



The role of personal values on the relationship between attitudes and consumption behavior towards sustainable fashion brands: An exploratory study of millennial consumers.

Student Name: Skye Mavourneen O'Leary



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Supervisor: Mbali Rameste

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Strategic Brand Communication Honours degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Abstract

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Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study

1. Introduction

1.1. Contextualization

In line with the given theme for the following research project, *the decade of agile brand building and design*, the following research report was developed with a focus on the growing trend of sustainability becoming an integral part of the world of brand building and design. The concept of sustainable development first emerged in 1987 when the Brundtland Commission issued the report *Our Common Future* stipulating development plans that aims to meet the needs of the present without jeopardizing future generations ability to meet their own needs (Balazs, Djokic, Gavriletea and Kuchinka, 2018). Since its initial emergence, the concept of sustainability across all industries has grown substantially as our global societies come face to face with the growing environmental threats and social destruction that threaten our continued existence.

The concepts of sustainability and fashion are seemingly contradictory terms, with the latter associated with fast changing trends and short product life cycles to meet the demands of the throwaway fashion culture, while the former implies longevity through pro-environmental and socially conscious behaviour (Davies and Lundblad, 2016; Balazs et al., 2018). Nonetheless, the destructive environmental impacts and social inequalities caused the 'fast fashion' culture has created a global demand for the need for sustainable transformations across the entire industry (Davies, Glozer, McDonagh and Mukendi, 2019).

Globally, fashion brands have been transforming their business models to shift their business practices towards a fully sustainable model in response to the demands and needs of the external environment (Davies *et al.*, 2019). However, the realization of a fully sustainable fashion industry requires the conscious effort and active engagement of each individual consumer making sustainable fashion choices (Choi, Jung and Oh, 2020). Previous research has indicated that changing people's consumption habits to consider sustainability as an integral part of the decision-making process is difficult and complex, resulting in the attitude-behavior gap (Alevizou, Henninger and Oates,

2016; Balazs et al., 2018; Choi et al., 2020). Exploring and identifying the potential drivers and barriers impacting this gap has been a dominant focus among researchers. However, research has identified that particular focus needs to be given to the context of sustainable fashion consumption due to the particular meaning that sustainability and fashion plays in the lives of different individual across different contexts (Alevizou et al., 2016). Similarly, the role that personal values can have on consumption behavior proves to be a valuable gateway to developing strategies to influence sustainable consumption behavior (Jha and Sharma, 2017).

As such, the focus of the following research study aims to explore what personal values underpin millennial consumers sustainable fashion consumption behavior and what role these could play in bridging the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behavior for sustainable fashion.

1.2. Rationale

As environmental threats and social inequalities continue to plague global societies, sustainable brands have a powerful influence to activate change across society through developing strategies that will influence consumers towards more sustainable consumption behavior (Balazs et al., 2018). The development of a sustainable fashion system is complex, making it a process as well as a product, of which consumers' conscious consumption choices form a part of (Alevizou, Henninger and Oates, 2016). However, consumer awareness of the need and benefit of shifting their consumption patterns towards sustainability remains low (Davies et al., 2019), hence the continued exploration of factors influencing the attitude-behavioral gap identified in previous studies (Bai, Ma and Wang, 2019).

Davies et al. (2019) and Choi et al. (2020) argue that specific focus needs to be given to the factors influencing sustainable fashion consumption due to the complex role clothing plays in our lives, placing it in a unique context separate from other green product categories. Jha and Sharma (2017) and Alevizou et al. (2016) state that consumption choices and clothing specifically express a part of one's identity and are likely influenced by certain values and beliefs of the individual. Furthermore, the interpretation of sustainable fashion differs across cultures and resultingly, the unique values and beliefs within these cultures may have an important impact on individual's

sustainable consumption behavior (Gil, Su, Watchravesringkon and Zhou, 2019). Alevizou et al. (2016) states that the philosophical notion which underpins the sustainable fashion movement, centers on sustainability values. As such, it will be beneficial for sustainable fashion brands to gain a deeper understanding of the role that consumers personal values can have on the relationship between their attitudes and consumption behavior towards sustainable fashion brands.

1.3. Research problem

The destructive environmental impacts and social inequalities caused by the dual effect of over production and consumption patterns associated with the 'fast fashion' culture has created a global demand for the need for sustainable transformations across the entire fashion industry (Davies, Glozer, McDonagh and Mukendi, 2019). Previous studies have identified that although consumers express positive attitudes towards sustainability, this does not always align with their consumption behavior, a phenomenon known as the attitude-behavioral gap (Choi, Jung and Oh, 2020). Although potential barriers and drivers to this gap in sustainable consumption have been previously identified, specific focus needs to be given to sustainable fashion due to the complex and varied meaning that both sustainability and clothing has to different people and across different cultures (Davies et al., 2019). As such, this study aims to address this problem by exploring what personal values underpin and motivate millennial consumers sustainable fashion consumption behavior and what role these personal values can have on bridging the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behavior towards sustainable fashion brands.

1.4. Research purpose and aim

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study is to explore what personal values underpin and motivate millennial consumers sustainable fashion consumption behavior and the role these might play in bridging the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behavior towards sustainable fashion. Data will be obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the role and prevalence of certain personal values in the lives of millennial consumers in relation to consumption behavior towards sustainable fashion.

1.5. Research question

What personal values underpin millennial consumers sustainable fashion consumption behavior and what role can these personal values play in bridging the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behavior towards sustainable fashion?

1.5.1. Sub-questions

- What are the key attributes that millennial consumers look for in sustainable fashion?
- Why are millennial consumers motivated to buy sustainable fashion?
- What are the barriers to purchasing sustainable fashion consumption?

1.6. Research objectives

- To determine what key attributes millennial consumers' look for in sustainable fashion.
- To explore why millennial consumers are motivated to buy sustainable fashion.
- To determine any barriers to sustainable fashion consumption.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Foundation and Literature Review

2. Theoretical foundation

The following theories have been identified as integral to the research study in order to answer the research questions and objectives.

2.1. Schwartz (1992) Theory of Basic Human Values

Values have been studied across multiple disciplines as a central concept associated with human behaviour and the functioning of organizations, institutions and society over time (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz, Melech, Lehmann, Burgess and Harris, 2001). Prior research has focused largely on relating differences found in attitudes and behaviours to individual differences in value priorities by relying on the associations that emerge between single target values and the external variable under study (Schwartz, 1996). This approach is problematic as it overlooks the dynamic nature of relations among different values in a values system when associated with specific attitudes and behaviour and fails to include a comprehensive set of values and the underlying motivations that guide the selection of single values and may influence behaviour.

As such, Schwartz (1992) developed the Theory of Basic Human Values which derives a comprehensive set of value types consisting of the substantive content of values and structure of relations that are recognized, understood and used to form priorities within and across cultures. Schwartz (1992) derived the universal classification of the content of values on the premise that values, in the form of conscious goals, are the cognitive representations of the responsiveness of individuals and groups to three universal requirements for human existence. These include the needs of humans as biological organisms; the requirements for coordinated social interaction and demands for the smooth functioning, survival and welfare needs of groups (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz 1994). Through cognitive development and socialization, individuals and groups are able to articulate broad goals that help them manage with the requirements inherent in human existence by communicating through shared language and action about specific value types which are grounded in one or more of these requirements (Schwartz et al., 1987; Schwartz, 1994).

From this reasoning, Schwartz (1994) derived ten motivationally distinct value types, recognized within and across cultures which are defined and distinguished according to the key content aspect of values being the central goal or motivational concern they express. These constructs of the theory are depicted in Table 1, adapted from Schwartz (1996). Column 3 depicts the organization of specific single values that constitutes each motivational type making the meaning of each type more concrete and explicit and forming reliable indexes of value priorities. A specific single value is representative of a type when actions taken in pursuit of that value promote the goal and attainment of that type (Schwartz, 1996).

Table 1: Motivational types of values in terms of their goals and the single values that represent them

Value Type	Expressive Goal	Single values
Power	Status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.	Social power, authority, wealth [Preserving public image, social recognition]
Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.	Successful, capable, ambitious, influential [Intelligence, self-respect]
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.	Pleasure, enjoying life
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.	Daring, a varied life, an exciting life
Self-direction	Independent thought and action-choosing, creating, exploring	Creativity, freedom, independent, curious, choosing own goals [Self-respect].
Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.	Broadminded, wisdom, social justice, equality, a world at peace, a world of beauty, unity with nature,

		protecting the environment
Benevolence	Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact.	Helpful, honest, forgiving, loyal responsible [True friendship, mature love]
Tradition	Respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self	Humble, accepting my portion in life, devout, respect for tradition, moderate
Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.	Politeness, obedient, self-discipline, honouring parents and elders
Security	Safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationship and of self.	Family security, national security, social order, clean, reciprocation of favours [Sense of belonging, healthy].

The second construct of this theory stipulates the dynamic structure of relations among the motivational types of values where complementary value types are located in close relation while opposing value types are located in opposite locations around the circle (Schwartz, 1992). The opposition between competing values in the value system are organized by two opposing dimensions of higher order values: Values that are organized by *Openness to Change* to values organized by *Conservation* and the second dimension organizing values by *Self-Transcendence* to those organized by *Self-Enhancement*.

Adapted from Schwartz (1995), Figure 1 depicts the total pattern of conflicts and compatibilities among value priorities and is premised on the fact that “actions in pursuit of each value type will have psychological, practical and social consequences that are either compatible with or in conflict with the pursuit of the other value types” (Schwartz, 1996) producing the circular structure of the value system.

As such, actions taken in pursuit of values that are in opposite locations around the circle will result in a conflict due to the dissimilar motivations they express. While the shared motivational emphasis and overlap of meaning of underlying motivations along the partition of adjacent value types results in the ease of the simultaneous pursuit of these value types (Schwartz et al., 2001). For instance, universalism and benevolence are both concerned with the enhancement of others and rising above self-interested acts (Schwartz, 2012). This entire circular structure results in a motivational continuum of value priorities that has empirically tested to reflect a near universal structure of motivational conflicts and compatibilities (Schwartz and Bardi, 2003).

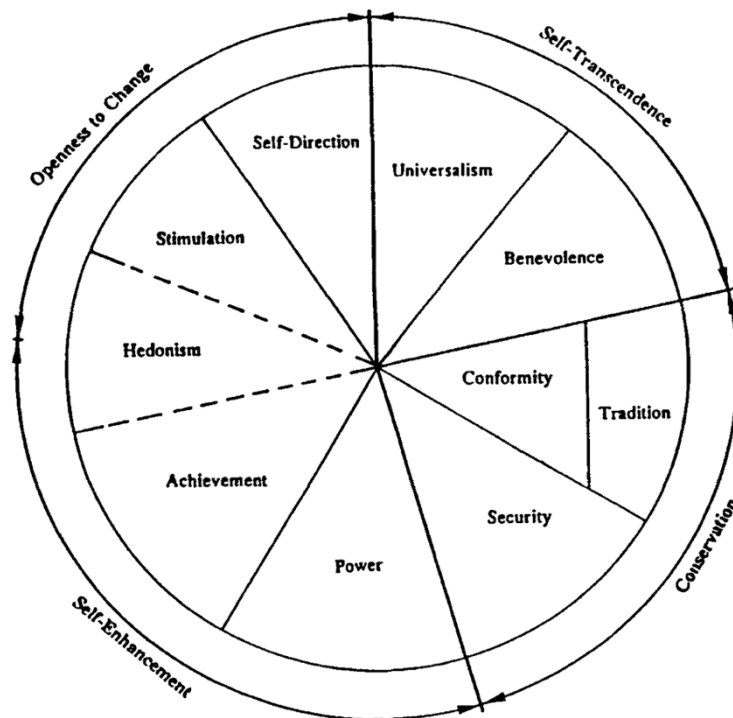


Figure 1: Theoretical model of relations among motivational types of values, higher-order value types, and bipolar value dimensions

Importantly, this theory focuses on relating the system of value priorities as an integrated whole to external variables such as attitudes and behaviour in coherent way resulting in more comprehensive and reliable interpretations of the association derived (Schwartz et al., 2003). This approach accounts for the fact that attitudes and behaviours are guided, not directly by single target values, but by the trade-off between competing values (Schwartz, 2012).

2.2. The Means-End Chain Theory

Gutman's (1982) Means-End Chain Theory was developed as a theoretical model that seeks to explain how consumer's product choices facilitate the achievement of desired 'end' states thus consisting of the elements that represent the consumer processes that link personal values to consumption behavior (Gutman, 1982). The theory is based on two fundamental assumptions: firstly, values, being desirable end states of existence, play a dominant role in guiding thought patterns (Gutman, 1982). Secondly, consumers cope with the magnitude and diversity of product alternatives that are available to satisfy their end states of existence by grouping them into product classes so as to simplify the complexity of choice (Gutman, 1982).

A critical element of this model is that the means-end chain provides a *linkage* between the product attributes (the 'means'), the consequences accrued by the consumer that are a result of the product attributes and the personal values (the 'ends') that are reinforced by the consequences (Gutman, 1982). The resulting attribute-consequence-value (ACV) chain represents the higher-order knowledge structure of the means-end hierarchy defined by what makes up these elements and their linkages (Gutman and Reynolds, 1988). In this way, these linkages identify the personally relevant role that different products attributes play in the life of the consumer by uncovering the reasons why an attribute or consequence is important to a consumer (Gutman and Reynolds, 1988).

Attributes are the concrete and abstract features inherent in different products while consequences can be defined as any result accruing directly or indirectly to the consumers due to their consumption choices (Gutman, 1982). Consequences can be functional, physiological, psychological and sociological in nature (Gutman, 1982).

The theory stipulates that consumer decision-making is a form of problem solving, represented by choice (Davies and Lundblad, 2016). Over time consumers learn to choose products on the basis of the attributes they possess, being those that are instrumental to achieving their desired consequences, minimizing undesired consequences and moving them towards their valued end-states, strengthening the ACV linkage (Gutman and Reynolds, 1988). Gutman (1982) states that because values are ordered by relative importance, personal values give different

consequences relative importance indicated as personally relevant valences to the consumer, emphasizing the importance of the consequence-value linkage.

The functionality of this model in its entirety occurs through a categorization process which outlines how consumers organize their thinking about specific product alternatives (Gutman, 1982). Distinctions are made at every level of the ACV chain, where the higher-level distinctions provide a motivational perspective on how product information is processed, categorized and used by the individual consumer (Gutman and Reynolds, 1988).

3. Conceptualization of key concepts

3.1. Sustainable fashion

Sustainable fashion refers to the transformation of 'fast fashion' manufacturing processes, fashion items and purchase behaviour that adopts one or more elements of social and environmental sustainability considerations such as fair-trade principles, sweat-shop free labour conditions and ethically sourced organic materials. (Davies, Glozer, McDonagh and Mukendi, 2019). Sustainable fashion is a complex, systemic process focused on aligning sustainability values and ethical conduct on the manufacturing and consumption side (Alevizou, Henninger and Oates, 2016).

3.2. Personal values

The conceptualization of values developed by Schwartz and Bilsky (1992) has been dominantly used to capture the key characteristics of all values throughout consumer behaviour literature today (Jha and Sharma, 2017; Gil, Su, Watchravesringkan and Zhou, 2019). Values are abstract concepts or beliefs that convey what is important to individuals and societies by referring to desirable goals that motivates and drive actions and behaviour (Schwartz, 2012). Values are ordered by relative importance forming a system of value priorities that serves as criteria that transcends specific situations and guide the selection of actions, events, people, behaviours and the self (Gil et al., 2019).

3.3. Consumer attitudes

Consumer attitudes refers to an individuals' general psychological evaluation of people and products captured in contrasting attribute dimensions such as good versus bad; harmful versus beneficial or positive versus negative (Akin and Okumus, 2020). Attitudes are comprised of consumers beliefs towards an object, the positive or negative feelings towards an object and the intention to act towards an object (Noermijati and Putra, 2017). Attitudes can endure over time and are continuously formed and influenced by what consumers learn, see, feel and the values that they possess (Noermijati and Putra, 2017).

3.4. Consumer behaviour

Consumer behaviour is a holistic process that includes a wide range of consumption activities by an individual or a group of individuals directly involved in need recognition,

searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products, services, activities or ideas that they expect will satisfy their needs and/or wants (Chan, Hoyer, MacInnis, Northey and Pieters, 2020).

3.5. Sustainable consumer behaviour

Sustainable consumer behaviour refers to the extent to which consumers consciously consider the social and environmental impacts of their consumption choices, behaviour and post-purchase behaviour such as to lessen the destructive environmental and social impacts of traditional consumption patterns (Choi, Oh and Jung, 2020). It involves a holistic decision-making process in which the consumer considers their social responsibility in wider society (Trudel, 2018).

3.6. The attitude-behaviour gap

The attitude-behaviour gap, with specific reference to environmentally friendly, ethical and sustainable consumer behaviour, refers to the inconsistency which arises between consumers expressed positive attitudes towards sustainable consumption issues and environmental protection and their actual consumption behaviour in this regard (Balazs et al., 2018).

4. Literature Review

4.1. Sustainable fashion

The slow fashion movement and the sustainable fashion industry have evolved substantially in the last decade to meet the growing need and demands for more sustainable fashion systems (Alevizou et al., 2016; Davies et al., 2019). Despite these growing trends, Alevizou et al. (2016) found that the realization of a fully sustainable fashion system is both difficult and complex, and resultingly there is often an identified misunderstanding among consumers on what actually constitutes sustainable fashion consumption (Chang and Watchravesringkan, 2017). The lack of agreed upon conceptualization of the principles which underpin sustainable fashion among different organizations, experts and consumers hinders the successful growth of a fully sustainable fashion system (Alevizou et al., 2016 and Davies et al., 2016).

Through the use of the social constructionist perspective, Alevizou et al. (2016) found that the understanding of the term sustainable fashion is subjective to each individual as participant groups emphasized different aspects of what constitutes sustainable fashion from their own perspectives, implying that the term and how to act upon it means different things to different people. Similarly, Davies et al. (2019) found that due to the subjectivity around the understanding of the term sustainability in fashion, there is no concrete definition, but is rather defined depending on the perspective from which it is approached.

4.2. Sustainable fashion consumption and the attitude-behaviour gap

With the evolving nature of the concept of sustainability and the subjective understanding of what sustainable fashion constitutes to different individuals, sustainable consumer behaviour remains a complex and challenging phenomenon to explain, understand and predict (Jha and Sharma, 2017; Davies et al., 2019). Previous studies have linked this challenge to the identified gap which exists between consumers expressed positive attitudes regarding sustainability and the inconsistency in the translation of these positive attitudes into their actual consumption behaviour (Chang and Watchravesringkon, 2017; Bordi and Moon, 2019; Choi, Jung and Oh, 2020). As such, studies have shown that attitudes alone are not sufficient predictors of sustainable consumption (Balazs et al., 2018), leading researchers to explore the influence that certain individual, situational or social factors have on the relationship

between consumers attitudes and sustainable consumption behaviour (Chang and Watchravesringkan, 2017; Bardi and Moon, Gil et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) has been identified as a dominate theoretical framework used to explore the influence that positive environmental attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioural control have on consumers purchase intention towards sustainable apparel (Ciasullo, Maiane, Torre and Troisi, 2017; Chang and Watchravesringkon, 2017). Chang and Watchravesringkon (2017) applied this theory to sustainable apparel consumption and found that each of the three constructs in the theory had a positive influence on consumers purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion, implying that consumers in this study did act in accordance with their positive environmental attitudes.

Bardi and Moon (2019) found contrasting results in a study conducted among Swedish Millennial and Generation X consumers. The findings indicated that although these consumers are knowledgeable of the important impact of their sustainable consumption choices and express positive attitudes towards sustainable fashion consumption, they continue to consciously make unsustainable purchase decisions (Bardi and Moon, 2019). Consumers indicted that there are various external factors making sustainable fashion consumption not an obvious choice for consumers (Bardi and Moon, 2019). One of the most prominent external factors identified in this study was that consumers felt that they are never fully informed at the point of purchase for sustainable fashion, making the purchasing process time-consuming and complex (Bardi and Moon, 2019). Similarly, in a study among US and Chinese Millennial consumers, Gil et al. (2019) found although these consumers have general social and environmental responsibly knowledge, they lack knowledge specially of sustainability issues in the fashion industry which impacts their final sustainable fashion purchasing decisions.

It was found that when sustainability is not fully integrated into the decision-making process as an integral aspect of purchasing decisions, the attitude-behaviour gap remains constant as consumers fall back into their habitual consumption patterns dominated by preferences in price, design and aesthetic appeal over aspects of sustainability (Bardi and Moon, 2019; Gil et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020). In line with

these findings, Balazs et al. (2018) found that traditional consumption habits are difficult to change but sustainability will not be fully embraced without each consumer decisions to engage in sustainable consumption patterns. As such, Chang and Watchravesringkon (2017) and Choi et al. (2020) suggested that sustainable fashion brands need encourage consumers to perceive more value in their sustainable fashion products and choices.

4.3. The role of personal values in sustainable fashion consumption

Despite the varying views on what constitutes sustainability in fashion, Alevizou et al. (2016) argues that the foundation of slow and sustainable fashion is centred around sustainability values. Similarly, to create a more practical integration of sustainability, the UN (2022) Millennium Declaration has explicitly identified sustainability values (SVs) as freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility (Aride and Pámies-Pallisé, 2019). Sustainability values reflect the inherent characteristics of what constitutes a sustainable phenomenon or behaviour (Aride and Pámies-Pallisé, 2019). Whereas human values are motivational constructs that convey what is important to us and serve as guiding principles for the selection and evaluation of people, behaviours, events or phenomena (Bardi and Schwartz, 2003). Importantly, people tend to behave in ways that promote the attainment of goals that represent the values they hold as important principles in their lives (Schwartz, 2012).

Within the framework of Schwartz (1992) theory of basic human values, Aride and Pámies-Pallisé (2019) found that a relation does exists between SVs and human values. This indicates the importance of understanding the influence that values have on consumers behaviours in order to influence consumers to engage in sustainable consumption behaviour through sustainability-orientated values aligned with their own (Aride and Pámies-Pallisé, 2019). Similar findings were obtained by Davies and Lundblad (2016) through a study aimed at exploring the values and motivations behind sustainable fashion consumption by frequent sustainable consumers. The authors applied the Means-End Chain theory in the study and found that sustainable consumption behaviour among these consumers are driven by six values namely: self-expression, self-esteem, responsibility, protecting the planet and a sense of accomplishment.

A development on these findings was found in a study conducted by Jha and Sharma (2017) aimed at exploring the variation in influence that different types of personal values have on different categories of sustainable consumption behaviour across different cultures. The authors developed and tested a theoretical model, the Holistic Values Scale (HVS), which is an extension of Schwartz Value Scale (SVS) to include culturally specific values pertaining to the Indian culture in relation to sustainable consumption behaviour (Jha and Sharma, 2017).

Two significant findings came out of this study. Firstly, the authors found that there is a variation in the influence that certain personal values have on different categories of sustainable consumption behaviour, with a positive and significant relationship only found between values of acceptance; benevolence; compassion; self-direction; self-enrichment; self-evaluation; tradition and universalism with high levels of sustainable consumption behaviour (Jha and Sharma, 2017). As such, it was found that personal values do not influence all kinds of sustainable consumption behaviour, indicating the need to explore the influence of values with specific product categories for sustainable consumption.

Secondly, the authors tested the moderating role of environmental attitudes in the value-attitude-behaviour hierarchy and found that environmental attitudes only had a significant moderating role with relation to internally orientated values which intuitively explains that a positive attitude that supports an internal value will motivate consumers to act in that way (Jha and Sharma, 2017). These internally orientated values, such as the value dimensions of universalism, accomplishment and self-enrichment and which have a significant impact on sustainable consumption attitudes and behaviour, align with those identified by Davies and Lundblad (2016).

Similarly, to the findings of Jha and Sharma (2016), Gil et al., (2019) found that differences do exist in the value priorities between young Millennial Chinese and US consumers with relation to their attitudes and behaviour towards sustainable fashion consumption. Nonetheless, the study found that their respective personal value priorities and fashion sustainability knowledge had a significant positive impact on their attitudes and sustainable consumption behaviour (Gil et al., 2019). Using Schwartz

(1992) theory of basic human values, Gil et al. (209) found that hedonism, security and self-direction were held to greatest importance among Chinese Millennial consumer, while benevolence, self-direction and achievement were held in greatest importance among US millennial consumers.

Choi et al. (2020) took on a different approach to exploring the attitude-behavioural intention gap in sustainable fashion consumption by investigating the psychological determinants that inhibit sustainable fashion consumption. Specifically, Choi et al. (2020) explored the impact that consumption values and social norms have on Chinese consumers attitudes and purchase intentions towards sustainable fashion. The study found that aesthetic consumption values were found to be positive determinants of the attitude-behavioural intention gap, indicating that product attributes such as design, style and colour play an important determining role in the level of sustainable fashion consumption consumers engage in (Choi et al., 2020). As such, aesthetic appeal of sustainable consumption plays an important role in consumers sustainable consumption behaviour. Conspicuous values were found as a barrier to sustainable fashion consumption, indicating that consumers need a shift in mind set to perceive greater value in sustainable fashion opposed to showing off (Choi et al. 2020).

Chapter 5: Research Design and Methodology

5.1. Research paradigm

A research paradigm illustrates the perspective from which the researcher views the world constituting a set of common, abstract beliefs that will guide how problems and research data are understood and addressed (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). The research paradigm is imperative as it will inform the researchers conceptual lens in order to shape the research methodological process to successfully answer the research questions. Every paradigm is underpinned by their respective ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions which forms the guiding principles for the researcher (Guba, 1990).

An interpretivist paradigm has been identified as the most suitable in guiding the researcher to gain the relevant data to answer the research question and aim. Interpretivism, heavily influenced by phenomenology and considered to be the anti-positivist position, stipulates that researchers will attempt to understand and explain social phenomena through the clarification of the meanings different people ascribe to them (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The ontological position holds that reality is socially constructed via multiple perspectives, implying that there exists no single, verifiable reality outside of our immediate senses (Pham, 2018). This aligns with the current research aim as it allows for a deeper understanding of the diverse and unique perspectives and experiences of sustainable fashion within the South African context.

Furthermore, the epistemological position stipulates that knowledge is subjectively knowable as individuals ascribe their own set of beliefs, meanings, values and concepts to the social phenomena around them as they interact with each other and society (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Rehman and Alharthi (2016) emphasis that the researchers aim is not the attainment of universal, context and value free knowledge, but rather the ability to gain multiple knowledge perspectives, inclusive of the researcher herself, to build on the knowledge of the phenomena being explored. This position supports the research aim as it aligns with the exploration of the role that consumers personal values can play in bridging the gap between attitudes and sustainable fashion consumption behaviour.

The axiological position favours a flexible research structure which allows for greater opportunity for the researcher to gain the subjective experiences and meanings the participants ascribe to the phenomena of sustainable fashion (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). This is relevant for the current study as it allows the researcher to probe the participants in an interview for a deeper understanding of their guiding principles in life and how this relates to sustainable fashion.

5.2. Research approach and design

The following study was conducted using a qualitative approach to allow the researcher to explore and gain a deeper understanding of what personal values underpin sustainable fashion consumption behavior. An inductive approach was useful in this study as it allowed the researcher to identify themes coming out of the data being obtained from participants in order to seek fresh information associated with the research problem. This approach follows that the essence of multiple participants realities cannot be understood in isolation from their context, which aligns with the research aim to explore the role of personal values from millennial consumers within the South African context (Maree, 2020).

A phenomenological research design is typically associated with a qualitative research approach. Phenomenology focuses on exploring a phenomenon from the multiple perspectives of those who have lived experiences with the phenomenon, in order to gain a description of the essence of the experiences with the phenomenon under study (Nieuwenhuis, 2020: 850). Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio (2019) state that by exploring the meaning of phenomena as perceived and understood by people's subjective experiences, new meanings can be found to enhance or re-orientate the way we understand the phenomenon under study.

Previous research has found that sustainable fashion consumption is complex to explain and predict due to the meaning of sustainability and fashion being subjectively understood and experienced by different individuals in different contexts (Alevizou et al., 2016;). Accordingly, the phenomenological research design is well aligned with the current research, aimed at exploring the role of personal values on the relationship

between consumers attitudes and consumption behaviour towards sustainable fashion brands.

5.3. Research plan

5.3.1. Population

In order to specify the population, the researcher established population parameters that distinguishes between the general, target and accessible population and aligns with the aim of the current research study (Asiamah, Mensah and Oteng-Aboyie, 2017). The target population refers to the entire group of participants that possess specific characteristics that are of relevance to the research study and are therefore able to contribute adequate experiences and thoughts towards exploring the research problem and answering the research question (Asiamah *et al.*, 2017). The following parameters have been established to define the target population:

Participants in this study were consumers have engaged sustainable fashion and fast fashion consumption. Additionally, because the study explicitly focuses on millennial sustainable fashion consumers, all participants were between the ages of 23-38, born between the years of 1981-1996 (Dimock, 2019). All participants in the study were South African citizens as the study sought to gain a deeper understanding within the South African context specifically.

The Covid-19 global pandemic has created a challenge in the ease of gaining access to participants due to the social distancing regulations. Although this does pose a constraint, the researcher was able to gain access to participants from KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape via Zoom Interviews. This allows the researcher to adhere to social distancing restrictions as well as gaining a wider perspective and scope on the study. This did however limit the accessible population to participants who had access to internet connectivity and a computer to conduct the interview via Zoom.

5.3.2. Sampling

The process of sampling involves selecting a subset of participants from the defined, accessible population who are able to provide rich information for the phenomena under study (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). By establishing a qualitative sampling plan,

the researcher was able to identify the sampling method, sample size and the procedure for recruitment of participants to partake in the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

Aligned with the research aim and the population parameters, the unit of analysis for the research study were millennial, sustainable fashion consumers who reside in South Africa, as the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem from the perspective of participants who have lived experiences with the phenomena under study.

In line with the research aim, purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was identified as the most appropriate sampling method which allowed the researcher to use her subjective discretion to select participants according to the pre-determined qualifying criteria for the research study, as mentioned above (Bala and Etikan, 2017). As such, participants who were South African citizens, between the ages of 23-38, have engaged in sustainable fashion and fast fashion consumption were purposefully selected by the researcher to be a part of the research sample.

This method aligns with the criteria of phenomenological research design which specifically focuses on participants shared lived experiences with the phenomena being studied (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). This method ensured that the researcher interviewed participants who were able to provide rich and detailed information that contributed to the in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). Participants shared different opinions of the research phenomena and were willing to articulate, reflect and share about it with the researcher (Bala and Etikan, 2017).

Due to time constraints and the Covid-19 social distancing restrictions, the researcher was only able to access three participants for the study. This sample size is small and not representative of the population; however, the sample size aligned with the exploratory nature of the study to gain in-depth insight into the role that consumers personal values have on their attitudes and consumption behavior towards sustainable fashion brands. Korstjens and Moser (2018) argue that phenomenological studies require fewer than ten interviews to reach data saturation which is the point where enough in-depth data was obtained to identify the themes and categories related to

the research problem. When no new ideas or insights are uncovered in the data collection and analysis process, the data is said to be saturated (Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

5.3.3. Data-collection method

The data-collection process aligned with a qualitative research design involved systematically and consistently gathering the necessary information from the research sample in order to generate the in-depth, rich and descriptive data needed to answer the research questions (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Adopting a qualitative data collection method enabled the researcher to take on a flexible and engaging approach with the participants in order to extract meaning out of the data that is grounded in human experience (Nowell, Norris, Moules and White, 2017; Korstjens and Moser, 2018). This enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the role that personal values can have in sustainable fashion consumption from the perspectives of sustainable fashion consumers (Korstjens and Moser, 2018).

The following research study made use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, conducted via Zoom, as the primary data-collection method. In line with the purpose and theoretical framework utilized in the current study, the researcher used a laddering technique to conduct the semi-structured interviews. The laddering technique is the most dominantly used interviewing technique within the Means-End Chain theory framework and can be described as “an in-depth one-on-one interviewing technique used to develop an understanding of how consumers translate the attributes of products into meaningful associations with respect to the self” (Gutman and Reynolds, 1988: 2).

The goal of the laddering technique is to elicit a set of personally relevant linkages between the attributes of a product, the consequences incurred by the consumer as a result of the product attributes and the underlying values these consequences reinforce (Gutman and Reynolds, 1998). This is done through a tailored interviewing guide using primarily a set of directed probes with focus on the question “why is that important to you?” in order to engage respondents to think critically about the underlying motivations for their choice of products (Gutman and Reynolds, 1988). The researcher began the interviews using a ‘difference by occasion’ technique whereby the researcher placed the participant into the consumption context and asked them to

describe the characteristics of this consumption (Campomar, Ikeda and Veludo-de-Oliveira, 2006). The semi-structured interview guide, which can be found in Annexure D, allowed for the set-up of defining different product attributes as indicated as important to the participant, thereafter from which the researcher was able to stimulate the respondents up a ladder of abstraction until the set of personal values were reached (Campomar et al., 2006).

The use of semi-structured interviews and the laddering technique allowed the researcher to be attentive to emerging themes or lines of inquiry that were brought up as important to the participant but had not been previously considered as integral to the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). This ensured that the depth of data collection was not limited by the researchers own barriers and allowed for further exploration of ideas that emerged in the interview (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The flexibility of this approach, as opposed to structured interviews, enabled the research to probe for further elaboration, clarification or detail on the participants responses in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the underlying values that play a role in millennial consumers sustainable fashion consumption behavior, and to obtain the ACV chain.

The researcher took the following steps towards a rigorous data-collection process. It is important to note that due to the context of the Covid-19 global pandemic and the social distancing regulations imposed by government, there were certain obstacles in the researcher's data-collection method that required the researcher to adapt to.

To ensure that the adapted data-collection method produced the rich, in-depth information required to answer the research questions, the researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews via online Zoom interviews, continuing to give the researcher the ability to probe and evaluate participants body language to a certain extent. This adaptation proved to be advantageous for the researcher as the use of technology enhanced the speed and ease of the data-collection process and gave the researcher access to participants outside of her immediate geographical location, widening the accessible population, while still adhering to the population parameters.

The researcher began the data-collection process by selecting participants according to abovementioned non-probability, purposive sampling method and in line with the

qualifying criteria needed to partake in the study. The researcher made contact with the target population through WhatsApp to inquire which of these possible participants would be willing to partake in the research study. These participants were known by the researcher and thus the researcher already had their cellphone numbers. Among the target population, three participants indicated their willingness to participate in the study, who the researcher then selected as part of the research sample.

The participants email address was obtained via WhatsApp in order to send each of the participants a participation and recording consent form to be signed and returned to the researcher. This is a critical step in the data collection process as it informs the participant of the scope of the study, their voluntary participation and confirms that their anonymity and confidentiality in the study is guaranteed.

Once all the signed consent forms were received back from the participants, the researcher scheduled all the Zoom interviews to take place on a single Saturday to ensure that the data-collection was done as consistently and systematically as possible. To further enhance the consistency and credibility of the data-collection process, the interview guides were not sent to any of the participants prior to the interview, which may have resulted in biased opinions or responses formed. The interview schedule with the three participants within the sample was finalized as follows:

Participant	Time slot
Participant 1	10h00 – 10h30
Participant 2	11h00 – 11h30
Participant 3	12h00 -12h30

Table 2: Interview Schedule

Prior to each interview time slot, the participants were sent an invite link via email to join their respective Zoom interview. The researcher allowed participants to speak freely in order to encourage participants to share about their personal experiences, their emotions and their feelings in relation to their attitudes and behaviors towards sustainable fashion. Whilst each interview was recorded, reflective notes were taken

by the researcher during each live interview conducted. After the last interview, the researcher transcribed each interview verbatim in order to systematically and coherently prepare the data for a rigorous data analysis process.

5.3.4. Data-analysis method

Qualitative-data analysis is an on-going and iterative process that is grounded in an interpretative philosophy that aims to uncover the meaning that participants ascribe to the phenomena under study through an analysis of their attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values and experiences with the phenomena being studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). A rigorous and transparent data-analysis process is a central aspect to producing credible and meaningful qualitative research findings (Delahunt and Maguire, 2017). When conducting data-analysis aligned with a qualitative research design, the researcher became the primary instrument of analysis through their subjective understanding, description and interpretation of the participants lived experiences with the phenomena under study (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher used their subjective judgment to organize the raw data into codes, themes and categories to gain a deeper understanding and interpretation of the meaning that is emerging out of the data collected (Delahunt and Maguire, 2017).

The data analysis method that was best suited and utilized for the current research study was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, organizing, interpreting and explaining themes identified within the qualitative data set (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Being a method, as opposed to a methodology, thematic analysis is a flexible approach as it does not require adherence to any particular theoretical or epistemological framework or perspective (Delahunt and Maguire, 2017). This gave the researcher the flexibility to modify the approach to align with the needs of the current study in order to obtain a rich, detailed and insightful account of the data (Nowell et al., 2017).

This method aligns with the phenomenological research design, as phenomenological data analysis focuses on gaining a clear reflection on the lived experience of the participants that is, as far as possible, free from any theoretical or prejudicial assumptions in order to extract the deeper meaning from participants lived experiences. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to seek out something

interesting about people's knowledge, experiences or values in relation to the research phenomena in order to extract findings that are significantly relevant towards answering the research question.

The researcher conducted the data-analysis inductively in order to derive a deeper analysis of the role that these personal values may have on the relationship between consumers attitudes and consumption behavior towards sustainable fashion brands. As such, the researcher used the existing values theory to derive new themes emerging out of the data set that are of significant relevance to understanding the research problem of the attitude-behavior that exists in consumers sustainable fashion consumption behavior. In this way, the researcher conducted a latent thematic analysis, in order to look beyond what is simply said toward interpreting and explaining the underlying ideas and motivations that informs the textual data (Delahunt and Maguire, 2017).

Although the flexibility of the approach is beneficial for the researcher, Nowell *et al.* (2017) emphasize that the data-analysis process needs to be systematically and rigorously conducted and disclosed in order to establish trustworthiness and credibility of the research study. The researcher followed on from the data-collection process by transcribing the audio and visual recordings verbatim from the interviews into a word document. A copy of these transcriptions was made and kept on an external hard drive. The following study utilized an iterative 6-phase framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006) in order to conduct a rigorous thematic analysis.

Firstly, the researcher became immersed and familiarized with the raw data in order to gain a holistic understanding and overview of the entire data set (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). The researcher read through all of the transcripts twice as well as relistened to the recordings, while creating a reflective journal containing initial impressions, insights and ideas emerging from the first engagement with the data set (Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

Secondly, the researcher began generating initial codes throughout the data set (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Before the coding process began, the researcher downloaded Microsoft Word Ad-in as a free tool that can be used for the qualitative data-analysis.

Using a digital tool to aid the researcher in the data-analysis process was advantageous for a number of reasons, especially in light of the Covid-19 global pandemic creating greater time restraints on the research study. The use of Microsoft Word Ad-in reduced the time needed to handle the raw data by enhancing the effectiveness; efficiency; flexibility; adaptability and rigor of the data-analysis process for the researcher. The researcher was however aware of the concern of the dehumanizing effect of technology dominating the qualitative data-collection process, of which the researcher was cognizant of in order to mitigate these concerns (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The researcher maximized the use of digital technology to engage in a heuristic process of collecting, searching and finding, connecting and transcendent interpretation (Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

Making use of Word Ad-in, the coding process involved systematically organizing the data into distinctive, meaningful segments by assigning codes that captures interesting characteristics the researcher identified in the data, which would later form the basis of the themes across the entire data set that relates to the research question (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). These codes act as heuristic tools that enhance further interpretation of the deeper, underlying ideas or assumptions within the data set (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The researcher worked through the entire document, highlighting the identified meaningful segments of textual data and coding it accordingly. The researcher assigned line number that restart on each page in order to create a more systematic and organized analysis that can be easily referred back to.

Once the entire data set had been coded, the researcher exported the coded data into an excel spreadsheet. Having the coded data set in excel allowed the researcher to manipulate, organize and analyze the data in a more efficient and systematic way. The researcher added in another column on the excel spread sheet that includes the reflective notes that were taken during the live interviews.

On the excel spread sheet, the researcher began the third step in the thematic analysis process. The researcher began searching for themes by categorizing all the relevant codes into an organized system that aided the researcher in making sense of the data set. Themes were generated by grouping content that shared a commonality and

which captures the nature of the experience into a meaningful whole (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). This process involved combining several codes into a single theme representative of a pattern identified among them. At the end of this process, all of the generated codes in step 2 were captured in broader themes that reflected something specific and interesting about the research problem and directly addressed the research questions (Delahunt and Maguire, 2017).

Next, the researcher reviewed the themes that had been identified by gathering all the data associated with each theme to determine if each theme was wholly supported by the data in a concise manner (Delahunt and Maguire, 2017). The validity of the themes was examined by identifying whether each theme accurately reflects the meaning in the data and functions in the context of the whole data set (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Through this refinement process of the themes, the researcher began to establish a clear understanding and interpretation of the themes that had emerged out of the data.

Fifth, the researcher identified the essence of each theme by defining each theme in relation to the data set and the overall research question (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). This involved creating a thematic map that captures the interaction and relationship between the themes such that the researcher could establish a more coherent definition of the theme in the context of the current research study (Delahunt and Maguire, 2017). Defining the themes, sub-themes and codes assisted the researcher in the gaining a thorough understanding of the data findings. Lastly, the themes and how they are related to one another was presented in the research results, and the researcher's interpretation of these findings was discussed in the discussion of the research report, all found within Chapter 4 of the following research report.

5.4. Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers strive to obtain trustworthiness of the research findings according to criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). Firstly, credibility refers to the truth-aspect of the research findings and concerns itself with the question of whether the findings can be trusted by the reader and are congruent with reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Credibility of the following research findings have been established through a thorough description and alignment of the research design, methods and theoretical framework

to address the research problem (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The researcher provided a detailed story of the data obtained from participants, by embedding pieces of the raw data along with the research interpretation, discussion and links to previous literature in order to provide the reader with a full understanding of the data, the findings and interpretations made.

Secondly, transferability refers to the extent to which the research results can be transferred into different context among different participants or readers of the research report (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). The transferability of the research results of the current study is limited due to small sample size, however the results are sound and thus can be transferable if the study is conducted among a larger sample size. However, for the context of this research report the researcher has provided a thick description of the findings and interpretation thereof, giving the reader a full account of the context, participants and the research design utilized such that the reader can make their own connections between elements of the study and their own experiences or research (Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

Thirdly, dependability has been achieved in the following research report through an extensive audit trail from the initial research design through to a full documentation of how the data was collected and analysed (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). This process ensures that the reader of this research report will have a clear understanding of the researchers reasoning and how the researched arrived at the interpretation of findings and conclusions made (Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

Lastly, confirmability refers to the extent to which the research findings and interpretations can be analysed and confirmed by external researchers as findings shaped by the participants and not by the researchers own bias or motivation (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). To ensure confirmability, the transparency of the data analysis method is assured through the explicit step-by-step explanation of the data-analysis process to ensure the researchers analysis is grounded in the data, both primary and secondary (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The researcher was cognizant to not use any quotes out of context and provided a contextualization to illustrate why the quote was included in the discussion of findings. Enough text was reproduced to ensure the

reader has the ability to decide, objectively, what the participant was conveying (Nieuwenhuis, 2020).

Chapter 6: Findings and Interpretation of Findings

6.1. Presentation of findings

The Means-End Chain Theory (Gutman, 1982) and Schwartz (1992) Theory of Basic Human Values utilized in the study allowed the researcher to explore and gain an understanding of the attributes which inform consumers preferences for sustainable fashion and how these are linked to various functional, psychological and social consequences which in turn satisfy particular personal values (Hur, 2020). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews using a laddering technique to elicit the attribute-consequence-value chains (Bako, 2013). Thereafter, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify four main themes that contribute to answering the research objectives and questions.

To reiterate, the purpose of the following research study was to explore what personal values underpin and motivate sustainable fashion consumption behavior and what role these could play in bridging the gap between consumers attributes and consumption behavior towards sustainable fashion brands.

The key components of the attribute-consequence-value chain found through the data-analysis process are illustrated in Table 3: Overall components of the A-C-V model (Gutman, 1982).

Attributes	(1) Circular Fashion (2) Unique Styles (3) Good Condition (4) Affordable (5) Thrifted (6) Local (7) Transparency (8) Natural Materials (9) Environmental and ethical aspects (10) Sensory aspects (11) Availability
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Functional Consequences	(12) Less frequent buying (13) Minimize environmental impact
Psychological Consequences	(14) Feeling of excitement (15) Feeling of satisfaction (16) Feeling unique (17) Feeling very pleased (18) Hedonic experience (19) Value for money (20) Individuality (21) Responsibility (22) Rewarding (23) Cherished (24) Personalization of experience
Social consequences	(25) Supporting the community
Values	(26) Achievement (27) Hedonism (28) Self-Direction (29) Universalism (30) Benevolence

Table 3: Components of the A-C-V model (Gutman, 1982)

Following an inductive approach and a rigorous thematic analysis, the following themes were identified by the researcher which represent the broader categories in which the means-end linkages falls into.

6.2. Interpretation and discussion of findings in context of broader research problem

Theme 1: Circular fashion

The fast fashion industry drives fast-changing trends which results in increased consumption and a throwaway fashion culture resulting in increased textile waste and environmental damage (Davies et al., 2019). Circular fashion aims to breaks this trend with fashion items that are designed, sourced, produced and utilized with the intention

to keep the materials and products in the loop while maintaining its most valuable form (Harlin, Heikkilä, Mensonen and Vehmas, 2018). This requires the active engagement from consumers in activities such as purchasing of durable textiles, careful care to extend the lifespan of clothing, repairing and reusing garments and recycling that which is not reusable (Harlin et al., 2018).

Sub-theme: Key attributes contributing to circular fashion

The first indication of the circular fashion theme was found in particular attributes that were expressed as important considerations by the participants. When asked *“Can you tell me what characteristics of the fashion item you took into consideration when making your last sustainable fashion purchase?”*, participants indicated the consideration of the item being *thrifed*:

“For starters, a big thing there is the support of somewhere that I know that this has 100% been thrifed, it’s had a prior life, it’s not been newly made” – Participant 1

The researcher found that thrifting is a common activity among participants interviewed with indications such as:

“I recently bought something from this thrifting kind of business” – Participant 3

“It’s so fantastic in that you can go to Observatory, you can go to Woodstock, there’s just thrift stores everywhere” – Participant 1

Participants further indicated that while one important attribute falls on the item being *thrifed*; the other equally important attribute falls on the item being in *Good Condition*:

“If you are reselling something for a price that I would pay for it probably in a normal retail store it has to be in perfect condition” – Participant 2

Similar findings from Harlin et al. (2018) indicated that consumers expected the quality of circular fashion to be equivalent to that of new garments.

Interestingly, the researcher found that the participants emphasis on *good quality* as an important attribute is directly linked to their ability to contribute to circular fashion in various ways:

“It has to be in good condition still so that I would even be able to pass it along after I’m done with it...to still fall into the sustainable loop” – Participant 2

“I just want good clothing that I can take good care of so that they can go to a new home because I know that it is inevitable that I am going to buy new clothes” – Participant 2

“I really try make it a point in my life to get new clothes but to also then give some of my clothes away... I end up with kind of the same amount of clothing just kind of in a flow and if I don’t have good quality clothing then I can’t really give them away or sell them again so that kind of stops the whole flow” – Participant 2

The emphasis that participants place on the importance of *good quality* clothing such that they can extend the lifespan of the item aligns with the findings from Davies and Lundblad (2016) who found that consumers are motivated to buy sustainable clothing that are of good quality as this is associated with long-lasting, durability of the clothing items that resultingly enhances the value for money of the item.

Furthermore, the researcher found that participants indicated that they would be willing to pay more money for a thrifted item if it has both attributes of *good quality* and a *unique style*:

“If I find an item that that’s really good quality and unique, I would personally make the choice to spend more money on something that I knew I could look after and cherish” – Participant 3

This finding indicates that the participant is aware that if they spend more money on something that is good quality and a unique style, they will keep this item for longer and in the long run save money, while being sustainable. Uniqueness of the sustainable and/or thrifted fashion item is further identified as an important attribute

among participants as it leads to multiple desired psychological consequences for the participants:

“Although it is not my initial like cool, I want to do this cause I’ll look unique, it’s a really epic bonus to me that I can now be sustainable and know that no one else will look like me... its definitely a big part of how I would like to present myself as a person like more uniquely” – Participant 3

This finding indicates the importance of the personal value of self-direction, as the freedom to independent thought and actions through the way one chooses to dress and style themselves (Schwartz, 1992).

Lastly, the unique attribute of a fashion item was found to be closely linked to the hedonic experience of taking the time to search and find that unique piece of clothing that one has been looking for some time, emphasizing the underlying value of hedonism among these consumers.

“I feel like me putting my efforts into really kind of find something that exactly suits the image that I had in my mind, it just makes me so much happier when I actually find it, it makes me cherish the piece so much more I think that the emotional benefit that I get from it is that I’m very proud of myself” – Participant 2

The researcher found that these participants enjoy the process of looking through a secondhand store to find a unique piece of clothing due to the sensory and rewarding nature of it:

“Definitely more sustainable for me to go to something like Never New, which is more of a like super chaotic... when I finally find something in a place like that it is so rewarding to me and being sustainable at the same time” – Participant 3

“You can sift through, feel the things yourself, try them on, see if there are any imperceptions” – Participant 1

These findings align with those of Hur (2020) who found that consumers were motivated to engage in sustainable fashion consumption for the hedonic experience of treasure hunting for something unique, revealing the personal value of hedonic and self-expressive values.

Theme 2: Environmental aspects

The researcher found that in the current study participants emphasize the importance of environmental aspects as a desired consequence of the alternative considerations away from fast fashion brands in the purchasing process for their clothing. Participants indicated that:

“What initially triggered it was definitely the ethical and environment aspects” – Participant 3

“I mean I really don’t buy clothing from those big brands because of quite a deep knowledge of the clothing production that happens before it lands up in those shops” – Participant 1

Thereafter, the researcher found environmental aspects to be a functional consequence, *minimizing environmental impact*, of the product attributes of the item being *thrifted* and made of *natural materials*:

“It lived with another person...I don’t necessarily know where its coming from, but I know that it hasn’t started there from scratch and if I can minimize my effect, especially on the environmental impact of farming cotton... then I’d rather know that I’ve sat along the same production line as the previous person rather than kicking up a whole other one for what I am buying” – Participant 1

“It’s really important to me because, every time we wash synthetic materials it releases microfibers and microplastics, every time that you are washing a piece of clothing that’s not made of natural materials you are contributing to the amount of plastic and waste that is in the earth and in the ocean” – Participant 2

The above findings indicate that the participants knowledge of the harmful and destructive effects of both fast fashion production practices and the post-consumption side of fast fashion plays an important role in consumers purchasing motivations towards sustainable and/or thrifted fashion items. Such motivations are underpinned by personal value of *universalism* which motivates individuals to appreciate and protect the welfare of all people and of nature (Schwartz, 2012).

This finding aligns with Hur (2020) that found that ‘being environmentally’ friendly was a functional consequence of a sustainable product attribute. While these findings are slightly in contrast with Harlin et al. (2018) who found that consumers end of the life cycle of their clothing rather than finding out what happens at the beginning of the life cycle, whereas participants in this study are interested in the full life cycle of their clothing and impact thereof.

Theme 3: Local

Contributing to the third theme that was identified to have significant relevance to the research study, the researcher found that participants value supporting local sustainable businesses for various reasons. Firstly, participants indicated that:

“If you can buy local then you are supporting the side that is sustainable in terms of its not coming from Europe or its not you know travelling by airplane and you’re helping in terms of CO2 emission” - Participant 3

This again indicates the consumer holistic thinking of the whole journey of their fashion item, where their purchasing decision to buy local has a greater consequence of minimizing the environmental impact of their fashion consumption. Furthermore, the researcher found that supporting local results in psychosocial consequences for the consumer:

“I also know where she has actually bought it from having been to the little charity shop that she picks it up from... it’s also having known its knock-on effect and assisting or putting money into something like that” – Participant 1

“A lot of attention for me personally on supporting local businesses during Covid because we know that our locals have struggled” – Participant 3

“I’m supporting this like young woman in her like business and its affordable and unique yeah” – Participant 3

This is an important factor as Harlin et al. (2018) found that consumer feel powerless over what happens at the beginning of the lifecycle because their clothing is often produced in faraway developing countries. In supporting local, this study found that consumers have a greater connection to the full production process of their clothing and thus feel a greater desire to support these local brands. This is indicative of the personal value of benevolence, as the motivation to enhance the welfare of people of which one is in frequent contact with. This aligns with the findings of Jha and Sharma (2017) who found that benevolence has a strong influencing role on sustainable consumption behavior.

Theme 4: Barriers

While the availability of online thrifting increases consumer’s availability of sustainable fashion choices, the researcher found participants indicate that this does come with possible risks. The researcher found that millennial consumers actively engage in purchasing online which enhances their ease of access to make sustainable fashion purchases and is ascribed to the attribute of *Availability*:

“It’s been so fantastic in 2020 as well because like you want to be sustainable in your fashion go to Instagram” – Participant 1

However, participants indicated that they had negative experiences with certain online, thrifting purchases:

“It had a bunch of stains on it so that the person didn’t tell me about it... that really put me off” – Participant 2

“I have bought some things once or twice from Instagram platform and just been like aah this is not what I’ve been so excited about” – Participant 1

While the above findings indicate that negative online experiences do occur with thrifting and sustainable purchases, the researcher found that participants are aware of the chance of this happening and indicate why they choose to engage with only brands that are authentic, honest and that they can trust:

“I understand that’s a part of a lot of things so that just kind of only put me off because the person didn’t tell me about it” – Participant 2

“I love shopping from Marne because I trust her completely... there’s that honesty about people that you can rely on” – Participant 1

“Just being I think a bit critical about like how authentic the space is... I’ll always go back to those spaces other than random spots you know” – Participant 1

“I had a personal interaction with her, and I know that I am supporting a good person who is doing a good thing” – Participant 3

Overall, all of the participants indicate that transparency of the brand is imperative when it comes to the relationship between the consumer and the brand, indicating that these participants are aware of greenwashing practices.

“There is such massive greenwashing schemes seen” – Participant 1

“I think especially in the business of sustainable fashion transparency is at the heart of it” – Participant 2

“the best thing about transparency is that you have nothing to hide... it makes your purchasing decision easier because you actually know that you are making a sustainable choice” – Participant 3

These findings align with that of Harlin et al. (2018) who found that transparency of the whole production process is crucial to increase consumer trust of sustainable fashion brands.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In line with the abovementioned research findings, interpretation and discussion, the research objectives can be addressed as follows:

Objective 1: To determine what key attributes consumer look for in sustainable fashion.

In line with the findings illustrated in Table 3 above, 11 key attributes were identified as important considerations for millennials consumers when seeking sustainable fashion. Unique styles, good condition and natural materials are attributes that align with previous literature as important considerations for consumers in sustainable fashion consumption. What was unique to the context of the following research report was the participants emphasis on the attributes of local and thrifted.

Objective 2: To explore why millennial consumers are motivated to buy sustainable fashion

In order to address this research objective, reference is made to consequences and values that were elicited from the initial attributes identified as important to the participants. The full set of consequences elicited from the participants is set out in Table 3 above. The key takeaway is that South African millennials consumers consider the holistic impact of their sustainable consumption choices, including the benefits to the environment, to the self and to their local community. As such, benevolence, self-direction, hedonism and universalism stand as the personal values that underpin and motivate sustainable fashion consumption behaviour.

Objective 3: To determine any barriers to sustainable fashion consumption

Participants in this study showed great wiliness to engage in sustainable fashion consumption, whilst expressing their knowledge of the risks that may be involved. As such, a possible barrier that was identified in the study is a lack of honesty and transparency of sustainable brands. Participants seek and place great importance on engaging with brands that are authentic and trustworthy.

Main research question:

From the above, it can be concluded that

Chapter 8: Overview of study

8.1. Heuristic Value

The purpose of the following research study was to explore what personal values underpin sustainable fashion consumption behaviour and the role these might play in bridging the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behaviour towards sustainable fashion brands. This study contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding the research problem from a South African perspective, whereas previous research has been dominated by Western perspectives. By exploring what personal values are prevalent among sustainable fashion consumers in the South African market, sustainable fashion brands can potentially align their communication strategies with these values in order effectively influence consumer sustainable behaviour. As such, the study aims to contribute a possible strategy to bridging the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behaviour towards sustainable fashion through the influencing role of personal values.

8.2. Ethical considerations

Due to the specific and in-depth nature of the process of research inquiry associated with qualitative studies, adherence to ethical standards is imperative to ensure the protection of the human participants partaking in the study (Afrin, 2018). Firstly, the proposed research study was approved by the ethics committee at Vega through the provision of an ethical clearance form, attached below. Secondly, as the research study required the involvement of human participants, the following ethical procedures were adhered to:

All participants were informed of the full scope of the study, including the goals of the research study, the nature of the study, the reason for the researcher's involvement and the credentials of the researcher (Maree, 2020). Once the participants were fully informed of the research process, those participants who agree to partake in the study were asked to sign a research consent forms (Afrin, 2018). The consent form informed participants that their participation in the study was voluntary, and should they wish to withdraw at any time during the interview, they were free to do so (Maree, 2020).

Participants anonymity and confidentiality in the study was assured as their identity and responses were kept confidential and only used for academic purposes by the researcher (Afrin, 2018). All information gathered in this study has been kept as a hard copy and can be made available to any persons who requests this information. This research is aimed at benefitting the participants being researched and external beneficiaries to the content being gathered.

8.3. Limitations

The Covid-19 global pandemic created certain limitations for the current research study. Firstly, the nation-wide lockdown, social distancing restrictions and the phased reopening of the economy created limitations in the researcher's time and ease of access to participants for the research study. As such, the sample size of three participants is not representative of the population and thus the findings of the study cannot be generalized to the larger population.

However, in line with the current research study that aimed to explore what personal values underpin and motivate sustainable fashion consumption and the role these values can play in bridging the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behavior towards sustainable fashion brands, the smaller sample size allows the researcher to gain a deep, rich and detailed account of the data pertaining to the research problem. Through a systematic and rigorous data analysis process, the findings from the current study can be tested among a larger sample size in future studies. Due to the social distancing restriction, the researcher was unable to conduct face to face interviews, however with the advance of technology, these interviews were conducted via online Zoom interviews. The researcher was however limited in her analysis of body language during the interview due to the limited interaction through the online Zoom platform. Being an entry level researcher, the interviewing technique of laddering is advisable to be used amongst more experienced researchers, this may have impacted the quality of the data collected by the researcher due to their lack of experience in conducting research.

Annexure A: Ethical clearance letter



11 September 2020



Student name: Skye Mavourneen O'Leary

Campus: Vega Bordeaux



Re: Approval of BA Strategic Brand Communications Proposal and Ethics Clearance



HONOURS/PGDIP ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.



Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

ADvTECH HOUSE

Inanda Greens
54 Wierda Rd West
Wierda Valley 2196
P.O. Box 2369
Randburg 2125



Directors: RJ Douglas (UK), JDR Oesch, MD Aitken, FJ Coughlan
Group Company Secretary: KN Piki

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GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor: Mbali Ramet

Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC): Dr Tish Taylor

Annexure B: Participant consent form

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by SKYE MAVOURNEEN O'LEARY exploring the underlying purchasing motivations for sustainable fashion consumption and the role they may play in bridging the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behaviour for sustainable fashion brands. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:	
• I agree to be interviewed for this research.	
• My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.	
• My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.	
• I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.	
• I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.	
Signature	Date

Annexure C: Audio and video consent form

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow SKYE O'LEARY to audio record my interviews as part of the research study being conducted. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:	
• My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.	
• The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer.	
• Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature	Date

Annexure D: Semi-structured interview guide

Hello (participant name). I just want to thank you again for taking the time to participate in this research study. To reiterate, the purpose of this research is to explore the underlying purchasing motivations for sustainable fashion and the role these may play in bridging the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behavior for sustainable fashion.

Please can you confirm that you have read, understood and signed the consent forms I sent to you earlier? (Thank you), and just to remind you then that this interview will be recorded for transcribing purposes only. Your identity will be kept confidential and your answers will be used strictly for academic purposes only.

Before we begin, I would just like to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers, I am looking to gain a deeper understanding from your perspective and experience in line with the research purpose. Please feel free to ask questions at any time should you wish to.

To place this research in context, sustainable fashion has been defined as: the multiple ways by which a fashion item or behavior is considered to be more sustainable, which includes, but is not limited to, environmental, social, slow fashion, reuse, recycled, cruelty-free and anti-consumption and production practices (Davies et al., 2019).

Let's begin:

Okay, I would like you to think of the last time you made a sustainable fashion purchase or acquired an item of sustainable fashion.

1. Can you tell me what characteristics of the fashion item you took into consideration when making the sustainable fashion purchase or acquired the sustainable fashion item?
 - Probe: What are the three most important attributes/characteristics you took into consideration?
 - Probe: What attributes/characteristics of the product would most likely make you buy sustainable in the future?

2. In your experience, are there any attributes that would stop you from buying sustainable again?
 - Have you been unsatisfied with a sustainable purchase and why?

Functional and psychosocial consequences

NOTE THREE ATTRIBUTES FROM ABOVE

3. You mentioned (attribute), why is this an important consideration for you?
 - Probe: can you please elaborate on why you would consider this to be an important factor for you?
4. What do you feel (attribute) does for you?
 - Probe: Why is it important that it does this for you?
5. How does (attribute) make you feel?

Annexure E: Concept Document Template

TITLE: Exploring what personal values motivate sustainable fashion consumption behaviour.

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
o explore what personal values underpin and motivate millennial consumers sustainable fashion consumption behaviour and what role these personal values can play in bridging the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behaviour towards sustainable fashion brands	1 What personal values underpin millennial consumers sustainable fashion consumption behaviour and what role can these personal values play in bridging the gap between consumers attitudes consumption behaviour towards sustainable fashion brands?	he development o a sustainable fashion system is complex and requires consumers to shi t towards conscious consumption choices However there remains an attitude-behaviour gap identi ed in previous literature Gap to identi y what role values can play in bridging this gap	Shalom H Schwartz (1992) Jonathan Gutman (1982) Gutman and Reynolds (1988)	1 Sustainable Fashion 2 Sustainable fashion consumption and the attitude-behaviour gap 3 he role o personal values in sustainable fashion consumption	nterpretivist paradigm <u>Ontology</u> reality is seen to be socially constructed <u>Epistemology</u> understanding reality and its shared meaning rom people s subjective experiences <u>Axiology</u> value flexible research structures which can capture meanings and subjective experience	Qualitative exploratory approach Population Population parameters South A rican Millennial between the ages o 23-38 Engaged in sustainable fashion consumption and ast fashion	Semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom Use o a laddering interview technique to elicit ACV chains and uncover the underlying personal values that motivates sustainable fashion consumption behaviour	Research study approved by Ethics Committee Participants ully in ormed o the ull scope o the study Participants anonymity and con identiality assured Participants in ormed that their participation is voluntary and can withdraw rom the study at any time Research indings available to anyone who request them	A dominant set o underlying values should come out o the data which re lects consumers motivations to purchase sustainable fashion	Choi Jung and Oh (2020) Chang H J and Watchravesringkon K 2018 Davies Glozer S McDonagh P and Mukendi A (2019) Davies A and Lundblad L (2016)
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Anticipated Contribution	Jha and Sharma (2017) Schwartz (1992 1994 1995 1996 2006 2012) Zhou Gil and Watchravesringkon (2019)
Destructive environmental impacts and social inequalities o ast fashion require a shi t in consumer behaviour towards sustainable While consumer express positive attitudes towards sustainability it is not consistent in their behaviour Values are said to play a guiding role in behaviour but there is lack o research on this in SA context	1 1 What are the key attributes that millennial consumers look or in sustainable fashion? 1 2 Why are millennial consumers motivated to buy sustainable fashion? 1 3 What are the barriers to purchasing sustainable fashion consumption?	Sustainable fashion Personal Values Consumer attitudes Consumer behaviour Sustainable consumer behaviour he attitude-behaviour gap	Schwartz (1992) heory o Basic Human Values Gutman (1982) Means-End Chain heory			Non-probability purposive sampling Sample size 3 participants	hematic Analysis	Covid-19 social distancing restrictions imposed by government constrained the researchers ease o access to participants Unable to conduct ace-to- ace interviews	Providing sustainable fashion brands in South A rica with the insight into the personal values that motivate sustainable fashion consumption Possible solution to develop communication strategies that can bridge the gap between consumers attitudes and consumption behaviour	

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