

## **An Exploratory Study on Ethical Concerns of Young Consumers of Fashion**

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the ethical concerns revealed in the fashion consumption habits of young consumers. The paper also aims to offer an overview of concepts like *slow fashion* versus *fast fashion*, *ethical fashion* and *sustainable fashion*, and a first look on how fashion consumers are adhering to sustainable marketing actions. A quantitative study was carried out on a sample of 201 Portuguese consumers, with a diversity of ages. Findings suggest that consumers in general and young consumers value price and quality over ethical attributes and that price and accessibility work as a barrier to ethical consumption. Results seem to indicate that older consumers with higher income are more prone to engage in ethical consumption concerns. Young consumers are more price sensitive and buy clothes more often. This can be explained by the need to follow trends and encompass the constant changes in fashion, driving them to *fast fashion* consumption patterns.

**Keywords:** *Ethical Fashion, Sustainable Fashion, Fast Fashion, Slow Fashion, Ethical Consumer Behavior.*

### **Introduction**

“If fashion is born from infinite desire, what happens when infinite desire intercepts with the fragile and finite creatures?” (Kovesi,2001)

According to research, *generation Y* or *millennials*, born from 1980 to 2000 (Crampton & Hodge,2009) is the most informed generation of the last registered generations, since it grows with computers, online shopping and has the most education and travelling opportunities, what leads to an high sense of civic duty and morality. (Crampton & Hodge,2009) *millennials* are informed about the ethical and sustainable issues of the fashion industry. Therefore, these consumers are looking for new ways of consuming fashion, like buying *ethical* and *sustainable fashion*, as well as, returning to *slow fashion* values. However, a big part of fashion consumers still purchases easily dispensable clothing items that are cheaper and allow them to buy more frequently. This type of fashion consumption is called *fast fashion*. *Fast fashion* has a big impact on environment.

*Fast fashion* brands have no control over fair market and ethical concerns. This difference between expected action and buying behavior is referred in the literature as: *attitude-behavior gap*; 30:3 syndrome and *ethical purchasing gap*. (Widmar,2016) Thus, the purpose of this study is to understand consumer's fashion habits, specially, young consumers' habits, in regards to ethical concerns. The present study is an exploratory research aimed at investigating what is most important to consumers when buying fashion and how ethical and sustainable fashion is perceived among Portuguese consumers. The topic under study is relatively understudied and important for an industry that is trying to adjust to current concerns with environment and ethics while dealing with a highly competitive market influenced by the fast-fashion concept of price over quality and mass production.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Fashion consumption**

In modern society, clothing is not only consumed for its inherent purpose, the primary need to cover, but also to fulfill the social and emotional needs of their consumers, like being stylish and a trend setter (Bockholdt, Kemper, Brettel, 2020) Since these products affect consumers appearance, fashion is seen as a form of language. (Bockholdt, Kemper, Brettel,2020) Its consumption is driven by the hedonic environment of shopping, what makes shopping for clothes an impulsive action (McNeill & Snowdon,2019). Impulsive buying occurs when a consumer experiences a sudden, usually powerful, and persistent enthusiasm, pleasure and temporary sensations that lead them to buying instantly. This results in a poor critical assessment of what they buy. (Bick, Halsey, Ekenga, 2018)

As for the difference between older generations and younger generations, younger generations buy clothes more often than older ones. Older consumers buy new clothes at the beginning of the season. Young consumers buy new clothes every two weeks and are always looking for different trends to try. (Bockholdt, Kemper, Brettel,2020)

## Fast Fashion

Consumers feel the need to adjust to a world of fast innovation and fast changes in a cheap and dynamic manner. (Bick, Halsey, Ekenga, 2018) The way to do it is by shifting from slow fashion consumption to fast fashion consumption. (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010)

Fast fashion is described as fashion quickly available, inexpensive, and dispensable (Magnuson, Reimers,Chao,2017) “with low connection to personality and unique style or to a specific country of origin. (Baghi, Gabrielli, Codeluppi, 2013) Its core business is a short time between production and distribution, using Just in Time (Sweeney, Soutar,2001) with the focus on constant renovation of their product range. (Baghi, Gabrielli, Codeluppi, 2013) Therefore, the priority is shifting from product quality to price and variety of choice, (Bick, Halsey, Ekenga, 2018) from high quality to design, marketing, and brand management. (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010)

According to Bhardwaj & Fairhurst (2010) , this approach to fashion is transgenerational, both young generations and older ones want to follow trends in detriment of other aspects like quality.

The democratization of fashion, the big advantage of *fast fashion*, has a dark side. (Bick, Halsey, Ekenga, 2018) These companies establish or hire factories in *Low- and Middle-Income Countries*, countries with low labor law enforcement. 80 billion items of clothing are bought by year, of those 80 billion, 90 % is produced in China or Bangladesh. (Bick, Halsey, Ekenga, 2018) The production of cotton and polyester is associated with serious health issues, as well as, water pollution and water overuse. Production without strict regulations compromises animal life of the area and the health of the population around the factory. Besides the problems that come from production, *fast fashion* is also highly disposable, what promotes more cycles of consumption and shorter ones (6 months). (Bick, Halsey, Ekenga, 2018)

Based on the literature review, three hypotheses were formulated:

H1: *Consumers with low concerns about ethical fashion value more price over quality.*

H2: *Consumers with low concerns about ethical fashion value more variety of choice over quality.*

## **Slow Fashion**

*Slow Fashion* is not well defined in the literature, because it is a relatively new subject. (Freestone & McGoldrick, 2007) *Slow Fashion* is described as the antidote to *fast fashion*. (Štefko & Steffek, 2018) In line with this definition, Magnuson, Reimers, Chao (2017) define *slow fashion* as the movement that represents a vision of sustainability in the fashion industry, based on different values and objectives of today, a break from *current fast fashion* standards. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2017) For others, *slow fashion* is a lifestyle, based on sustainable consumption, local production, preservation of ecosystems, traditional values, diversity of the fonts and responsible approach to production. (Freestone & McGoldrick, 2007) Štefko & Steffek (2018) cluster these categories into 3 essential areas of *slow fashion*: local value, transparent production systems and sustainable and sensory products. (Štefko & Steffek, 2018) Freestone & McGoldrick (2007) expand this definition by adding the ethical choice of consumers.

For the purpose of this study we are going to use Magnuson, Reimers, Chao (2017) definition of *slow fashion*. *Slow fashion* represents a paradigm shift from focusing on quantity to focusing on quality. *Slow fashion* brands gain prestige by creating high quality items (Štefko & Steffek, 2018) that have timeless designs and last longer. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2017) In theory, these attributes minimize fashion consumption and its environmental impact. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2017) Thereby, *slow fashion* attributes are longer product lifespan, in terms of design longevity and physical durability of the fabric, high quality and versatility. (Jägel, Keeling, Reppel, Gruber, 2012 )

Hence, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H3: *Slow fashion consumers present more environmental and ethical concerns than no slow fashion consumers.*

## Ethical Fashion

*Ethical fashion* is defined as high quality, well designed products that are environmentally sustainable, which help minorities and reflect proper work conditions. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019). *Ethical fashion* is associated with four dimensions:

1. Sustainable attributes;
2. Employee well-fare attributes;
3. Animal well-fare attributes;
4. *Slow-Fashion*.

(Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019)

*Ethical fashion* does not have the expected success, there is a positive attitude towards *Ethical fashion*, however, rarely translates into purchase. (Freestone & McGoldrick, 2007) This way, *ethical fashion* sales incorporate a small percentage of the total global fashion sales. The inconsistency between attitudes and purchase behavior is called *attitude-behavior gap*. Magnuson, Reimers, Chao (2017) conclude that the reason for this *attitude-behavior gap* is that some fashion attributes, conventional ones, have more weighting when choosing fashion items than others. The researchers divided fashion attributes in conventional and non-conventional attributes:

Conventional attributes are divided into 3 categories:

- Physical quality attributes;
- Extrinsic quality attributes;
- Cost Attributes.

Non-conventional attributes are divided into 4 categories:

- Environmental sustainability attributes;
- Employee welfare attributes;
- Animal welfare attributes;
- *Slow Fashion* attributes;

Physical Attributes refer to tangible qualities and include fit, comfort, appearance, and color. Consumers consider these attributes as more important than ethical ones. (Niinimäki,2015) Therefore, if the perceived quality of a garment is low,

consumers may ignore their ethical concerns. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019)  
Hence, the following hypothesis was formulated:

*H4: Physical quality attributes are more important to fashion consumers than ethical and sustainable attributes.*

Extrinsic attributes refer to non-tangible aspects and include brand name, country of origin and brand image. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019) A less experienced consumer uses these attributes as a factor of choice, working as a pseudo-measure of quality. Thus, these attributes are more important than ethical ones. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019) Based on the literature review, the following hypothesis was formulated:

*H5: Brand name is more important to fashion consumers than ethical and sustainable fashion attribute.*

Cost is defined as the barriers to shopping. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019) The three fundamental costs are: time, effort, and money. Cost is particularly relevant when studying ethical fashion because ethical consumption is more expensive and less available. Perry, A., Chung, T. (2016) confirm that a lot of travelling costs to access ethical fashion brands leads to less proneness to buy ethical fashion.

Hence, the following hypothesis were formulated:

*H6: Consumers consider ethical fashion more expensive than other fashion alternatives.*

*H7: Consumers consider ethical fashion less convenient than other fashion alternatives.*

Environmental responsibility attributes are directed to the negative impacts of the fashion industry. Clothe is considered environmentally responsible if it is made from natural fibers, free of chemicals and made in the most efficient way possible. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019)

Employee welfare attributes target the negative impact of fashion industry on employee well-being, such as, fair wages, fair work conditions and free of child labor. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019)

Animal welfare attributes are designed to minimize the negative impacts of fashion industry on animals, like, being free of animal testing and the use of real fur and leather. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019)

According to studies, other factors can influence the proneness to ethical products consumption, such as the search for self-realization or to avoid feelings of guilt when buying (Freestone & McGoldrick, 2007) and for the inherent symbolism of buying ethically (Solomon, 1983).

Based on the literature review, we formulate the following hypothesis:

*H8: Ethical Fashion consumers want mainly to feel good about themselves when buying.*

According to Manzano, Rivas, Bonilla (2012). the previous existence of social conscience and participation on social organizations affects positively the choice of ethical products. This way if there is no previous social responsibility, it is harder to commit with ethical product purchase.

Hence, the following hypothesis was formulated:

*H9: The involvement in social organizations positively influences ethical fashion purchase behavior.*

For Freestone & McGoldrick (2008) ethical consumption is influenced by a Decisional Balance, consumers evaluate the pros and cons of a purchase decision. The Decisional Balance Scale studied by Freestone & McGoldrick (2008) is applied to this study. The Decisional Balance Scale divided pros into “*personal positives*” and “*social positives*” and cons into “*personal negatives*” and “*social negatives*”. There are six stages of ethical consumption:

1. **Not noticed an issue**, in this stage the individual is not aware or concerned about the ethical issue.
2. **The aware but not greatly concerned**, in this stage the individual knows about the ethical issue but is unaffected by it and probably will not change its behavior.
3. **Aware and concerned but have not acted**, in this stage the individual is evaluating what course of action to follow. They are conscious of the issue and care about it but have not yet felt the need to act. They may be confused or uncertain.



4. **Concerned and intend to act** might still be uncertain but is closer to those who care and act upon.
5. **Concerned and taken minor action** is the first stage of ethical behavior, they are aware and concerned and discuss it openly with their friends and family.
6. **Concerned and taken major action**, in this stage the individual cares and will change brands, sign petitions or boycott products because of the violation of an ethical issue.

### **Sustainable Fashion**

According to the European Environment Agency (EEA), fashion industry is the 4<sup>th</sup> most polluting industry. According to *Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP)*, almost 20 % of water pollution comes from the treatment of fabrics and dyeing. (Niinimäki,2015) In this reality, slow fashion brands like LUIS VUITTON, PRADA, ARMANI, and fast fashion brands, like MANGO and ZARA are starting to adapt and prioritizing environmental problems, by promoting circular practices and the use of sustainable materials. (Blasi,Lorenzo, Sedita, 2019).

Hence, the following hypothesis was formulated:

*H10: Brands' sustainable fashion campaigns positively influence ethical consumer purchase behavior.*

*Sustainable fashion* is presented as a subtopic of *ethical fashion*. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2017) (Niinimäki,2015). However, after critical analysis of the literature review, supported by Freestone & McGoldrick (2008), we conclude that buying fashion garments that are sustainably manufactured is not making an ethical purchase. As referred above, *fast fashion* brands are starting to incorporate sustainable production practices, but do not practice fair market. In fact, buying ethically is more difficult and has a bigger cost than buying sustainably. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, sustainable fashion is a condition of ethical fashion but buying sustainable fashion is not an ethical choice.

## Data and Methodology

### Sample profile and procedures of data collection

Data were collected in July 2020 through physical questionnaires distributed personally and through an online questionnaire posted on social networks. A final convenience sample of 201 respondents (n=201) was obtained. Given the exploratory nature of the study, we considered this sampling technique fast and effective. The sample consisted of 22.4% man and 77.6% women; with 72.1% Millennials, aging between 20 and 40 years old, and 27.9% above 41 years old. Most of the respondents presented a higher degree or are university students.

**Table 1: Participants in the study**

| Age             |     | Gender |     | Occupation  |     | Residence   |      | Income(per month) |     |
|-----------------|-----|--------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|------|-------------------|-----|
| 20-40 years old | 72% | Female | 78% | Student     | 38% | Coast       | 92%  | <650              | 44% |
| +40 years old   | 28% | Male   | 72% | Not-Student | 62% | Countryside | 7,5% | 650-1000          | 27% |

The first part of the questionnaire was based on the qualitative study developed by Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, (2019) and adapted to a quantitative research, using a rank order scaling. (Malhotra, 1999) Respondents were asked to order the importance of 11 fashion attributes found in the literature (novelty, variety of choice, brand image, sustainable consumption, quality, longer product lifespan, timelessness, fair market, country of origin, accessibility, price), by assigning a number between 1 to 11, being 1 the most important and 11 the least important. In the second part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked about an ethical fashion consumption scale – Transtheoretical Model - based on the study of Freestone and McGoldrick (2008). Respondents were asked on 18 items on a Likert scale of 5 points, anchored on 1-Completely disagree and 5-Completely agree.

## **Results**

Results (n=201) showed that the most frequent answer to purchase frequency is less than one time a month (61.2%), followed by 1 or 2 times (36.3%). This result could be influenced by COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown, as well as, changes in lifestyle and purchase habits. According to Bockholdt, Kemper, Brettel (2020), Generation X buys fashion items more often than Generation Y. More than an half of the respondents from generation Y answered "less than once a month" (64.1%) to the question "In a typical month, how often do you buy clothes", while for Generation X, 44.6 % answered "1 or 2 times a month". Regarding the differences in gender, women buy fashion items more often than men ("less than once a month" = 77.8%). To the study, we grouped the sample into Slow Fashion consumers and Ethical fashion consumers, according to their rankings on the fashion attributes scale. Slow Fashion consumers ranked quality, timelessness, and longer product lifespan in the first three places. Ethical fashion consumers ranked Country of origin, Fair Market and Sustainability in the first three places.

### **Test of Hypothesis 1**

Hypothesis 1 states that consumers with low concerns about ethical fashion value more price over quality. According to the frequency distribution analysis, unethical consumers, with means under 3.5 on the Likert Scale of ethical consumption, rank price and quality almost at the same level. Quality is the most important with 73.3% of the answers between 1 and 3. Findings did not support Hypothesis 1.

### **Test of Hypothesis 2**

Hypothesis 2 states that consumers with low concerns about ethical fashion value more variety over quality. Based on the frequency distribution test, we conclude that, these consumers do not value variety (26% of the answers) over quality (73% of the answers) not supporting hypothesis 2.

### **Test of Hypothesis 3**

Hypothesis 3 states that slow fashion consumers have more environmental and ethical concerns than no slow fashion consumers. A chi-square test was performed. A dichotomous variable “slow fashion consumer” (0 = not slow fashion consumer; 1 = slow fashion consumer) allowed to create two groups of consumers according to their rankings on the fashion attributes scale. According to the chi-square test there was no statistically significant differences regarding ethical behavior and slow fashion consumption ( $p > .1$ ). The results did not support hypothesis 3.

### **Test of Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5**

Hypothesis 4 states that physical quality attributes are more important for fashion consumers than ethical and sustainable attributes. Hypothesis 5 states that brand name is more important to consumers than ethical and sustainable fashion attributes. The absolute frequency distribution of the respondents that ranked between 1 and 3 each fashion attribute, from most important to least important, is the following:

**Table 2: Fashion attributes rank order scale results**

| <b>Fashion Attribute</b> | <b>Nº of answers that ranked between 1 and 3</b> |
|--------------------------|--|
| Quality                  | 100  |
| Price                    | 95   |
| Longer product lifespan  | 68   |
| Timelessness             | 42   |
| Accessibility            | 35   |
| Fair Market              | 21   |
| Sustainability           | 18   |
| Variety of choice        | 17   |
| Novelty                  | 15   |
| Brand Image              | 14   |
| Country of origin        | 8  |

From the frequency distribution, we can conclude that physical Quality and price are more important than ethical and sustainable attributes, supporting hypothesis 4. However, results did not support hypothesis 5.

### **Test of Hypothesis 6**

Hypothesis 6 states that consumers consider ethical fashion more expensive than other fashion alternatives. According to the descriptive statics, most of the respondents agreed that it is more expensive, supporting hypothesis 6.

### **Test of Hypothesis 7**

Hypothesis 7 states that consumers consider ethical fashion is less convenient than other fashion alternatives. The frequency distribution results on the questions "*It would be very difficult to only buy from companies that do not violate this issue*" and "*If I could only choose from products that support this issue shopping would less convenient.*" Indicated that most of the respondents agree that ethical fashion is less convenient than other alternatives. Hence, hypothesis 7 was supported.

### **Test of Hypothesis 8**

Hypothesis 8 states that ethical fashion consumers want to feel good about themselves when buying. A dichotomous variable "slow fashion consumer" (0 = not slow fashion consumer; 1 = slow fashion consumer) allowed to create two groups of consumers according to their rankings on the fashion attributes scale. Most of the slow fashion consumers (72.8%) answered "*agree*" or "*completely agree*" to the question "*I feel better if I act against companies that violate this issue*". Thus, results supported Hypothesis 8.

### **Test of Hypothesis 9**

Hypothesis 9 states that the involvement in social organizations (ethical consumer behavior) positively influences ethical fashion purchase behavior. A chi-Square test was conducted. A dichotomous variable "ethical fashion consumer" (0 = not ethical fashion consumer; 1= ethical fashion consumer) was introduced as dependent variable. The chi-square test indicated no statistically significant differences between ethical fashion consumers and not ethical fashion

consumers on their scores on the independent variable social consciousness ( $p > .1$ ). Results did not support hypothesis 9.

### **Test of Hypothesis 10**

Hypothesis 10 states that sustainable fashion campaigns positively influence consumer purchase behavior towards sustainable fashion. Most of the respondents (69.2%) stated that sustainable fashion campaigns did not influence their fashion purchases. Hence, hypothesis 10 was not supported.

### **Stages of Ethical Behavior**

To understand in which stage of the Transtheoretical Model of Freestone & McGoldrick (2008) a means study was conducted on the independent variables of generation and gender. According to Freestone and McGoldrick as a person moves forward on the TTM, the personal and social negatives scale will be lower as the personal and social positives scale will be higher. We concluded that the sample in analysis is in the early stages of the TTM, in the "*aware and concerned but not taken action*" or "*concerned and intend to take action*" stages. (Freestone & McGoldrick, 2008)

In order to understand the influence of gender and age on ethical behavior, we performed two Qui-square tests. The Qui-square test results on how generation influences ethical fashion consumption was not statistically significant ( $p > .10$ ). In what concerns to how gender influences ethical fashion consumption, no statistically significant differences between gender and ethical fashion consumption were achieved ( $p > .10$ ).

### **Discussion and Managerial implications**

The study addresses some concerns expressed in the literature regarding the importance of physical quality, price, and brand image on fashion consumption, as well as what influences ethical fashion consumption. With respect to the importance of some fashion criteria, the results enhance the importance of Physical Quality attributes and cost attributes when buying fashion items. As referred by Magnuson, Reimers, Chao (2019) and Niinimäki (2015) and confirmed by the results, consumers value physical quality more than ethical and

sustainable fashion attributes and will only buy ethical fashion items if they present the same quality and durability. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019) (Niinimäki, 2015) The results also supported that that price can be an obstacle for an ethical fashion consumption. Findings also seem to indicate that there are differences between Generation X and Generation Y. Generation Y buys fashion garments more often and values more the price attribute than Generation X. Generation X values more timelessness than Generation Y. Other attributes do not show significant differences. The findings should be of interest to decision makers helping them understanding what they should value when innovating and advertising fashion.

Regarding the influence of previous social action, awareness, and sustainable fashion campaigns on the purchase of ethical and sustainable fashion, they seem not very impactful on the participants' purchase decision process, in contrast to the stated by Freestone & McGoldrick (2008). However, findings seem also to indicate that avoiding feelings of guilt and self-realization are a motivation to consuming ethical fashion.

Regarding the stages of ethical behavior based on the means results and the low importance given to ethical fashion attributes, we conclude that ,overall, the sample is in the early stages of ethical behavior, which means they are aware of the problem but are not affected by it or are contemplating what course of action to follow. They are conscious of the problem and care about it but have not yet felt the need to act or do not know how to act. This conclusion is according to the study of Freestone and McGoldrick (2008), which refers that ethical fashion does not have the expected success considering the attitudes towards ethical consumption.

The managerial implications that arise from this study may be of interest to the textile and fashion business sector since they can improve their marketing strategies and understand how to innovate in the market of ethical fashion and sustainability.

Regarding companies' managers, it allows them to analyze how they can innovate in the textile industry and keep a competitive advantage. According to Blasi,Lorenzo, Sedita (2019) consumers' purchase decisions have a strong influence in a company's transactions. Understanding what the customers want trough a long-term dialog between company and consumers is important to

create new value and new business models (Niinimäki,2015), and seems to be an important factor in designing more effective marketing strategies and campaigns.

### **Limitations and future research**

The results of this preliminary study should be analyzed considering several limitations.

Although the sample includes individuals from two different generations, different occupations, residence, gender, and income, there are groups underrepresented, such as generation X, no students, participants living in country, and with higher incomes. Future replication efforts should consider a broader sample, to confirm these results.

Moreover, the study could benefit from a complementary qualitative research, for example, in-depth interviews or focus groups in order to understand why some consumers prioritize some fashion attributes over others and what is keeping them from moving forward in the stages of ethical behavior. Appropriate methodology to analyze H10: “*sustainable fashion campaigns positively influence consumer purchase behavior towards sustainable fashion*” would also be necessary, as we only checked the impact of sustainable fashion marketing campaigns based on participants’ perceptions.

### **Conclusions**

Fashion industry must keep up with consumers needs and lifestyle. For a long time, clothing items were bought considering durability. However, nowadays, clothing meets broader needs. Fashion helps people to be a part of a group or distance themselves from one. (Bockholdt, Kemper, Brettel,2020) Therefore, fashion brands are not only concerned about the quality and durability of their items, they should look for new ways of meeting the different consumers and understanding what they value the most when shopping.

There are four main ways of fashion consumption found in literature: *Fast fashion*, *slow fashion*, *ethical fashion* and *sustainable fashion*. *Fast fashion* is considered cheaper, with lower quality but always changing. Therefore, *fast fashion*



consumers value price, variety of choice and novelty. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019)

*Slow Fashion* is considered as being the opposite to *Fast Fashion*. *Slow Fashion* consumers prefer a Longer product lifespan and longevity in terms of product quality and design. *Ethical Fashion* is new in the literature and its known for high quality garments, with fabrics bought and produced in fair market and with respect for animal and employee welfare. (Magnuson, Reimers, Chao, 2019).

Finally, we consider *sustainable fashion*, common in *slow fashion* and *fast fashion* brands that want to adjust their products and marketing techniques to meet new needs. *Sustainable fashion* uses new ways of production, like circular practices and sustainable materials. Findings suggest that consumers in general and young consumers value price and quality over ethical attributes and that price and accessibility work as a barrier to ethical consumption. Results seem to indicate that older consumers with higher income are more prone to engage in ethical consumption concerns. Young consumers are more price sensitive and buy clothes more often. This can be explained by the need to follow trends and encompass the constant changes in fashion, driving them to *fast fashion* consumption patterns.

Regarding *ethical fashion* consumption the consumers with more ethical concerns are men with ages under 40 years old. However, Portuguese consumers are not greatly influenced by ethical and sustainable aspects when buying fashion items. Since they see *ethical fashion* as less convenient and more expensive. *Ethical fashion* consumption is influenced by the need to feel good when shopping. To succeed, *ethical fashion* Brands should improve the education of their consumers on ethical concerns and advertise ethical products that guarantee quality and durability. The benefits found for consuming *ethical fashion* should surpass the price and lack of variety.

Following research studies should consider these findings and explore the reasons for the resistance to ethical and sustainable fashion and how companies can improve their marketing strategies. Regarding the stages of ethical consumption, we conclude that Portuguese consumers are in the “*Aware and concerned but have not acted*” or “*Concerned and intend to act*” stages of the TTM model presented by Freestone & McGoldrick (2008). This means that

Portuguese consumers are not yet acting but are contemplating what course to follow. They may not have the means to do it or may feel powerless. Given the opportunity the individuals in this stage may become more ethically active. Portuguese consumers are conscious about the environmental issues that come from fast fashion because they value clothes with a longer lifespan and quality. These consumers intend to buy more ethically and sustainably, but the easier way to do it is by buying slow fashion items.

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