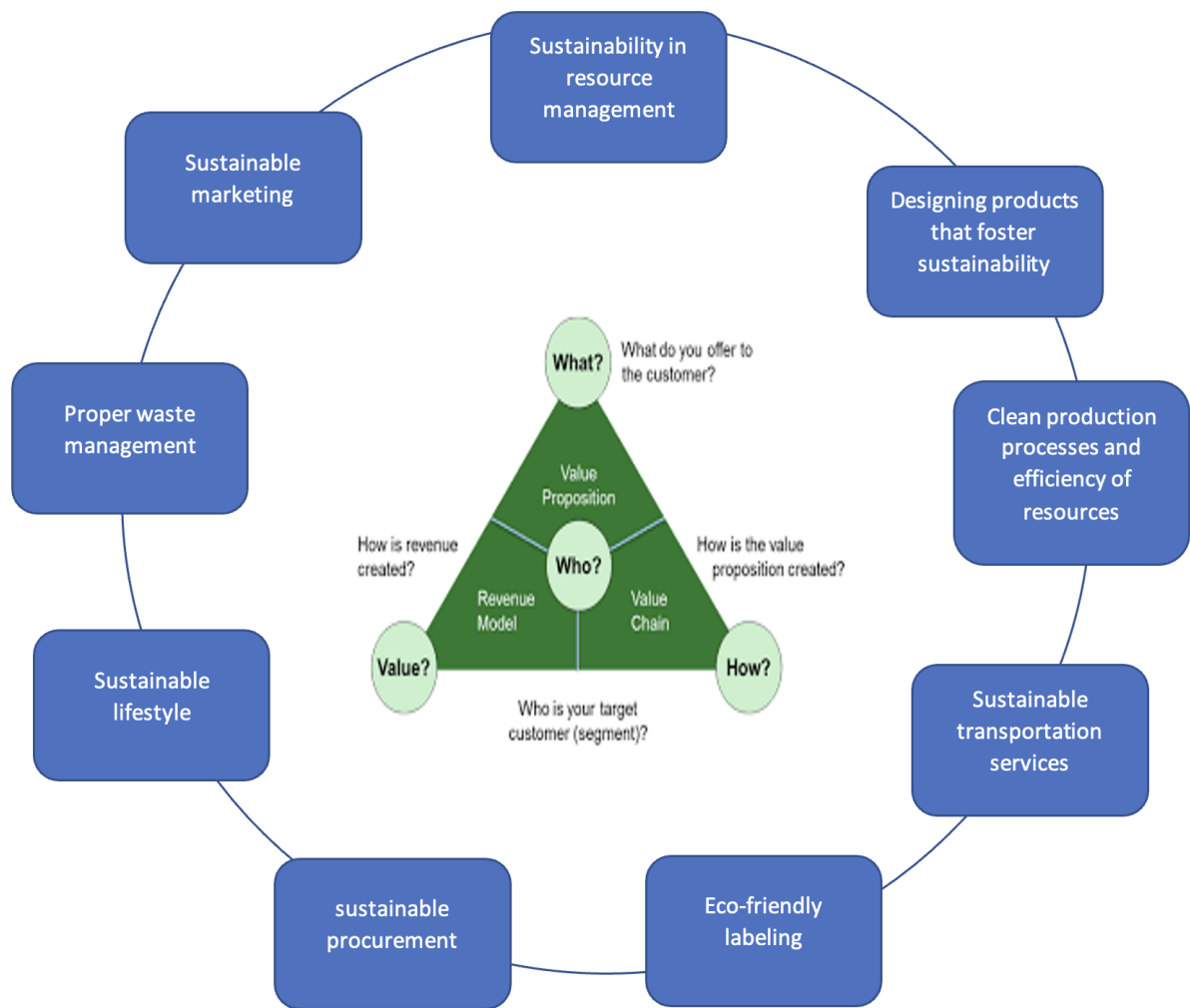


Figure 2: Combined Business Model Triangle and SCP Cycle. Adopted from St. Gallen Business Model (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2019).

Fast fashion enterprises embrace sustainability within the customer interface where they research into ways of meeting the needs of customers, their values, propositions, and perspectives. In such cases, the companies examine products they avail to customers, methods of creating value, the target customers, and ways to develop more revenues (Mazzarol and Benjamin, 2011). Accordingly, companies use the life cycle model to offer the cradle-to-cradle concept based on ensuring a safe environment to link with consumers by creating awareness of sustainability via social media. In such cases, the fast-fashion

enterprises follow a sustainable consumption and production cycle (SCP) focusing on the nine principles within a circular concept concerning sustainability (Leal Filho *et al.*, 2015).

Fast Fashion and Social Media

Fast Fashion

Ghemawat *et al.* (2003) describe fast fashion as the mass production of clothes that are on-trend and making sure that such attire is available in the store within the shortest time possible to meet the demands of consumers. Contrarily, Pierson (2021) perceives fast fashion as a term that elaborates on the expeditious production of clothing cheaply to meet the current fashion trends leading to high-level ramifications on the environment and exploiting the workers in the garment sector across the world.

Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) note that fast fashion became popular in the 1990s when the fashion brands commenced seeking better ways of enhancing their profits by establishing their cheap attires in supermarkets placing the high street fashion brands under high pressure. Hence, brands developed solutions for establishing designs indicating catwalk trends which they sent to production within the shortest time possible for speedy production (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2010). Consequently, customers could buy the trendy attires immediately leading to a pop-up of fast fashion.

Social Media

According to Carr and Hayes (2015), social media is internet-based communication that enables people to generate online content, share information, discuss, and foster their engagements with each other. Corso and Robinson (2013) states that, the use of social media

to raise awareness about fast fashion environmental policies is possible. First and foremost, social media is a participatory platform that invites people to provide input and suggestions on pressing environmental concerns as they arise.

The link between Fast Fashion and Social Media

Social media is influential for fast fashion enterprises, whereby the enterprises use social media to reach the prospects or customers who crave the trendy lifestyle they view on digital content (Michaela, 2015). The fast-fashion enterprises use social media to sell their fast-fashion products that inspire and entertain customers to purchase the products. Fast fashion retailers embrace social media to their advantage when they fuse shopping with social media (Michaela, 2015). Accordingly, the retail enterprises post videos, stories, and links to shop content that enable users to transition from browsing, identifying, and purchasing with ease. Thus, fast fashion enterprises use social media to create and raise awareness concerning fast fashion trends because it is a participatory platform that invites many people to give their opinions, suggestions, and comments on fast fashion trends and environmental concerns (Corso and Robinson, 2013).

A comprehension of the link between social media and fast fashion is based on the benefits that social media accords to fast fashion. Ghemawat *et al.* (2003) indicate that social media cultivates brand image besides raising awareness because it connects brands with customers. Fast fashion enterprises develop digital ads and many sponsored posts that enhance the visibility of brands to the target customers on social media (Byun and Sternquist, 2011). Thus, the brand engages with the customers through the content. Similarly, social media fosters high connectivity with the customers of fast fashion brands.

Separately, social media enhances traffic by connecting fast fashion brands to the targeted customers improving their connectivity to the stores. Prospects and new customers investigate fast fashion trends online leading to satisfaction and transparency for both customers and the enterprises (Byun and Sternquist, 2011). The high traffic also arises because of the instant and direct communication process because customers get immediate responses concerning any issues during the communication process (Byun and Sternquist, 2011).

Social Media and Sustainability in the Fast Fashion Sector

Sustainability

Zhang and Chan (2020) define sustainability from the etymological viewpoint using the term sustain meaning continuity to a different level. On the other hand, Sarkis, and Zhu (2018) take the environmental point of view to define sustainability as the process of avoiding depletion of resources to ensure a balance that does not allow depletion or decrease in quality of life. Nevertheless, the present study defines sustainability from both the business and environmental perspective as the process of meeting the current needs without disturbing or compromising the capacity or ability of the future generation from meeting their needs (Brundtland, 1987). Thus, it entails the preservation of resources, conserving the environment, and coordinating environmental, financial, and social demands while finding solutions to concerns through ensuring social responsibility, and ethics in all business activities (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010).

Sustainability in the Fast Fashion Sector

The implementation of sustainability within the fast fashion sector entails the limitation of waste, conservation of the resources, prevention of pollution, and protection of the environment to ensure continuity, proper management of renewable resources, and ensuring environmental balance (Quental *et al.*, 2011, p.257).

According to Pierson (2021), the fast fashion industry is a major contributor to environmental pollution second to the oil sector. The author further notes that the sector exploits its workers leading to their poor lives. For example, the workers in the garment sector in Bangladesh alone, mainly women, make \$ 96 per month which is less than what should sustain their decent lives with the basic items by a third (Pierson, 2021).

A link between social media and sustainability in the fast fashion

The link brings both benefits and demerits. Pierson (2021) indicates that social media only has a role of expediting the connection between the customers and fast fashion products leading to the enhancement of a throw-away culture of harmful products to the environment and overconsumption without preservation of resources. The author notes that 10 percent of 2,000 customers engaged in throwing away items of garments once such an item is posted on a social media platform every three occasions (Pierson, 2021). Besides, the fast-fashion enterprises have not been transparent in fostering their ethical practices concerning environment and labour practices irrespective of the availability of social media to communicate such to the public. Instead, fast fashion enterprises only rely on social media for marketing where they target customers using personalised ads but do not share their contribution toward sustainability (Pierson, 2021).

Manna (2022) ascertain the importance of social media in educating consumers about fast fashion products. The author notes that customers prefer enterprises that follow environmental conservation, conduct labour exploitation, and ensure sustainability. The report shows that 50 percent of customers are willing to purchase products from fast fashion enterprises that only call out for greenwashing when they take positive action and change due to public action. The report further notes that H&M, is one of the top five retailers that value sustainability and have strong sustainable and ethical credentials portrayed in social media.

Lasty, Reiter, and Kozar (2016) indicate that the current fast fashion enterprises are driven by the interests of consumers towards sustainability. The various brands currently engage consumers via social media and communicate their efforts towards sustainability to enhance consciousness regarding the brand image. For example, Everlane monitors and responds to the feedback of consumers before making decisions on its products that resonate with the desires of the consumers (Reilly and Hynan, 2014, p.747). Besides, it offers environmentally friendly packaging, and designs, and engages in sustainable activities via its social media accounts (Zhao *et al.*, 2022).

Summary

The literature review offers links on how fashion brands use social media to promote sustainability within the fast fashion sector. Accordingly, the literature review section has expounded on the fast fashion sector, social media, and how the sector uses social media to

enhance sustainability. Accordingly, the review explores how enterprises use the CP cycle model to meet sustainability based on the nine principles while meeting the needs of both businesses and consumers within the business model triangle. Moreover, the literature review discusses the speech act theory and how it combines text information and visual information from the colour theory for communication through advertising and creating awareness of sustainability among consumers via social media platforms. Furthermore, the review links the usage of social media and the perception concerning sustainable products using the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The idea suggests that a person's intention to engage in a behaviour is investigated through cognitions altered by exposure to social media platforms that provide information on a certain action. For example, exposure to social media with information regarding buying sustainable apparel enhances the intention to buy such items (Villarroel *et al.*, 2019).

Gap in the literature

The literature review offers links on how fashion brands use social media to promote sustainability within the fast fashion sector. Most of the sources provide non-numerical information with not well-developed methodology such as a case study to single out a given fast fashion enterprise. Moreover, none of the studies explored in the literature review examine sustainability practices in Zara, H&M, and GAP which warrants the present study to fill the gap.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodology section discusses the methods that the researcher uses to collect data to answer the research questions and achieve research objectives. The present study applies the ONION model to give the order of approach to the study process commencing from the outer layer towards the inside or inner core (Saunders et al., 2007). Therefore, the researcher commences with the underpinning philosophy, paradigm, study approach, design, strategy, method, data collection, and analysis. According to Saunders et al. (2007), the use of the ONION framework gives the order of research operations from the outside position moving towards the inside using an onion-like layer model. Thus, the researcher must accomplish the outer layer before moving towards the inner layers as indicated in the diagram below.

ONION Framework

The ONION framework is a guideline for the research process that a researcher uses to collect data following a given procedure. According to Saunders *et al.* (2007), the ONION framework demonstrates the stages that a researcher uses to develop research detailing the processes. The application of the ONION framework begins from the outer layer towards the inner core. In such cases, the research addresses research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, research choice, and research time horizon (Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

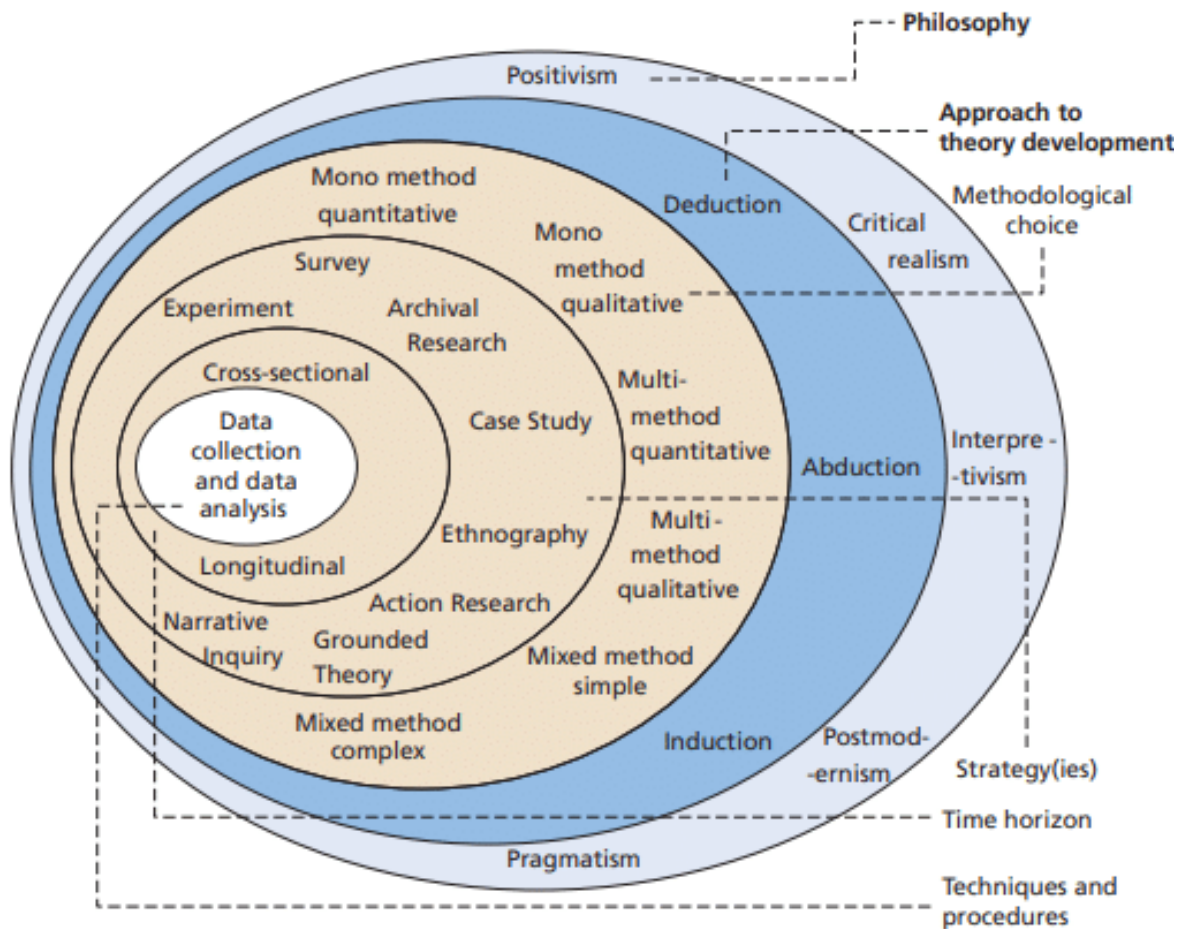


Figure 3: ONION Framework (Saunders et al., 2019, p.130).

Research Philosophy and Paradigm

According to Saunders et al. (2019) the term "research philosophy" describes a set of assumptions and attitudes towards the progress of knowledge. It represents a belief about the means by which an information or data regarding a given phenomenon should be collected, analysed, and presented. Therefore, the study focuses on a positivist philosophical approach that grants the positivism paradigm (Kaboub, 2008). Positivist philosophy embraces an

understanding of the social world to develop an abstract and a law that governs the operations of the social world (Saunders et al., 2007). Therefore, the researcher tests the laws against systematically collected data.

The perspective explores social reality focusing on the idea that a researcher can understand the behaviours of respondents through reasoning and observation. Thus, only the objective facts form the basis of science to give true knowledge based on the quantified observational results leading to generality or generalisation of the topic (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

The study is based on an objective and real-world interpretation of data that the researcher collects. Accordingly, the researcher is positioned to objectively interpret the topic by exploring the quantitative or scientific methods to collect and analyse data instead of exploring how people experience sustainability versus fast fashion (Jayaratne, 1993). In such cases, the researcher becomes impartial, and trustworthy, giving information and the results can be used for generalisation or replication in other contexts of study. Henceforth, the study embraces a positivist philosophical approach which asserts that methods applied in natural science are true (Saunders et al., 2019).

Research Approach

As stated by Saunders et al. (2019) there are three basic methods for developing theories as part of a given research: deductive, inductive, and abductive. A general rule is established via inductive reasoning, a method of theory construction that begins with a single observation. The deductive research approach is whereby a researcher uses scientific investigation to understand theories, and what other people have done.

The study uses a deductive approach because the researcher commences with an assumption that fast fashion companies do not promote their sustainability endeavours using social media to create awareness among customers. Therefore, the researcher develops a problem statement and formulates questions and objectives based on the assumption highlighted in the purpose of the study. Accordingly, the researcher collects and analyses data to achieve the objectives of the study.

Quantitative Methodological choice

There are typically two major research fields that are usually recognised in the literature: quantitative research method and qualitative research method (Adams, John et al., 2014). Qualitative research uses non-quantitative data collection and analysis techniques which aim at exploring social relationships and describe the reality as experienced by the respondents (Adams, John et al., 2014). Quantitative research method, applied in the present study, is the strategies, assumptions, and techniques that a researcher uses to study the economic, social, and psychological processes by exploring the existing numerical patterns or data (Ponto, 2015). The researcher uses quantitative survey. For this purpose, the researcher uses closed-ended questions to give numerical data from the respondents to develop knowledge and understanding concerning the social world (Saunders, 2019).

Research strategy

According to Saunders and Thornhill (2007), the research strategy represents the overall plan of how the researcher is considering answering the main questions of a given research. Research strategies offer the direction of the study including all the processes the researcher follows to collect data (Ponto, 2015). The strategy also helps to generalise large data from a large sample size (Ponto, 2015). In this study the researcher will be using a survey in order to collect data.

Survey

A survey is a process of questioning or examining a given sample of people or subjects to get data concerning their knowledge, behaviour, or opinion on a topic (Ponto, 2015). A survey helps researchers to get data that guide the research samples, topics, or questions.

The objectives, and the researcher questions presented in the present study warrant the usage of the survey as the best research strategy. In such cases, the researcher uses scientific methods to select the participants to minimise biases and give the respondents equal chances to be included in the study process (Ponto, 2015).

Time Horizon

A time horizon is the fixed point or planning horizon of time that the research in the future evaluates at the end of a study process. Therefore, it gives the timeframe of a study process (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, for the primary data the researcher uses a cross-

sectional study time horizon because of the limited time allocated for the study process (Levin, 2006). In accordance with secondary data, the researcher uses a longitudinal method as its time horizon because the research looks into the brands for a specific period of time which is between 2018-2021.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection is the procedure that the researcher uses to collect and measure data using variables to test the assumptions, answer a research question or evaluate results (Howell, et al., 2020).

The researcher uses quantitative data analysis techniques in the data analysis process because the collected data are quantitative and numerical. The researcher uses graphs and tables to provide a summary of the results of the study. Besides, the study provides cross-tabulations to explore datasets showing the relationships between Zara, GAP, and H&M based on their usage of social media to create awareness of sustainability among customers.

Data Collection of Primary Data

Primary data is information gathered by a researcher from first-hand sources, such as humans (Saunders et al., 2019). The researcher uses a structured survey (made on Google forms and distributed online) with closed-ended questions to collect data. The researcher gathers data by sending the 5-minute survey online via emails or virtually to the selected respondents to answer the questions upon consenting to engage in the study process. The questionnaire contains ten multiple-choice closed-ended questions with no option for

additional information or opinion that the participant adds to the questions. The researcher allocated two weeks for the collection of 50 respondents.

Data Collection of Secondary Data

Secondary data analysis is defined as a re-analysis of previously obtained and analysed data (Punch, 2005). Furthermore, Bryman (2004) defines secondary data analysis as the interpretation of data by researchers who were not involved when the data was collected. Even though secondary research might save time and expense to the researcher, it requires that the researcher takes extra effort to ensure that the data is reliable and legitimate (Bryman, 2004).

The research considered various factors such as context, sampling, and data to arrive at the best criterion to select companies that will provide information concerning the use of social media in achieving awareness of sustainability activities which companies direct towards the consumers (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Accordingly, the context entails a provision of enough information concerning the cases including descriptive information concerning the topic. Secondly, the researcher embraced purposive sampling as a technique relevant for the study focusing on the companies within the fast fashion sector that are competitive, available globally, and convenient. Moreover, the choice of three companies, namely Zara, GAP, and H&M provides comprehensive data to ensure representation of the population in terms of companies within the fast fashion sector. Equally, the researcher considered data as a factor in the selection of the companies (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Accordingly, the researcher will obtain information from social media (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok platforms), collected for a particular period between 2018 - 2021, regarding the 3

companies, in order to examine how they use social media in enhancing sustainability among the consumers.

Sampling Methods

Sample Frame and Size

The sample frame is the unit that the researcher draws samples from a target population. The sample frame gives the list of respondents from which the researcher draws samples or participants (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Divakar, 2021).

The researcher in the present study draws a sample size from the London population between the ages of 16 – 55. Accordingly, the researcher draws a sample size from the entire population of London which equals 50 participants. The study uses respondents who use social media to view activities and products from Zara, GAP, and H&M.

Probability Sampling technique

The probability sampling technique is the selection of respondents or sample size from a given population using a randomisation process giving subjects equal chances (Taherdoost, 2016). The study uses the results for generalisation to a larger population. Accordingly, the researcher uses the scientific method to select samples included in the study process. (Howell, et al., 2020).

The study process takes place in London at Zara, GAP, and H&M. Therefore, the researcher uses stratified sampling to select participants using social media to view the sustainability activities of the companies (Saunders et al., 2019).

The advantages of implementing the probability sampling technique include the creation of layers that are representative of the population (Howell, et al., 2020). Furthermore, the technique is cost-effective and does not consume a lot of time. Moreover, there is less judgement on the part of the researcher leading to the suppression of subjective biases. Nevertheless, the disadvantages include a high chance of selecting a specific class of a given sample (Howell, et al., 2020). Besides, the procedure is monotonous and redundant due to the repetitive assigning of respondents.

Summary

The study embraces both survey and research of the primary and secondary sources on the topic to fulfil the objectives of the research. The quantitative data analysis and the systematic review explore more about fast fashion enterprises such as Zara, GAP, and H&M through graphical representation of data, summarising the information on their sustainability activities.

Research Ethics

Research ethics is the process of offering guidelines and norms which are aimed at the responsible conduction of a given research. Furthermore, research ethics educates, navigates, and monitors the researchers who are conducting a given research, in order to ensure adequate ethical standards and approaches (Kim, 2011).

The study will conform to regulations and ethics for both primary and secondary procedures in the collection of data. Therefore, the researcher will obtain permission from the institutions governing research processes, especially, the use of human subjects based on IRB

(Institutional Review Board) standards. Besides, the researcher will consider the interests and needs of the human subjects concerning anonymity, privacy, safety, and access to information (Kim, 2011). Moreover, the research will seek permission from the participants to ensure that they voluntarily consent to engage in the study.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis of Secondary Data

Quantitative descriptive analysis is a type of cognitive sensory properties that uses descriptive panels to analyse the sensory features of a product. A type of data analysis that supports in defining, showing, or summarising data points in a constructive manner, such as patterns that may develop and fulfil every requirement of the data. (Stone et al., 1974, cited by Kemp and Hollowood, 2018)

Zara

Zara embraces sustainability using different social media platforms to communicate to its customers and create awareness of the sustainable products. The company shares all its production processes of the garments with the customers, including manufacturing procedures to avail high-quality clothes (Chan, 2017). The reason for including Zara Inc in the present study is that it is one of the prominent fast fashion enterprises known globally. Hence, it will be resourceful in obtaining the required data for the study. Besides, the company mostly uses both Instagram and YouTube to avail images and videos regarding its

products and sustainability strategies to the customers at 26 percent between the year 2018 and 2021.

Separately, Zara Inc is essential for the study because it embraces the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) guidelines and continues to publish its processes revealing its commitment to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent from 2005 which is fulfilled in the year 2020. Other activities the company engages in to ensure sustainability include the use of automatic sensors that give out light at 80 percent in case of energy wastage (Allam *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, Zara Inc is important for the study because it incorporates different activities concerning sustainability from sourcing raw materials, designing the products, manufacturing, and in all its supply chains to ensure reduced water consumption, control pollution, and reduce consumption of energy.

H&M

H&M embraces sustainability measures in all its operational activities incorporating such measures in the business models to produce eco-friendly garments (Dyrnes *et al.*, 2021). Accordingly, the inclusion of H&M Inc in the study is because it currently provides 97 percent of videos in its brand revealing how it implements sustainability programs to consumers indicating that it uses social media to educate and create awareness of sustainability among consumers. The company shares all the activities in its supply chain on Instagram and YouTube concerning how it embraces measures against pollution, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in transportation, production, and shipping (Dyrnes *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, it emphasises measures to reduce energy wastage by controlling its production processes (Dyrnes *et al.*, 2021).

GAP

According to Velasquez (2021), GAP embraces sustainability by managing its chemicals and ensuring water stewardship. The relevance of using GAP in the study is because GAP implements Mill Sustainability Programs through the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC), and Social & Labour Convergence Program (SLCP). Therefore, it will be imperative to note in the study the reason the company only embraces YouTube in sharing its sustainability activities to consumers irrespective of exceeding its 2020 sustainability goal of saving over 10 billion litres of water (Velasquez, 2021).

Percentage average videos used on Social Media Platforms by Zara, H&M, and GAP between 2018 and 2021

The results indicate that H&M has been developing videos on sustainability activities for customers on average of 8 videos for 4 years accounting for 75% of the total videos in the sample which shows that they are most concerned about sustainability. Secondly Zara has been developing videos on average of 2 videos accounting for 20% of the total average videos in the sample. GAP has been making videos on average of 0.583 accounting for only 5 percent of the sample.

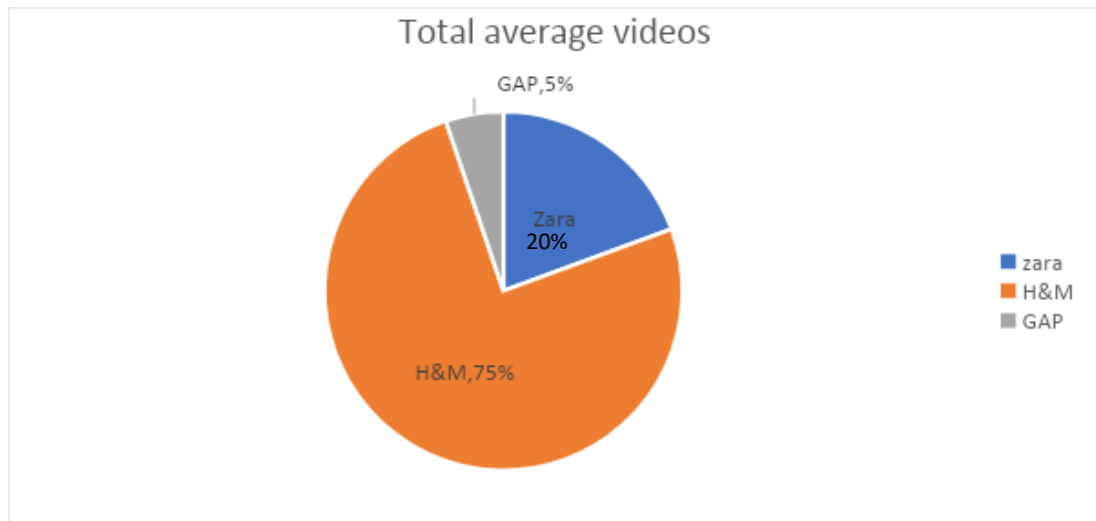


Figure 4: Percentage of the average number of videos made by Zara, H&M, and GAP on social media platforms on sustainability between 2018 and 2021

Percentage average duration of the videos

The results from the study reveal the average duration (seconds) for videos produced by fast fashion brands such as Zara, H&M, and GAP to create awareness of sustainability to customers on various media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and TikTok.

H&M leads with the average duration of 51.08 seconds or 52 percent followed by Zara with 30 seconds or 31 percent, then GAP with 16.97 seconds or 17 percent.

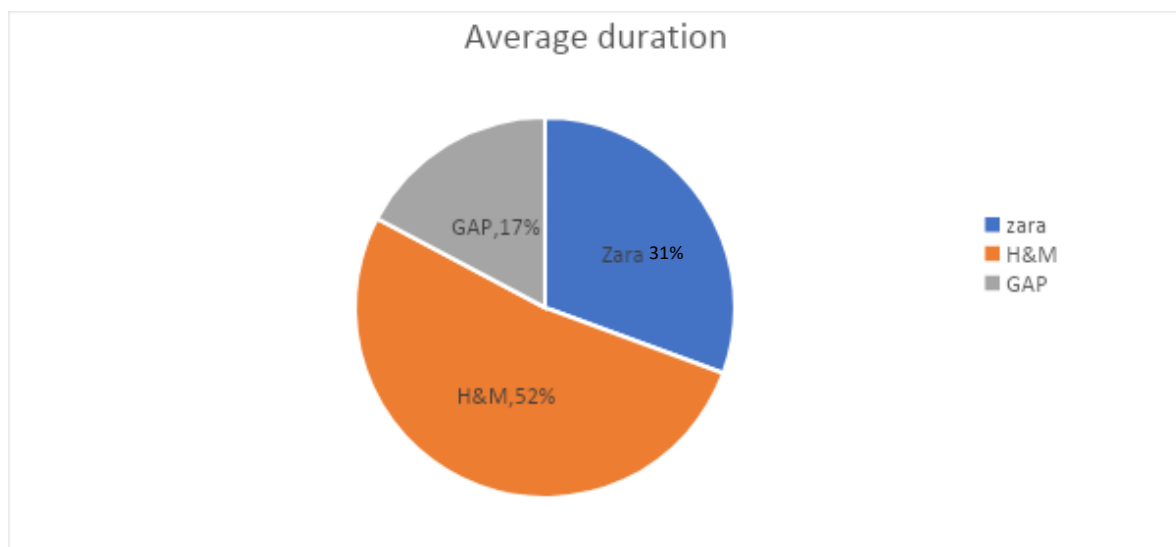


Figure 5: Percentage average duration (seconds) of videos developed by Zara, H&M, and GAP between 2018 and 2021

Percentage average view of videos by customers

Customers view videos of brands and sustainability activities created by fast fashion brands. Accordingly, about 50,845 customers, or 86 percent on average view videos containing brands and sustainability activities of H&M. In the third quarter of 2020 H&M has recorded a total of EUR 2 million in the funding of sustainable products (Annual report H&M, 2021). 8022 customers view the contents of Zara on average, or 14 percent in the sample. Only 197.67 customers, or zero percent on average view videos from GAP fast fashion company these values imply concern of low sustainability.

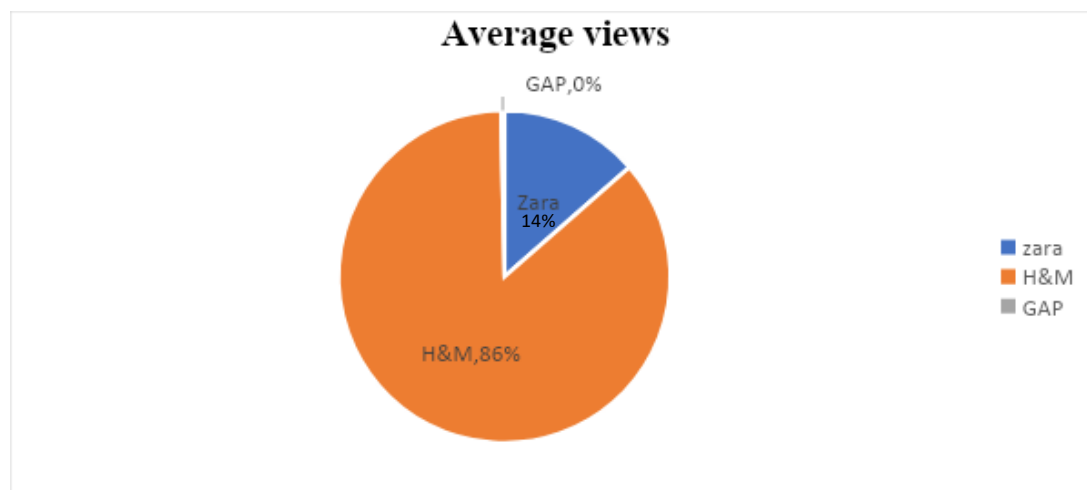


Figure 6: Percentage of average view of videos of brands and sustainability activities of Zara, H&M, and GAP on social media platforms by customers

Number of views of videos from 2018 to 2021

The results show that H&M leads on the average video views of brands with 50,845 average views (85%) of the sample which implies that the company lies heavy on online platforms, followed by Zara company at 8,022 views (25%) and GAP company with 197.67 views (5%) between 2018 and 2021.

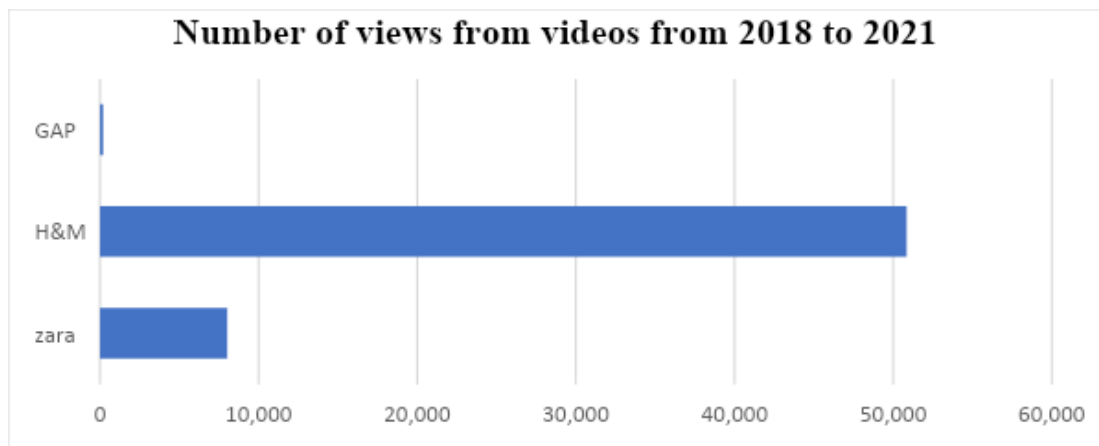


Figure 7: Number of views from videos by Zara, H&M, and GAP from 2018 to 2021.

Brand video views on Instagram

The results from the study reveal that fast fashion brands such as Zara, and H&M use Instagram to post videos of their brands revealing sustainability activities to consumers from the year 2018 to 2021. The trend at which customers have been viewing videos of Zara using Instagram videos has been on the decline over the years with the highest average views recorded in 2018 at 29,670 which has reduced by 15,120 to record 14,550 in the year 2021. The same declining trend is noted in H&M's usage of Instagram to post videos of sustainability to customers. The results show that H&M recorded 16,490 average video views in 2021 which is a reduction of 9,695 from 26,185 recorded in the year 2018. Separately, GAP has not been using Instagram as a social media platform to record its videos from the year 2018 to 2021.

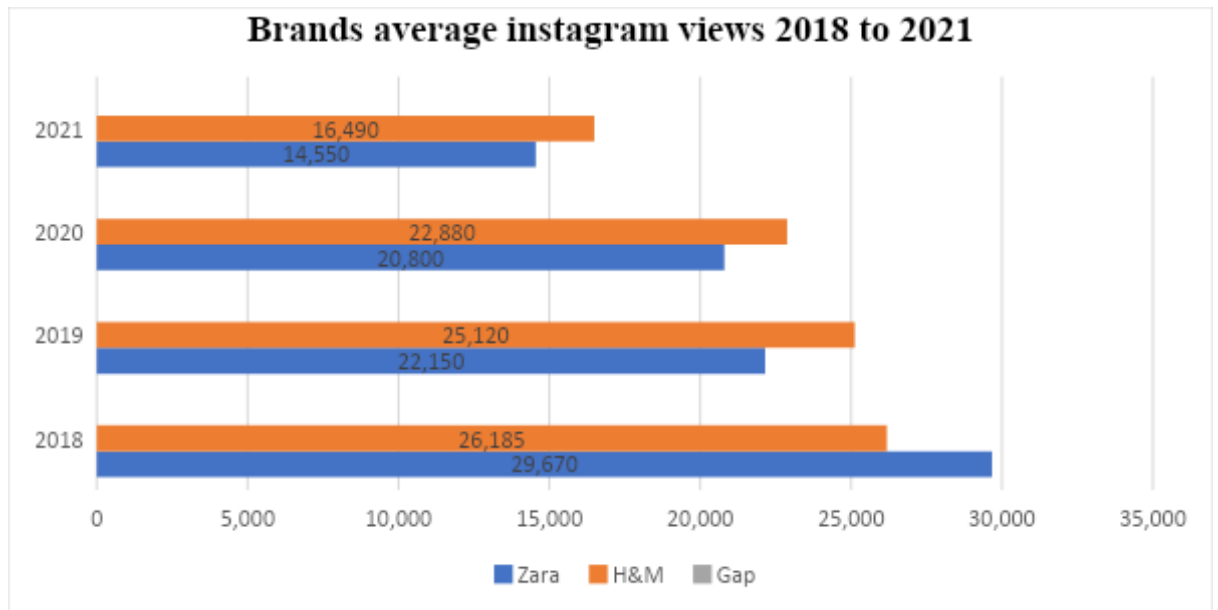


Figure 8: Number of video views (brands produced) on Instagram by Zara, H&M, and GAP from 2018 to 2021.

Video on YouTube

The results from the study indicate that customers are more likely to view videos of sustainability activities from Zara and H&M on YouTube platforms between 2018 and 2021. Accordingly, the trend of consumers viewing YouTube videos of Zara products and sustainability activities has been on the decline from 8,180 videos in 2018 followed by 206 views in 2019 then recorded a little increase of 710 in 2020 while not producing any videos in 2021. On the other hand, H&M recorded 409,844 views of videos on YouTube in 2018 which is the outlier of the study's results. In 2019, 34,566 views were recorded, 60,224 in 2020, and 14,830 in 2021. However, there were no recorded videos from GAP on YouTube.

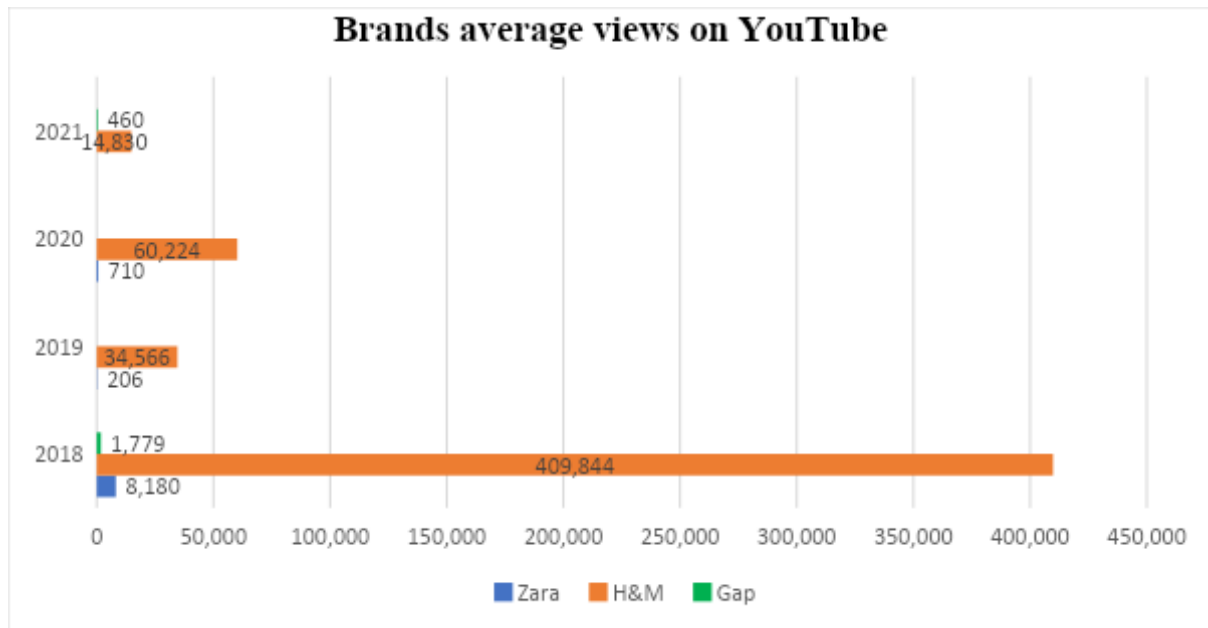


Figure 9: Number of video views) on YouTube by Zara, H&M, and GAP from 2018 to 2021.

Video views recorded on TikTok

The results indicate that TikTok is the least social media platform used by customers to view videos on brands and sustainability activities from Zara, H&M, and GAP. The results show zero records of Zara and H&M company videos between 2018 and 2021 while only 133 average views of videos were recorded in 2021 alone.

TikTok				
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Zara	0	0	0	0
H&M	0	0	0	0
GAP	0	0	0	133

Figure 10: Video views recorded on TikTok between 2018 – 2021

Correlation of the study results

The study presumes that more customers view video content of fast fashion brands on sustainability when the videos have longer durations (in seconds) content. The results from the sample reveal the opposite based on the values indicated in the table summary below. Accordingly, the shorter the duration of the videos, the more the customers view the video contents, and more customers view video content of fast fashion brands on sustainability when the videos have longer durational (in seconds) content.

Table of correlation on video duration and video views 2018-2021

	<i>No of videos</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Views</i>
Videos	1		
Duration	0.066659467	1	
Views	-0.04123427	-0.02188	1

Figure 11: Video durations and video views correlation

Influencers

Finally, H&M is capturing the attention of clients who are more interested in sustainable fashion by using Influencer Marketing.

H&M's collaboration with actress Maisie Williams is one example of such activities. The Game of Thrones actress has been collaborating with the fashion giant to encourage the usage of 100% recycled sourced materials in the manufacturing of textile clothes (Eco-Stylist, 2022).

Descriptive analysis of Primary Data

The researcher presents the results using descriptive statistics expounding on the summary of demographic information of the respondents in the survey. The researcher recruited 47 respondents to participate in the study and none absconded or left during the process of the survey.

Gender of Respondents

The gender of the 47 respondents that the researcher has recruited in the study shows 72.3 percent female, and 25.5 percent male while the rest prefer not to indicate their gender. Therefore, most of the respondents are females.

What is your gender?
47 responses

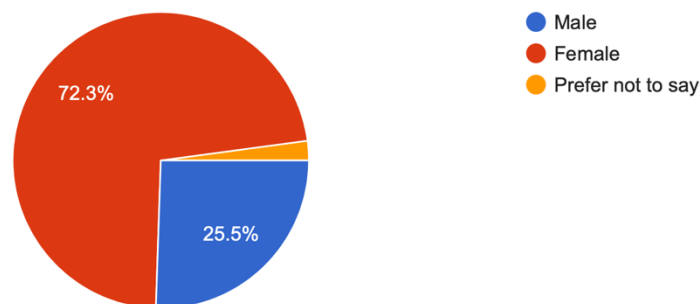


Figure 12: Percentage of the gender of the respondents

Age Group of the Respondents

The age group of the respondents recruited in the present study includes 18-24 years accounting for 23.4 percent, 25-34 years accounting for 23.4 percent, 35-44 years accounting for 19.1 percent, 45-54 years accounting for 23.4 percent, and respondents of 55 and above

years accounting for 10.6 percent. Accordingly, the age group between 35-44 and 55 and above are less engaged with the survey.

What is your age?

47 responses

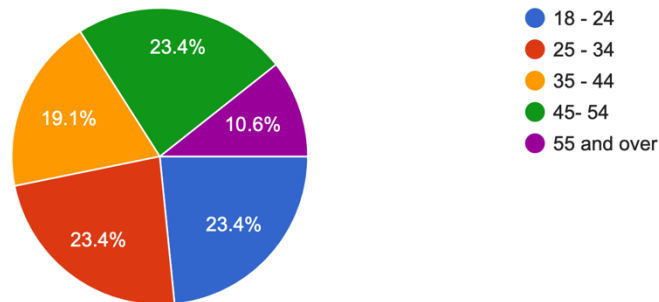


Figure 13: Percentage of age categories of respondents

Current Occupation of the Respondents

The results regarding the current occupation of the respondents indicate that students are 27.7 percent, respondents employed full-time are 25.5 percent, and respondents who are self-employed account for 21.30 percent. Besides, business owners and respondents employed part-time account for 12.8 percent respectively while others account for 10.6 percent. Therefore, most participants are students and employed on a full-time basis.

How would you describe your current occupation?

47 responses

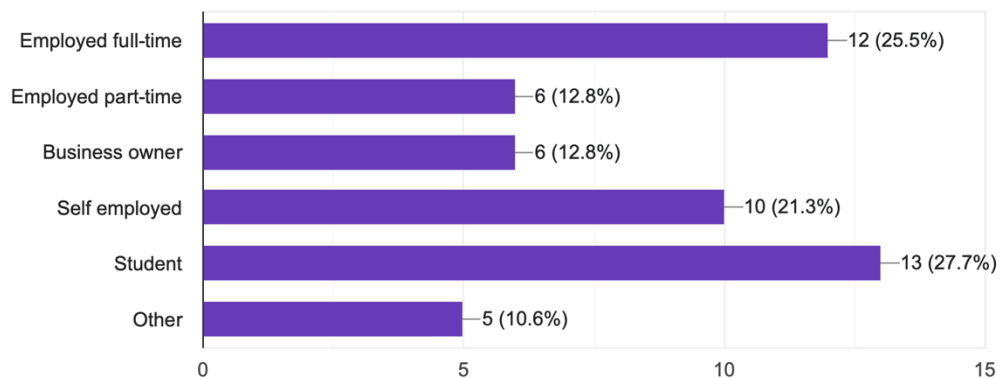


Figure 14: Graph showing occupational percentages of the respondents

Level of Education of the Respondents

The respondents that the researcher has recruited in the study have varied levels of education. The results reveal that respondents who have attained high school education account for 48.9 percent. The respondents who have attained a bachelor's education account for 19.10 percent, respondents with a master's degree are 23.40 percent while respondents who indicated others account for 8.5 percent. Hence, most participants are in high school followed by those undertaking master's degrees.

What is your highest education level?

47 responses

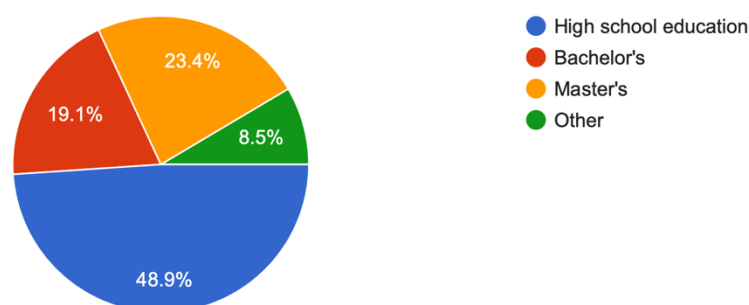


Figure 15: Percentage of the level of education of the respondents

Annual Income of the Respondents

The results reveal that only 45 respondents indicated their level of annual income with the majority falling in the category of \$10,000-\$19,999 followed closely by respondents paid in the group of under \$10,000 at 22.20 percent. The respondents who earn \$20,000-\$29,999 account for 20 percent while the respondents earning \$50,000-\$59,999 account for 15.6 percent. Moreover, respondents earning \$30,000-\$39,999 accounted for 13.30 percent while the rest did not indicate their levels of annual income. Hence, the annual income of the respondents is mostly in 10,000 – 19,000 annually.

What is your annual income?
45 responses

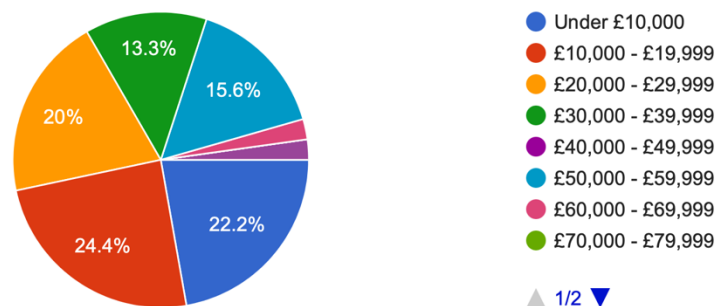


Figure 16: Graph showing the percentage annual income of the respondents

Fast Fashion Brand that consumers buy their products from

The respondents from the study indicate that they purchase their products from different fast fashion brands. Accordingly, the results show that 46 respondents answered the question with 15.2 percent buying from Zara, 19.6 percent buying from H&M, 23.9 percent

purchasing from Zara and H&M, and 19.6 percent purchasing from all the brands while the rest did indicate their preferences. Hence, Zara and H&M are the most popular brands.

Which fast fashion brands do you typically buy from?

46 responses

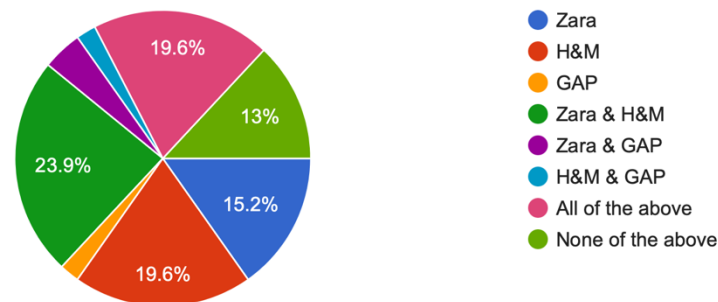


Figure 17: Graph showing the percentage of a brand that consumers buy their fast fashion products

Whether Fast Fashion Brands promote Sustainability

The study results regarding a statement on sustainability and fashion brands reveal that 34 percent of respondents remain neutral, 23.4 percent disagree, 21.3 percent agree while 10.6 percent indicate strongly agree and strongly disagree. Based on the neutral results of 34 percent, most of the participants are not familiar with the promotions on sustainability.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Fast fashion brands promote sustainability"

47 responses

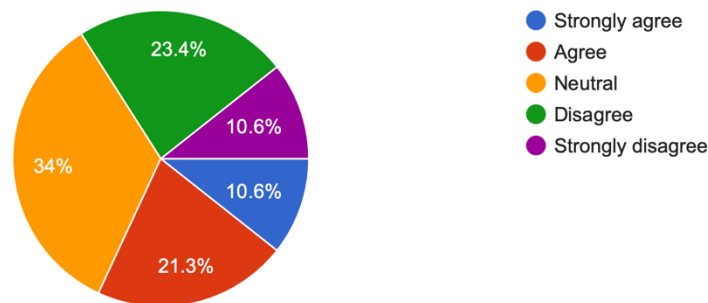


Figure 18: Percentage of respondents indicating their view on whether fast fashion promotes sustainability

Whether purchasing decisions are impacted by the level of sustainability offered by a given fast fashion brand

The results indicate that 40.4 percent agree that their purchase decision is impacted by the level of sustainability given by fast fashion brands. Besides, 31.90 percent were neutral, 14.90 percent strongly agreed while 12.80 percent disagreed. The participants while shopping may notice sustainability tap or post. Therefore, they may decide on such a post indicating they have a desire to buy sustainable products.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: " Purchasing decisions are impacted by the level of sustainability offered by a given fast fashion brand"

47 responses

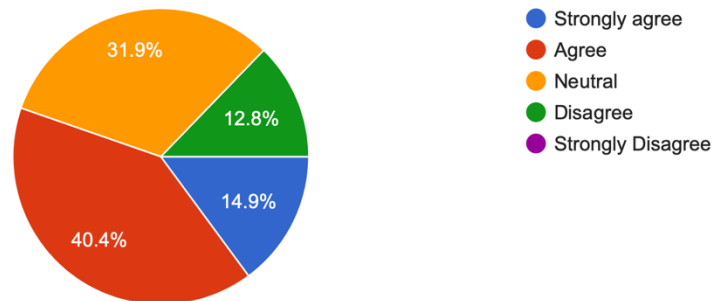


Figure 19: Percentage of respondents on whether purchasing decisions are impacted by the level of sustainability offered by a given fast fashion brand

Whether purchase decisions are impacted by the social media posts published by given fast fashion brands

The respondents indicate how they perceive their purchase decision based on the social media published on websites of fast fashion. Accordingly, 57.40 percent agreed, 19.1 percent remained neutral, 21.3 percent strongly agreed while the rest did not indicate their ideas. The customers may not be familiar with sustainable promotions. However, they gain interest when they access social media and gain morale to purchase items created in the sustainable way.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: " Purchasing decisions are impacted by the social media posts published by a given fast fashion brand"

47 responses

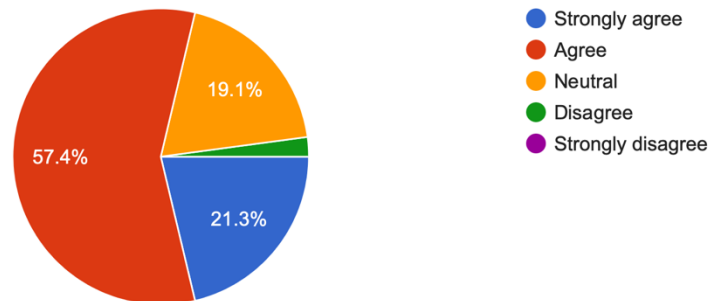


Figure 20: Percentage of respondents on purchase decision impacted by the social media posts published by given fast fashion brands

How Respondents consider whether fashion brands promote sustainability

The results show that 40.40 percent of the respondents consider that fashion brands promote sustainability as they get information on social media. Besides, 23.4 percent get information on the company website, 21.30 percent get information from TV and magazine, 8.50 percent from customer reviews while 34 percent get it from all the sources of information noted in the graph. Therefore, the participants consider social media posts to be more reliable when it comes to promoting sustainability.

How do you consider whether a given fast fashion brand promotes sustainability?
47 responses

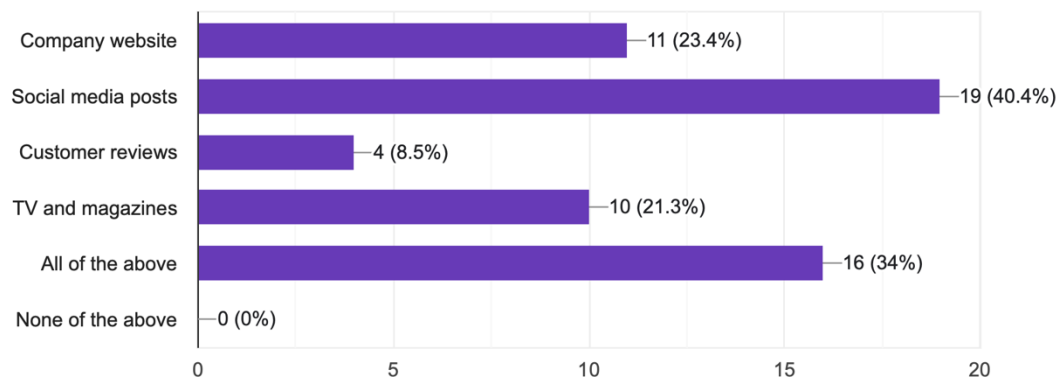


Figure 21: How Respondents consider whether fashion brands promote sustainability

DATA EVALUATION

Data evaluation entails the statistical processes for evaluating data to determine whether the information is the type, quality, and quantity the researcher requires in the study.

The primary data regarding the first theme on whether fast fashion companies' sustainability shows that the companies strive to embrace sustainability activities within the operations, especially, in the manufacturing of products. The respondents note a neutral result of 34 percent indicating that they are not familiar with the idea that fast fashion companies promote sustainability. However, the respondents are willing and may decide to buy sustainable products when they notice sustainability posts or tap when shopping.

Allam et al. (2020) indicate that Zara Inc implements all the regulations of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the guidelines that recommend the publication of the processes to show its level of commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent as of the year 2005 which it fulfilled in 2020. Similarly, Dyrnes et al. (2021) affirm that H&M

implements sustainability measures in all the manufacturing processes to produce eco-friendly clothes and implements measures to reduce energy wastages in the production process. Equally, secondary data reveals that GAP company manages its chemicals and embraces proper water stewardship. Besides, the company follows the protocols of Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) and Mill Sustainability Programs through the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC).

The second theme of the study is whether fast fashion companies use social media to promote sustainability. The primary data shows that 57.40 percent of the respondents agree while 21.3 percent strongly agree that they can buy sustainable products from fast fashion shops based on the information the companies publish on social media irrespective of the respondents not being familiar with the sustainable promotional strategies. The researcher obtains similar results from the secondary data. Dyrnes et al. (2021) note that H&M uses YouTube and Instagram to share its activities within the supply chain system including the measures against pollution, recycling, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in production, transportation, and shipping. Likewise, GAP uses YouTube to share its sustainability measures and control of utilisation of water. On the same note, Chan (2017) affirms that Zara uses Instagram and YouTube to share videos and images concerning sustainable products and activities to customers. Therefore, the results show that fast fashion companies such as Zara, H&M, and GAP use social media to advertise their products and create awareness of sustainability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This dissertation on examining sustainability and fast fashion focusing on how fast fashion brands use social media to promote sustainability answers the below research questions.

1. Do fast fashion enterprises provide sustainability?

The study reveals that fast fashion companies such as Zara, H&M, and GAP provide sustainability by ensuring that their products are now sustainable as they also embrace sustainability guidelines.

2. What types of social media do fast fashion promote sustainability?

The results from the study indicate that fast fashion companies such as Zara, GAP, and H&M use Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok social media platforms to promote sustainability by providing videos, posts, and tags for customers to view and make decisions based on the information promoting sustainability.

3. How does fast fashion use social media?

The results show that fast fashion companies like Zara, H&M, and GAP use videos, images, and blogs to advertise their sustainable products as they create awareness of sustainability.

Furthermore, it can be seen from the results of Question 7 that the participants are not familiar with the promotion of sustainability. Therefore, the brands could consider enhancing the promotions of sustainable products via social media. When it comes to promoting sustainability, the participants believe that social media is the most recognised way to promote sustainability based on the survey results.

Question 8 from the survey results indicates that participants have a desire to purchase sustainable products. Hence, the brands need to take this into account and be more active with the production of sustainable items.

Finally, Question 9 of the survey shows that a large percentage of the participants agree that purchase decisions are impacted by the social media posts published by given fast fashion brands. Therefore, brands should strive to maximise the effectiveness of social media platforms as they influence a significant amount of the audience.

Future Research

The present study acts as a springboard for future research endeavours. Therefore, the researcher recommends that future studies embrace a larger sample size compared to the current sample size included in the study. Accordingly, the future study should include more fast fashion companies instead of only three included in the present study. Secondly, the researcher in the future study should use pure primary data focusing only on quantitative data to avoid subjective biases in the selection of samples in secondary data. Moreover, future studies should embrace a longitudinal approach to allocate more time to studying the variables instead of the cross-sectional approach that provides only a one-point data collection process.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Secondary data research

Firms	Platform	Year	No of videos	Average duration(sec)	Average view	Total average views	Total average duration	Total average videos
Zara	Instagram	2018	7	72	29,670			
Zara	Instagram	2019	8	22	22,150			
Zara	Instagram	2020	1	31	20,800			
Zara	Instagram	2021	2	31	14,550			
Zara	TikTok	2018	0	0	0			
Zara	TikTok	2019	0	0	0			
Zara	TikTok	2020	0	0	0			
Zara	TikTok	2021	0	0	0			
Zara	YouTube	2018	3	76	8,180			
Zara	YouTube	2019	1	52	206			
Zara	YouTube	2020	4	76	710			
Zara	YouTube	2021	0	0	0	8,022	30	2.166666667
H&M	Instagram	2018	13	12	26,185			
H&M	Instagram	2019	21	9	25,120			
H&M	Instagram	2020	6	128	22,880			
H&M	Instagram	2021	21	18	16,490			
H&M	TikTok	2018	0	0	0			
H&M	TikTok	2019	0	0	0			
H&M	TikTok	2020	0	0	0			
H&M	TikTok	2021	0	0	0			
H&M	YouTube	2018	3	68	409,844			
H&M	YouTube	2019	4	117	34,566			
H&M	YouTube	2020	6	73	60,224			
H&M	YouTube	2021	27	188	14,830	50,845	51.08333333	8.416666667
GAP	Instagram	2018	0	0	0			
GAP	Instagram	2019	0	0	0			
GAP	Instagram	2020	0	0	0			
GAP	Instagram	2021	0	0	0			
GAP	TikTok	2018	0	0	0			
GAP	TikTok	2019	0	0	0			
GAP	TikTok	2020	0	0	0			
GAP	TikTok	2021	2	6	133	3		
GAP	YouTube	2018	1	3	1,779			
GAP	YouTube	2019	0	0	0			
GAP	YouTube	2020	0	0	0			
GAP	YouTube	2021	4	194	460	197.6666667	16.91666667	0.583333333

Primary data questionnaire

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this survey!

The purpose of the survey is to gather primary data which will help to investigate the relationship between sustainability and fast fashion focusing on whether fast fashion brands like ZARA, GAP, and H&M utilise social media to promote sustainability.

It would be very kind of you if you could spare 5 minutes of your time and provide answers to all of the questions below.

Your personal data will be kept confidential and will be fully compliant with The GDPR - UK Data Protection Act 2018. The survey is voluntary, meaning that you can pull out at all times.

Thank you for your help in advance!

Question #1

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Question #2

What is your age?

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 and over

Question #3

How would you describe your current occupation?

- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Business owner
- Self-employed
- Student
- Other

Question #4

What is your highest education level?

- High school education
- Bachelor's

- Master's
- Other

Question #5

What is your annual income?

- Under £10,000
- £10,000 - £19,999
- £20,000 - £29,999
- £30,000 - £39,999
- £40,000 - £49,999
- £50,000 - £59,999
- £60,000 - £69,999
- £70,000 - £79,999
- £80,000 - £89,999
- £90,000 - £99,999
- Over £100,000

Question #6

Which fast fashion brand do you typically buy from?

- Zara
- H&M
- Gap
- Zara & H&M
- Zara & Gap
- H&M & Gap
- All of the above
- None of the above

Question #7

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Fast fashion brands promote sustainability?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question #8

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Purchasing decisions are impacted by the level of sustainability offered by a given fast fashion brand?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question #9

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Purchasing decisions are impacted by the social media posts published by a given fast fashion brand?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question #10

How do you consider whether a given fast fashion brand promotes sustainability?

- Company website
- Social media posts
- Customer reviews
- TV and magazines
- All of the above
- None of the above