



**An exploration of consumer attitude and sustainable purchase  
intention within the fashion industry.**

By

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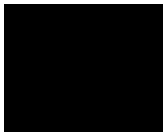
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**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the research report submitted for the Honours in Strategic Brand Communication at The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE) is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for a postgraduate qualification.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research probed at the emerging intention-behaviour-gap in the sustainable purchasing decisions of consumers within the South African fashion industry, through an exploration of consumers attitude towards sustainability. Insight into this problem was guided, and gained, through the theory of planned behaviour (Aijzen, 1991), which supplemented exploration into the potential barriers to performing a behaviour such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The theory of planned behaviour (Aijzen, 1991) aided in cultivating, and guiding the development of, an understanding into consumer intention and actual performed behaviour, regarding sustainable purchasing decisions in the South African fashion industry.

Insight into the problem of this emerging intention-behaviour-gap, was established through exploration into the perceptions of individual South African consumers regarding sustainability within the fashion industry. The results of this exploration indicate that South African consumer attitude towards sustainable purchasing behaviour within the fashion industry is highly favourable. The sample demonstrated a higher regarded for the subjective norm and opinions of their peers, than for their families with regards to sustainable purchasing behaviour within the fashion industry. The sample further demonstrated that the barriers to their perceived level of control, with regards to sustainable purchase intention within the South African fashion industry, were aesthetics, price, and accessibility. This demonstrates that there is an audience for sustainable fashion in South Africa; however, based on the exploration of this research, the market lusts after an improvement in aesthetic, accessibility, and price-point to incite intention. This research also revealed that members of the sample felt a sense of gratification post-sustainable-purchase, regardless of organisational transparency; however, transparency and honesty are also of prime importance to this audience prior-to-purchase. This is a potential gap in knowledge that could be explored in further research.

Key words: Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioural Control and Behavioural Intention.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Contextualisation

Ever-increasing and evolving technology use has led to heightened, and growing, consumer concern around many social and environmental issues (McNeill and Moore, 2015). This growing consumer concern, a result of technological refinement and its associated improvements in accessibility to information globally, has served to intensify pressure pertaining to social and environmental issues, throughout broader society (McNeill and Moore, 2015). As a result, there is astute consumer awareness concerning the impact of the global fashion industry, on broader society and the global environment (McNeill and Moore, 2015).

The global fashion industry is representative of a gargantuan economic force, employing over 300 million people with a cumulative valuation of 1.3 trillion dollars (Gazzola, Pavione, Pezzeti and Grechi, 2020). Unfortunately, up to three-fifths of all clothing produced ends-up in an incinerator within a year of production (Puspita and Chae, 2021) as such, the fashion industry has one of the largest impacts on the environment and has been described as one of the most pollutant industries in the modern marketplace (Hementa, 2021). This, coupled with growing consumer consciousness and an emerging desire for sustainability has presented an opportunity for brands that adopt sustainable and ethical business practices (Chen, 2009), not only to establish a competitive advantage, but also to potentially aid in mitigating the growing environmental and social pressures felt globally (McNeil and Moore, 2015).

With evolving consumer demand for brands that are sustainable, throughout their supply chain and production processes (Kong, Witmaier and Ko, 2020), this is an opportunity that must be optimised to harness a competitive advantage in the current marketplace. However, the other side of the market, is that it has become insatiable, with the instilment of impulse buying as a common consumer behaviour. There has been an uptick in trend-sensitive fashion and a consequent increase in fashion seasons (McNeil and Moore, 2015). The emergence of “waste couture” (Neumann, Martinez and Martinez, 2020), has aided in the foundation of fast-fashion, fashion that prioritizes speed over sustainability, as well as the establishment of the perception that

sustainable, slow-fashion can be over-priced (Neumann et al., 2020). To further this dilemma, the market has also become saturated with superficial promises of green intention. As a result, consumers have become sceptical about the transparency of fashion brands, which has impacted consumer perception (McNeil and Moore, 2015). This stems from the belief that green marketing is merely a proliferation tactic used to justify higher pricing. In this way, authentic transparency has become imperative in establishing solid consumer-relations, as well as to solidify competitive advantage in the current marketplace (Neumann et al, 2020); (Chen, 2009).

As such, there is an emerging gap between sustainable consumer intention and actual purchasing decisions (de Lira, da Silva, Costa and Araujo, 2022). This intention-behaviour-gap, in sustainable purchasing behaviour will be the centre-point of this research, which will be undergone in a bid to unpack the consumers perception of sustainability in the industry.

## **1.2 Rationale**

The global fashion industry is believed to be one of the largest devastators to the environment and has been described as one of the most pollutant industries in the modern marketplace (Hementa, 2021). Consumer consciousness, a result of advancing technology, has led to a growing desire for sustainability from within the fashion industry's consumer-base (McNeil and Moore, 2015). This has presented an opportunity for fashion brands that adopt sustainable, ethical business practices. As by aiding in the mitigation of unsustainable practices, through the holistic instillment of sustainable behaviour, there is potential for the development of a competitive advantage in the emerging, conscious-consumer driven, sustainable marketplace (Chen, 2009).

To fully leverage this opportunity for sustainable development, in a bid to cultivate a competitive advantage, a holistic analysis of the current global fashion landscape is pertinent. This is partly due to ever-increasing technological advancement, which has contributed towards the emergence of "waste couture," (Neumann et al., 2020) or fast-fashion. The emergence of fast-fashion has led to the development of impulse buying as a consumer purchasing trend, as well as the establishment of the perception that sustainable fashion can be over-priced (Neumann et al., 2020). This phenomenon is

exacerbated by industry-led superficial promises of green intention and sustainable practise, to justify a higher price tag (McNeill and Moore, 2015). This is further aggravated by the belief that green marketing is merely a proliferation tactic used to justify higher pricing (Neumann et al, 2020). In this way, authentic transparency has become imperative in establishing solid consumer-relations, as well as to solidify competitive advantage in the current marketplace (Neumann et al, 2020).

As a fashion-loving consumer, with a tertiary level of knowledge in branding and a passion for sustainability, the researcher has a level of pre-established knowledge into the broader topic of sustainable fashion consumption. This exploration into consumer attitudes towards sustainability seeks to understand, and unpack, the barriers to sustainable consumption within the fashion industry. This will be done in a bid to understand the full spectrum of the sustainability-driven opportunities available to members of the fashion industry. As by exploring the barriers to sustainable consumption, this research seeks to understand the ways in which members of the fashion industry can leverage a sustainability-driven competitive advantage (Chen, 2009), in one of the most pollutant industries in the modern marketplace (Hementa, 2021).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

There is an emerging gap between sustainable consumer intention and actual purchasing decisions (de Lira, da Silva, Costa and Araujo, 2022). This intention-behaviour-gap, in sustainable purchasing behaviour, will be the centre-point of this research, which will be undergone to understand consumers attitudes towards sustainability in the fashion industry.

### **1.4 Purpose Statement**

This research seeks insight into the emerging intention-behaviour-gap regarding sustainable purchasing behaviour and intention within the South African fashion industry. This research endeavours to gain insight into a potential path to bridging the gap between conscious-consumer intention, and the actual purchasing behaviour, through an exploration of consumers attitude towards sustainability. The establishment of this insight will be guided by the theory of planned behaviour (Aijzen,

1991), this model will supplement exploration into the potential barriers to performing a behaviour such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. This theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) will also aid in understanding consumer intention and actual performed behaviour regarding sustainable purchasing decisions in the South African fashion industry. The primary purpose of this research is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge, through an exploration of individual South African consumer perceptions of sustainability within the fashion industry. As such, this research will be undertaken to identify the barriers to sustainable consumption within the fashion industry. The identification of these barriers will supplement exploration into the ways in which members of the fashion industry can harness sustainability, as a means to gain a competitive advantage.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

- What are South African consumers attitudes towards sustainability within the fashion industry?
- What are the subjective norms impacting South African consumers attitudes, regarding sustainability within the fashion industry?
- What level of perceived behavioural control is experienced by South African consumers regarding sustainable purchase intention?

### **1.6 Research Objectives**

- To gain insight into consumers attitudes towards sustainability in the fashion industry.
- To explore the subjective norms impacting consumers attitudes towards sustainability in the fashion industry.
- To explore the level of perceived behavioural control experienced by South African consumers of the fashion industry.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Conceptualisation**

#### **2.1.1 Attitude**

Ajzen (1991) defines attitude as the subjective gauging of a behaviour. Referring to an individuals' evaluation of a behaviour, based on the subjective assessment of the potential outcomes of a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Conner and Armitage (1998) define attitude as the individual creation of behavioural belief. Behavioural beliefs are representative of individual intention to perform a behaviour, based on subjective outcome assessment (Conner and Armitage, 1998). With regards to this study, attitude gauges individual intention to perform a behaviour, through a personal assessment of the outcome. This will be measured by exploring personal behavioural and ethical beliefs relating to the outcome of sustainable behaviour. For the purposes of this study, consumer attitude will be explored as a means to understand existing subjective beliefs regarding sustainable purchase intention in the South African fashion industry.

#### **2.1.2 Subjective norms**

Ajzen (1991) proposes that subjective norms aid in the personal assessment, or internal evaluation, of a behaviour. These subjective norms direct individuals to behave in a certain way, through the perception of social pressure associated with a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Subjective norms are a function of normative belief and represent the likelihood of an individual engaging in a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This is based on the perception held by the individuals reference group regarding the behaviour. As such, Ajzen (1991) proposes that these norms are subjective to the individuals' way of thinking; but can be altered based on the opinion of those around the individual. With regards to this study, subjective norms create intention through the combination of individual attitude, and the opinion of those around the individual, regarding a behaviour. For the purposes of this study, the subjective norms associated with sustainable purchase intention will be explored to understand the level of intention, and social pressure, held by broader South African society regarding

sustainable purchasing behaviour in the fashion industry. This will serve as a tool to aid in understanding the potential barriers to sustainable purchasing behaviour in a South African context.

### **2.1.3 Perceived behavioural control**

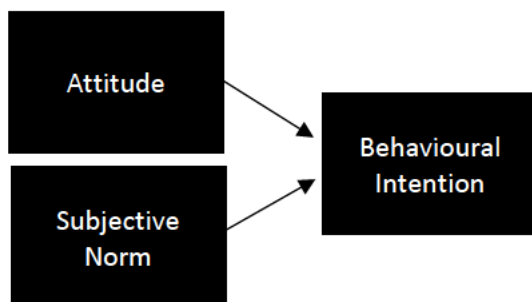
Ajzen (1991) proposes that perceived behavioural control is an indicator of an individual's understanding of the level of difficulty associated with a behaviour. Perceived behavioural control is also the function of control beliefs, this refers to the individual's perception of the level of involvement, resources and opportunities required to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This further involves a gauging of the level of control held by the individual while enacting a behaviour. Resultingly, Ajzen (1991) believes that perceived behavioural control is a factor influencing behaviour. With regards to this research, perceived behavioural control refers to the individuals' level of control experienced, and involvement required, while performing a behaviour. Perceived behavioural control refers to the level of participation, resources and opportunities required prior to performing a behaviour. For the purposes of this study, perceived behavioural control will be investigated alongside attitude and subjective norms to understand South African consumers level of intention associated with sustainable purchasing decisions in the fashion industry. This is particularly pertinent with regards the potential barriers to sustainable consumption, as consumers may feel that sustainable behaviour is out-of-reach due to budget. This feeling of inaccessibility has the potential impact an individuals' feeling of perceived behavioural control, and can be a potential barrier to sustainable purchase intention.

### 2.1.4 Behavioural Intention

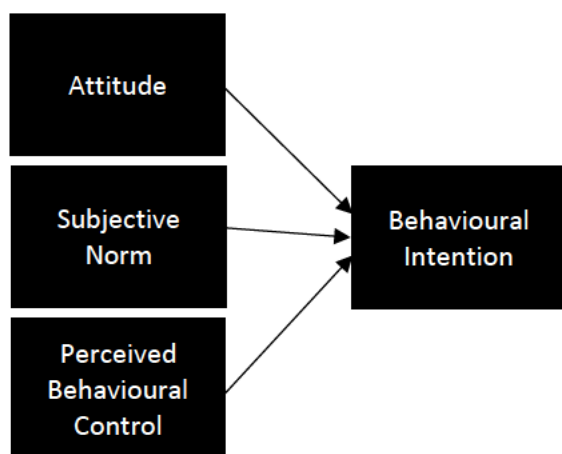
Ajzen (1991) defines behavioural intention as the combined function of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control regarding a behaviour. For the purposes of this study, behavioural intention is the combination of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control regarding sustainable purchase decisions. This will be explored through the potential barriers to sustainable purchasing decisions in a bid to identify the ways in which sustainable intention can be encouraged in the South African fashion industry.

## 2.2 Theoretical Foundation

Conner and Armitage (1998) indicate that the theory of planned behaviour is an expectancy value model that expresses the relationship between attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and behavioural intention. The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen and Madden, 1986). Both theories place emphasis on the role of intention to inspire action.



The theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Madden, 1986). (TRA)



The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). (TPB)

Ajzen (1991) argues that the addition of perceived behavioural control takes accessibility to resources, and opportunities, into account as this could impact an individual's willingness to participate in a behaviour. This is particularly pertinent in the context of this research, sustainability, as consumers may feel the practise of sustainable behaviour is out-of-reach due to budget. This can impact the subjective feeling of perceived behavioural control, as well as individual purchase intention (Ajzen, 1991). As such, the TPB has been selected as the model for the purposes of this research.

In line with the TPB, Conner and Armitage (1998) suggest that decisions are behavioural and dependent on subjective understanding. Conner and Armitage (1998) indicate that behavioural decisions are based on an individual's cautious understanding of available information. Due to the subjective nature of decision-making, the role of intention is vital (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (1991) defines intention as the factors that motivate and influence behaviour. Intention is an indication of the level of "willingness" to try, based on the level of planned effort required to behave in a certain way (Ajzen, 1991). Conner and Armitage (1998) further this by indicating that intention is the planned performance of a behaviour. As such, it can be understood that individuals only participate in intended behaviour (Conner and Armitage, 1998). This is furthered with the notion that individuals have a degree of voluntary control in the decision-making process, which means that the final purchasing decision is a deliberate, and cognitive, choice amongst alternatives (Conner and Armitage, 1998). According to Ajzen (1991), behavioural intention is the function of attitude, subjective

norm, and perceived behavioural control regarding a particular behaviour. Ajzen (1991) proposes that attitude is the holistic and subjective gauging of a behaviour. This is the personal evaluation of the subjective degree to which positive or negative associations are ascribed to a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Subjective norms aid in this internal assessment, or evaluation, of behaviour. Ajzen (1991) suggests that subjective norms guide individuals to behave in a certain way, through perceived social pressure relating to a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). In essence, Ajzen (1991) believes that these norms are subjective to an individuals' way of thinking; however, can be altered based on the opinion of those around the individual.

Ajzen (1991) expresses that perceived behavioural control relates to an individual's level of access to the resources and opportunities required to enact a behaviour as well as the individual perception of control while performing a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Individuals with the perception of access, and opportunity, to perform a behaviour have a higher level of perceived behavioural control and are more likely to intentionally practise a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The concept of perceived behavioural control is furthered by Ajzen (1991) as an indication of the level of difficulty ascribed to a behaviour, by an individual. In this way, perceived behavioural control is a factor influencing behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioural control is particularly relevant in unpacking the barriers to green purchase intention, as there is the perception that this behaviour demands extensive research and requires an investment of time and capital. As such, consumers that feel green products are accessible to them, are more likely to practise sustainable purchasing behaviour.

Ajzen (1991) proposes that a positive attitude and subjective norm, coupled with a higher level of perceived control will result in greater intention to perform a behaviour. In this way, Ajzen (1991) suggests that individual behaviour can be predicted through an individual's initial attitude towards a behaviour, their subjective intention to perform the behaviour, and the control felt by the individual while the practising the behaviour. Conner and Armitage (1998) bolster this idea of planned behaviour by suggesting that individuals establish an intention to behave based on their attitude, subjective norms and their perceived level of control while practising the behaviour.

## **2.3 Literature Review**

### **1.1 Overview of the Global Fashion Landscape**

Gazzola, Pavione, Pezzetti and Grechi (2020) define the concept of sustainability as seeking well-being, an improved quality of life and a greater sense of responsibility to a broader community. Gazzola et al., (2020) state that the global fashion industry is representative of a gargantuan economic force, employing over 300 million people with a cumulative valuation of 1.3 trillion dollars. Puspita and Chae, (2021) echo this, suggesting that up to three-fifths of all clothing produced ends-up in an incinerator within a year of production. Hementa, (2021) agrees with this, stating that the fashion industry has one of the largest impacts on the environment and has been described as one of the most pollutant industries in the modern marketplace. McNeil and Moore (2015) expand on this by stating that the market has become insatiable, which is evident in the instilment of impulse buying as a common consumer behaviour. The authors further state that there has been an uptick in trend-sensitive fashion which has caused an increase in fashion seasons (McNeil and Moore, 2015) and resultingly, greater wastage (Puspita and Chae, 2021).

### **1.2 Organisational Perspective**

According to Chen (2009) the impact of the industry, coupled with growing consumer consciousness, and an emerging desire for sustainability has presented an opportunity for brands that adopt sustainable and ethical business practices. Polonsky and Jevon (2006) posit that belief and ethics differ over time, which can result in the establishment of a murky perception as time passes. This has the potential to result in the condemnation of an initially perceived ethical action (Polonsky and Jevon, 2006). To avoid condemnation over-time, with regards to communicating sustainability, Chen (2009) suggests the adoption of green marketing efforts should be integrated throughout brand strategy. Chen (2009) suggests that by embodying the concept of green marketing, brands can establish a differentiation advantage. Huo, Hameed, Zhang, Ali and Hashim (2022) agree with this sentiment and suggest that CSR can still be impactful on reputation, even if the concept is not fully understood by the audience.

Chen (2009) presents the idea that the holistic integration of sustainability throughout supply-chain processes, and transparency of this process, are a means to achieve a competitive advantage in the current fashion industry, rather than a potential hinderance as suggested by Polonsky and Jevon (2006). Polonsky and Jevon (2006) do; however, suggest that there are benefits to social responsibility. It is suggested that connecting a brand with socially responsible behaviour, through its values and personality, can aid in the establishment of value and differentiation (Polonsky and Jevon, 2006).

With evolving consumer demand for brands that are sustainable, throughout their supply chain and production processes, Kong, Witmaier and Ko (2020) agree with Chen (2009); Polonsky and Jevon (2006), in believing that this is an opportunity to harness a competitive advantage in the current marketplace. McNeil and Moore (2015) also agree that this is an opportunity for differentiation and the creation of a competitive advantage (Chen, 2009); (Kong et al., 2020). However, McNeil and Moore (2015) argue that is also an opportunity to aid in mitigating the global pressures caused by the industry (McNeil and Moore, 2015). Chen (2009) agrees that brands should seek opportunities to intrinsically enhance environmental performance; however, only as this has the potential to strengthen brand equity in the long-run (Chen, 2009). Gazzola et al.,(2020), agree with McNeil and Moore (2015), that the development of an intrinsic approach towards sustainability is the foundation for generating long-lasting benefit and to cultivate long-lasting growth.

### **1.3 Consumer Perception**

Chen (2009) suggests that a consumers understanding of a brand is linked with the brands offering and is supported by brand image (Chen, 2009). This image is a vital determinant of consumer satisfaction and can impact a consumers behaviour. Chen (2009), also suggests that green brand equity can enhance brand image. On the other hand, Polonsky and Jevon (2006), suggest that consumers can become dissatisfied with a brand based on any perceived under-delivery on promises, particularly with regards to corporate social responsibility (CSR). However, it is posited that this can be avoided by placing CSR, genuinely, at the core of all brand activities and not merely using CSR as a PR tactic (Polonsky and Jevon, 2006). Unfortunately, perceived performance may vary across stakeholders as subjective judgement can result in a

differing perspective on the outcome. To combat this, Polonsky and Jevon (2006) suggest that brands should tackle a system-wide issue, such as the use of unsustainable materials in the case of the fashion industry.

Research conducted by Musova, Musa, Drugdova, Lazaroiu and Alayasa (2021) revealed that consumers are genuinely willing to support sustainability within the fashion industry; however, this research also showed that consumers require a greater level of knowledge and insight into the industry to do so. As such, Musova et al., (2021) suggest that the sharing of knowledge is an imperative organisational responsibility when producing sustainable offerings.

## **2. Attitude**

Ajzen (1991) indicates that attitude is the holistic and subjective gauging of a behaviour. This is the personal evaluation of the positive or negative outcome associated with a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This study takes the position that attitude expresses the personal assessment of an outcome, as a means to gauge the individual intention to perform a behaviour by exploring personal, behavioural and ethical beliefs relating to the outcome.

In the case of sustainable purchasing behaviour within the fashion industry, the broader attitude towards this behaviour is impacted by a lack of trust in organisational transparency. As this research seeks to unpack the developing rift in sustainable purchase intention in the fashion industry, an exploration of trust can provide insight into an existing attitudinal barrier to sustainable purchase behaviour.

### **2.1 Trust**

Chen (2009) states that trust can influence a purchasing decision. Chen (2009) further poses the idea that consumer trust can enhance consumer commitment to a brand and is a determinant of brand equity. Unfortunately, Chen (2009) also notes that if consumers' trust is impacted, brand reputation may be impaired (Chen, 2009). McNeil and Moore (2015) confirm this as a potential barrier to sustainable purchase intention, by suggesting that the fashion industry has become saturated with superficial promises of green intention. The authors believe that this has led to the development of consumer scepticism regarding the transparency of fashion brands, which has

intensified consumer cynicism around the marketing of sustainable products (McNeil and Moore, 2015). Neumann, Martinez and Martinez (2020), further suggest that this stems from the belief that green marketing is merely a proliferation tactic that has previously been used to justify higher pricing.

The Financial Times (2022) recently exposed broader industry greenwashing due to flexible ESG reporting requirements and legislation on a global scale. Unfortunately, ESG ratings are derived from subjective corporate disclosure and full marks are easily scored on these rating systems by doing the bare minimum (Rose, 2022). In this way, the existence of a policy could earn a company points for environmental and social investment, even if not dealt with in the boardroom (Rose, 2022). As such, ESG score, and corporate behaviour or investment performance do not necessarily correlate (Rose, 2022). Unfortunately, a recent New York Times article furthers this idea. As, according to Tabuchi (2022), the fashion industry is not a transparent system; rather, it is a system enveloped in secrecy. The recent New York Times article states that the fashion industry is the biggest global greenwashing culprit (Tabuchi, 2022). According to Tabuchi (2022), this makes it incredibly difficult for modern day consumers to discern the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions. In accordance with this, Soares de Lira, da Silva, Costa and Araujo (2022) suggest that this dubiousness is causing a rift between sustainable consumer intention and their actual purchasing decisions. To avoid this, Polonsky and Jevon (2006) suggest that the leveraging of CSR issues must be carefully considered, as over-use can create scepticism in the consumer-base.

Soares de Lira et al., (2022) found that without added brand value, price sensitivity can become tentative. Further, a study by Jestratijevic, Uanhoro and Creighton (2020) found that by implementing sustainable solutions and sharing honest, transparent information about these solutions, transparency transformed into trustworthiness in the eyes of the consumer. A study conducted by Hemantha (2021) revealed that it is indeed possible for members of the fashion industry to implement intrinsically meaningful, and transparent, CSR while adding-value for consumers through sustainability initiatives. Hemantha (2021) discusses an organisation called TenTree that authentically places CSR at the core of its brand positioning as recommended by Polonsky and Jevon (2006). The brand discussed by Hemantha (2021) does this by planting ten trees for every item sold. Having already planted over 25 million trees, this

is evidently an effective and sustainable practise that carries attitudinal meaning to its consumer-base (Hemantha, 2021). Hemantha, (2021) discusses that the brand adds-value for their consumers through the use of individualised interactive codes that display the location of each set of trees planted post-purchase (Hemantha, 2021). This type of added value, aids in calming consumer price sensitivity and has been shown to better foster trust within the consumer-base (Soares de Lira et al., 2022).

### **3. Subjective norm**

Ajzen (1991) states that subjective norms aid in the internal assessment, or evaluation, of a behaviour as these norms guide individuals to behave in a certain way through a perceived social pressure relating to the behaviour. This study takes the position that subjective norms create intention through the combination of individual attitude, and the opinion of those around the individual, regarding a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Mandarić, Hunjet and Kozina (2021) state that buying clothes is not an act of altruism, that generally consumers are not as concerned with sustainability as they are with price point. A study conducted by Momberg, Jacobs and Sonnenberg (2012) found that awareness and knowledge regarding sustainable fashion consumption was very limited in the South African consumer-base. The study notes that South African consumers prioritise price, fit and aesthetics above all other product attributes, including sustainability (Momberg et al., 2012). The South African consumer-bases preference for price, fit and quality were also placed as more relevant than ethical sourcing in a study conducted by Nilssen, Bick and Abratt (2019). Mandarić et al., (2021) suggests that as a result, it is pertinent for members of the fashion industry to influence consumer behaviour, and social norms, in a bid to protect the environment and stakeholders involved in production, by means of de-marketing. Demarketing is a marketing strategy in which brands encourage consumers to purchase less of their offering, in a bid to decrease environmental pressure (Mandarić et al., 2021). In a study conducted by Hemantha (2021), a brand-named Patagonia is discussed for its “Don’t buy this jacket,” demarketing campaign. The “Don’t buy this jacket” campaign used demarketing as a strategy to significantly influence consumer behaviour, and subjective norms, regarding sustainable purchasing behaviour (Hemantha, 2021).

#### **4. Perceived behavioural control**

Ajzen (1991) defines perceived behavioural control as an indicator of an individual's understanding of the level of difficulty associated with a behaviour. This study takes the position that perceived behavioural control refers to the individuals' level of control experienced, and involvement required, while performing a behaviour as well as the level of participation, resources and opportunities required prior to performing a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

As the emergence of "waste couture" (Neumann et al., 2020), has aided in the growth of fast-fashion, Neumann et al., (2020) believe that this has led to the creation of the perception, and attitude, that sustainable fashion can be over-priced. This perception is a potential barrier to sustainable purchase intention as it leads consumers to believe that sustainable purchasing behaviour is expensive and out-of-reach, negatively impacting the consumers perceived behavioural control. A study conducted by Soares de Lira et al., (2022) further found that purchasing environmentally friendly products requires a higher level of effort from the consumer, in the form of research, as well as a higher price. Despite this, the study found that as sustainable products are perceived to be more expensive, consumers that have internalized ideas regarding sustainability, are desensitised to the price variation. This is furthered as the study suggests consumers that do not see the benefit of sustainable purchasing behaviour will have a negative perceived behavioural control in a sustainable purchasing position (Soares de Lira et al., 2022)

## 5. Conclusion

The broader organisational perspective on sustainable practise in the industry revealed that brands capitalise on the opportunity to intrinsically enhance the environmental performance of their product offering to strengthen brand equity (Chen, 2009). The development of an intrinsic approach towards sustainability is also the foundation for generating long-lasting benefit (McNeil and Moore, 2015). Musova et al., (2021) revealed that consumers are genuinely willing to support sustainable practise within the fashion industry; however, require a greater level of knowledge and insight into the industry to-do-so. Exploration into consumers and the existing attitudinal barrier of trust revealed that trust can influence a purchasing decision (Chen, 2009). Unfortunately, consumer cynicism regarding the marketing of sustainable products has intensified (McNeil and Moore, 2015) due to the broader belief that green marketing is merely a proliferation tactic used to justify higher pricing (Neumann et al., 2020) This is causing a rift between sustainable consumer intention and actual purchasing behaviour (Soares de Lira et al., 2022). It was further revealed that South African consumers have limited knowledge and awareness on the topic of sustainable fashion consumption (Momborg et al., 2012); (Nilssen et al., 2019). It was also found that sustainable purchasing behaviour requires a higher level of effort from the consumer, in the form of research, as well as actual cost (Soares de Lira et al., 2022).

It has been identified that current South African consumer attitudes toward sustainability are unknown (Nilssen et al., 2019). As this review of literature aimed to provide an overview of the existing body of knowledge on sustainability within the fashion industry; Ultimately, to understand the potential barriers to sustainable consumption within the South African fashion industry. This research still strives to gain insight into the fashion industry's consumer-base in South Africa; particularly pertaining to individuals' attitude, subjective norm, and level of perceived behavioural control, with regards to sustainable purchase intention. This research seeks to further probe at the rift in sustainable behaviour, to understand the ways in which South African fashion brands can grow, in terms of value-added sustainable development.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Paradigm**

Qualitatively, this research seeks insight into the attitudes held by South African consumers of the fashion industry, in relation to sustainable purchase intention. The Constructivist Axiological paradigm has been selected to guide this research. This paradigm takes the stance that ethics and values are subjective and personal to every individual (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This is pertinent to this topic as purchasing behaviour is a subjective decision, and is personal to every individual. With regards to the epistemological position of this paradigm, knowledge is subjective; resultingly, the knowledge gained through this literature review is ethics-based and subjective to the researcher. As sustainability is an intentional, subjective behaviour the knowledge gained will be subjective to the selected sample. This research seeks to investigate South African consumers attitudes towards sustainability, in relation to purchase intention, in the fashion industry. The subjective nature of green purchasing-behaviour is supported by the constructivist axiological paradigm which suggests that values are subjective to every individual. As such, according to the paradigm selected, it can be understood that every individual has their own, unique spectrum for measuring values, such as sustainability and sustainable purchasing behaviour.

Constructivism asserts that human beings are fundamentally different from objects, this is because human beings, unlike objects, are subject to change and can be influenced by their environment (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). In this way, Constructivists seek to describe meaningful social action by understanding human behaviour (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This paradigm was initially selected for this research, as this research seeks insight into the attitudes held by South African consumers of the fashion industry, in relation to sustainable purchase intention. More specifically, this research abides by the Constructivist Axiological paradigm which states that reality is subjectively constructed, as such all social inquiry is subjectively value-bound and value-laden (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). In this way, individuals are influenced by their own subjective value-system (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). With regards to the epistemological position of this paradigm, knowledge is subjective; resultingly, the

knowledge gained through the literature review is ethics-based and subjective to the researcher.

The Constructivist Axiological paradigm has been selected to guide this research as this paradigm takes the stance that ethics and values are subjective and personal to every individual (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This is pertinent to this research topic as sustainable purchasing behaviour is a subjective decision and is personal to every individual. As sustainability is an intentional, subjective behaviour, the knowledge gained through this research will be subjective to the selected sample and will impact the transferability of this research to another sample. This research seeks to investigate South African consumers attitudes towards sustainability, in relation to purchase intention, in the fashion industry. The subjective nature of green purchasing-behaviour is supported by the constructivist axiological paradigm which suggests that values are subjective to every individual. As such, according to the paradigm selected, it can be understood that every individual has their own, unique spectrum for measuring values, such as sustainability and sustainable purchasing behaviour.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

The Constructivist Axiological paradigm has been selected to guide this research as this paradigm takes the stance that ethics and values are subjective and personal to every individual (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This is pertinent to this research topic as sustainable purchasing behaviour is a subjective decision, and is personal to every individual.

This research seeks qualitative insight into the attitudes held by South African consumers of the fashion industry, in relation to sustainable purchase intention. As this research strives to investigate consumer attitude and sustainable purchase intention within the fashion industry, this research will be exploratory in nature (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This research will take an inductive approach, with the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), guiding the investigation of existing attitudes, subjective norms and perceived level of control held by South African consumers of the fashion industry, regarding sustainable purchase-intention. This research will be conducted over one year, as such this will be a cross-sectional study (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

This research aspires to probe at consumers attitudes towards sustainability in the fashion industry, the subjective norms impacting these attitudes, and the perceived level of control felt by these consumers regarding sustainable purchase behaviour within the fashion industry. As such, phenomenology will be employed to derive an understanding of the existing body of knowledge regarding consumer attitudes towards sustainability within the fashion industry (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

As the Epistemological outlook of Constructivism suggests that knowledge is subjective, socially constructed and individually dependent, this research will also utilise ethnographic research, in the form of semi-structured individual interviews (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Prior to these semi-structured interviews, a precursory screening survey will be dispersed to the broader population of urban, South African females between 21-25 years of age, through purposive sampling. This precursory survey will allow for the operationalization of attitude, to gauge a level of primary insight into consumer perceptions of sustainability within the fashion industry. The screening-survey will also allow for the stratification of the sample based on attitude towards sustainability, using Robins and Greenwald's (1994) stages of sustainable attitude. Once stratified, the sample members representative of each stage of sustainable attitude, will be invited to participate in the set of semi-structured individual interviews. In this way, an Incorporative, Impulsive, Imperial, Interpersonal and Institutional consumer will be invited to answer a set of semi-structured individual interviews (Robins and Greenwald, 1994). The screening-survey will also serve as a means to achieve a more holistic, and representative, understanding; despite the limited sample size of five.

The semi-structured interviews will allow for further exploration into the existing attitudes, subjective norms and perceived level of control held by South African consumers of the fashion industry, regarding sustainable purchase-intention. In this way, these semi-structured interviews will allow for the establishment of insight into the intention-behaviour gap in sustainable fashion consumption, from differing consumer perspectives. This will also be done in a bid to achieve a more holistic, and representative, understanding into the intention-behaviour gap with regards to sustainable fashion consumption; despite the limited sample size of five.

### **3.3 Population**

A previous study by McNeill and Moore (2015), identified that 21–25-year-olds as an age group are the most heavily targeted demographic by mainstream fashion retailers. It was also noted, through initial phenomenological research that Generation Y and Z have been characterized as having higher environmental awareness than previous generations (Hementa, 2021). As such, the population for this research was selected to fall between 21-25 years of age. Further phenomenological research revealed a study conducted by Hementa (2021), which suggested that women are more likely to understand and practise sustainable behaviour. In light of this, the population for this research design became females aged 21-25. The study conducted by Hementa (2021) also noted that urban consumers have a higher knowledge, and awareness, regarding sustainability. As such, the population for this study became urban, South African females between 21-25 years of age; specifically in the Gauteng region.

### **3.4 Sampling**

Non-probability stratified purposive sampling of the population, 21–25-year-old, urban South African female consumers of the fashion industry was utilized in this research process (Maree, 2019); (Hementa, 2021). A precursory screening survey was shared digitally, through the WhatsApp platform. This was done in order to stratify the sample and narrow down the broader population of urban, South African females between 21-25 years of age; specifically in the Gauteng region. The screening survey received 12 valid responses, falling within the scope of the population. Of these 12 responses, 6 were stratified based on their attitude towards sustainability, using Robins and Greenwald's (1994) stages of sustainable attitude.

These five stages of sustainable attitude are: Incorporative, this is a consumer that presents no awareness for sustainability (Robins and Greenwald, 1994).

The participant selected to represent the incorporative consumer, in this study was Participant 5. Participant 5 was selected as incorporative as she displayed the least casual awareness for sustainability out of the 12 respondents.

Impulsive, this is a consumer that presents the capacity for sustainable knowledge; without any awareness (Robins and Greenwald, 1994). Participant 4 was selected to

represent impulsive consumers as she presented some knowledge on sustainable behaviour, with limited awareness.

Imperial, this is a consumer that is concerned with the impact, and individual implications, associated with performing a sustainable behaviour. An imperial consumer is more concerned with the immediate effect, of the purchase, and not future decisions (Robins and Greenwald, 1994). Participant 2 displayed the most imperial tendencies as she displayed concern with her individual impact, and the immediate effect of her purchasing decisions.

Interpersonal consumers have an aptitude, awareness, and desire to participate in sustainable behaviour. Interpersonal consumers are highly concerned with their impact on community and family; however, these consumers are also concerned about the opinion of others and are uncomfortable going against the societal norm (Robins and Greenwald, 1994). Both participant 3 and 6 displayed an aptitude and awareness to participate in sustainable behaviour. Both participants are concerned with their impact on community; however, participant 3 was presented higher discomfort going against her societal norm. As such, both participants 3 and 6 were selected in a bid to cultivate a representative sample for this research.

Institutional consumers have a clear belief system and can critically examine their motivations, as well as ideas conflicting with their own view. Institutional consumers assume responsibility for their actions and are highly sceptical about the government and industry (Robins and Greenwald, 1994). Participant 1 was selected to represent the institutional consumer, as she has a developed understanding of sustainability and displayed the most scepticism about the industry.

The stratification of the sample, through a precursory screening survey, served to ensure that the results of this research were more representative of the attitudes of the broader population, and their behaviour, with a limited sample of six. In this way, the precursory screening survey and stratified sample allowed for a more representative sample selection, with the intention of improving the transferability of this research.

### **3.5 Data Collection Method**

Initially, phenomenology in the form of a literature review was used to gain a foundational understanding into existing South African consumer attitudes towards sustainability, within the fashion industry. The information gained through the literature review has been utilized to further this research and supplement its exploration into South African consumers attitudes towards sustainability within the fashion industry.

A precursory screening-survey was shared through the WhatsApp platform in a bid to gauge the attitudes of the broader population of urban South African females between 21-25 years of age. As well as to narrow down this broad population into a more manageable, purposive sample. After the sampler had been dispersed, the sample was stratified based on attitude towards sustainability, using Robins and Greenwald's' (1994) stages of sustainable attitude. The stratification of the sample, through a precursory screening survey, aided in the representation of this research with a limited sample of six.

### **3.6 Data Collection Details**

The screening-survey was shared to the broader population, of urban South African females aged 21-25, through non-probability snowball sampling by means of the WhatsApp platform. This allowed for the broader operationalization of the populations attitude towards sustainability. This aided in establishing an insight into the attitude and perceptions of the broader population regarding sustainability within the fashion industry. The screening-survey also allowed for the stratification of the sample based on attitude towards sustainability. Once stratified, the sample members representative of each stage of Robins and Greenwald's (1994) sustainable attitude, were invited to participate in a set of semi-structured individual interviews. An Incorporative, Impulsive, Imperial, Interpersonal and Institutional consumer were invited to participate in this study by answering a set of semi-structured individual interviews (Robins and Greenwald, 1994). In this way, the sample, while limited, is still representative of the broader spectrum of the selected populations sustainable attitude. This was done with the intention of achieving a more holistic, and representative, understanding into sustainable purchase intention; despite the limited sample size of six. The questions asked in the screening survey also allowed for the

gathering of a foundational level of insight into the broader consumer attitude, subjective norms and perceived level of control experienced by the selected sample.

The use of ethnography, in the form of semi-structured interviews, has allowed for deeper exploration into South African consumers attitudes toward sustainability within the fashion industry. These interviews took place at a mutually agreed upon, neutral location. This allowed for further probing at, varying levels of consumer attitude towards sustainability in the fashion industry, as the sample felt comfortable to share their organic thoughts. In this way, these semi-structured individual interviews have allowed for the establishment of a level of insight into the intention-behaviour gap in sustainable fashion consumption, from varying consumer perspectives.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Method**

With regards to phenomenology, a literature review was used to gain an understanding of the existing consumer attitudes towards sustainability within the fashion industry. The information gained through the literature review was analysed through content analysis in a bid to unpack existing consumer attitudes towards sustainability within the fashion industry nature (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This was done to further this research, and its exploration into South African consumers attitudes towards sustainability within the fashion industry.

Thematic and Discourse analysis have been employed, in-tandem, to unpack the insight gained through the screening-survey, as well as through the semi-structured interviews. The themes for the thematic analysis were derived and conceptualised through the initial content analysis regarding the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). These already prevalent themes include attitude, subjective norm, and perceived level of behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). The insights gained through the semi-structured interviews have thematically followed suit; however, as the purpose of this research is to probe at the emerging purchase-intention gap to expand the existing body of knowledge, Discourse analysis has also been employed as a means of data analysis (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This analysis allowed for the thematic segregation, post-semi-structured-interviews and has allowed for the grouping of

shared opinions as well as the inclusion of new, unmentioned, or unrealised themes, as discussed by the research sample.

## **4 RESULTS/FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Findings**

The following section discusses the findings of the screening-survey and semi-structured interviews. This section has been segregated thematically according to Ajzens' (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour specifically pertaining to the attitude, subjective norm and perceived level of control experienced by fashion industry consumers throughout the purchase process. This was done as according to Ajzen (1991), the combination of the attitude, subjective norm and perceived level of control are catalysts for behavioural intent, or sustainable purchase intention in the case of this research.

There is an emerging gap between sustainable consumer intention and actual purchasing decisions (de Lira, da Silva, Costa and Araujo, 2022). This intention-behaviour-gap, in sustainable purchasing behaviour, has become the centre-point of this research, which has been undergone to gain insight into consumers attitudes towards sustainability in the fashion industry. Exploration into consumer attitude towards sustainability within the fashion industry was supplemented by Ajzens (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour. Consumer attitude, subjective norm and perceived level of control were explored through a screening survey and a set of semi-structured interviews in a bid to gain insight into consumer attitude and sustainable purchase intention within the fashion industry.

### **4.2 Limitations**

The use of a younger population, with a tertiary level of insight into sustainability, limits the transferability of this research with regards to the broader South African population (du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014). The samples' level of knowledge into sustainability, as well as the fashion industry, means that this research may not be replicable with a different sample, further impacting the transferability of this research (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The limitation of one researcher and a small, five-person, sample could also impact this research; however, a sampler has been used in a bid to combat this and establish a more holistic understanding. The use of the non-probability sampling methods, and screening questionnaire to narrow down the population into a usable sample, is also a potential limitation to the transferability of this research (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). As the sample was selected prior to participation in a bid to cultivate a representative

research sample with a limited sample of six. Axiological constructivism seeks to explore individual realities and values, (du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014), as such this research will not be value-free and is subject to bias; however, in a bid to delimit this research, all insight and understanding established is also supported by academic sources.

#### **4.3 Presentation and Interpretation of Findings in context**

The results indicate consumer attitude towards sustainable purchasing behaviour within the fashion industry is favourable. The sample also demonstrated a higher regard for the subjective norm and opinions of their peers, than for their families with regards to sustainable purchasing behaviour within the fashion industry. The sample further demonstrated that the barriers to their perceived level of control, with regards to sustainable purchase intention within the South African fashion industry, were aesthetics, price, and accessibility. This demonstrates that there is an audience for sustainable fashion in South Africa; however, based on this research the market is seeking an improvement in aesthetic, accessibility, and price-point to incite intention.

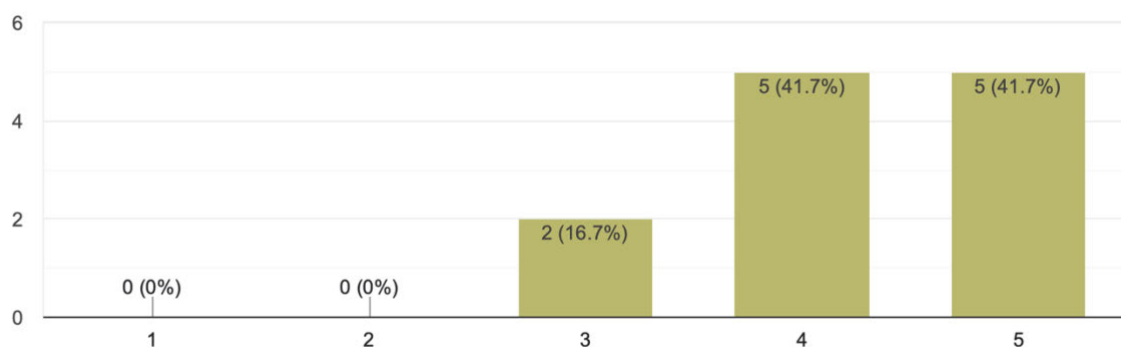
The screening-survey revealed that South African men are also a viable and passionate market with regards to sustainable fashion. This goes against the thinking of Hementa (2021), that women are more likely to understand and practise sustainable behaviour. Considering this, it is recommended that further research is done with regards to the attitude of a male audience towards sustainable behaviour. Further, the research revealed that members of the sample feel a sense of gratification post-sustainable-purchase, regardless of organisational transparency; however, transparency and honesty are also of prime importance to this audience prior-to-purchase. This is a potential gap in knowledge that could be explored further.

This research sought to gain insight into a potential path to bridging the gap between conscious-consumer intention, and the actual purchasing behaviour, through an exploration of consumers attitude towards sustainability. The establishment of this insight has been guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This model has supplemented exploration into the potential barriers to performing a sustainable behaviour.

#### 4.4 Attitude

Ajzen (1991) suggests that attitude is the holistic and subjective gauging of a behaviour. This is the personal evaluation of the positive or negative outcome associated with a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This study has taken the position that attitude expresses the personal assessment of an outcome and serves to gauge the individual intention to perform a behaviour by exploring personal, behavioural and ethical beliefs relating to the outcome. With regards to this study, attitude gauges individual intention to perform a behaviour, through a personal assessment of the outcome. This was measured by exploring the personal behavioural and ethical beliefs, of the broader population and selected sample, relating to the outcome of sustainable behaviour. For the purposes of this study, consumer attitude was explored to understand existing subjective beliefs regarding sustainable purchase intention in the South African fashion industry.

Please rank the following based on importance to you? Protecting the environment  
12 responses

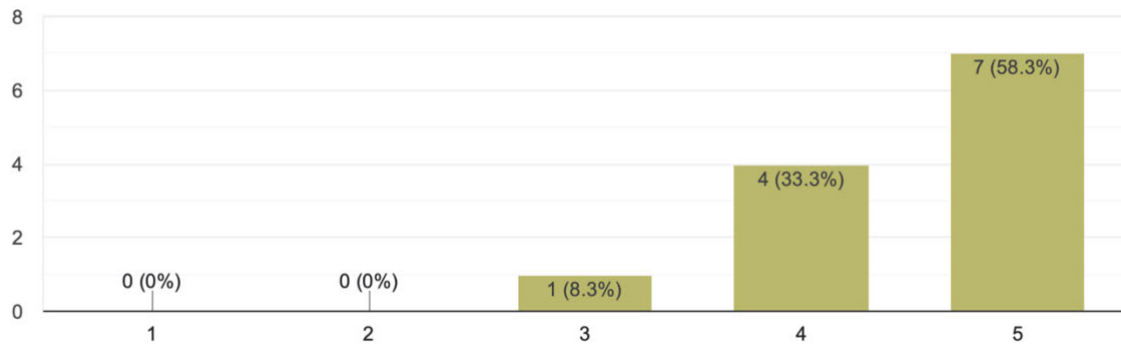


**Figure 1:** 93% of screening-survey respondents felt the importance of protecting the environment moderately to incredibly.

The screening survey displayed that consumer within the broader population responded favourably to questions exploring their attitude towards sustainability. The population felt that social responsibility (75%), protecting the environment (93%) and consuming durable products (91%) hold moderate to incredible importance to them.

Please rate the following statements: I am willing to buy environmentally-friendly fashion

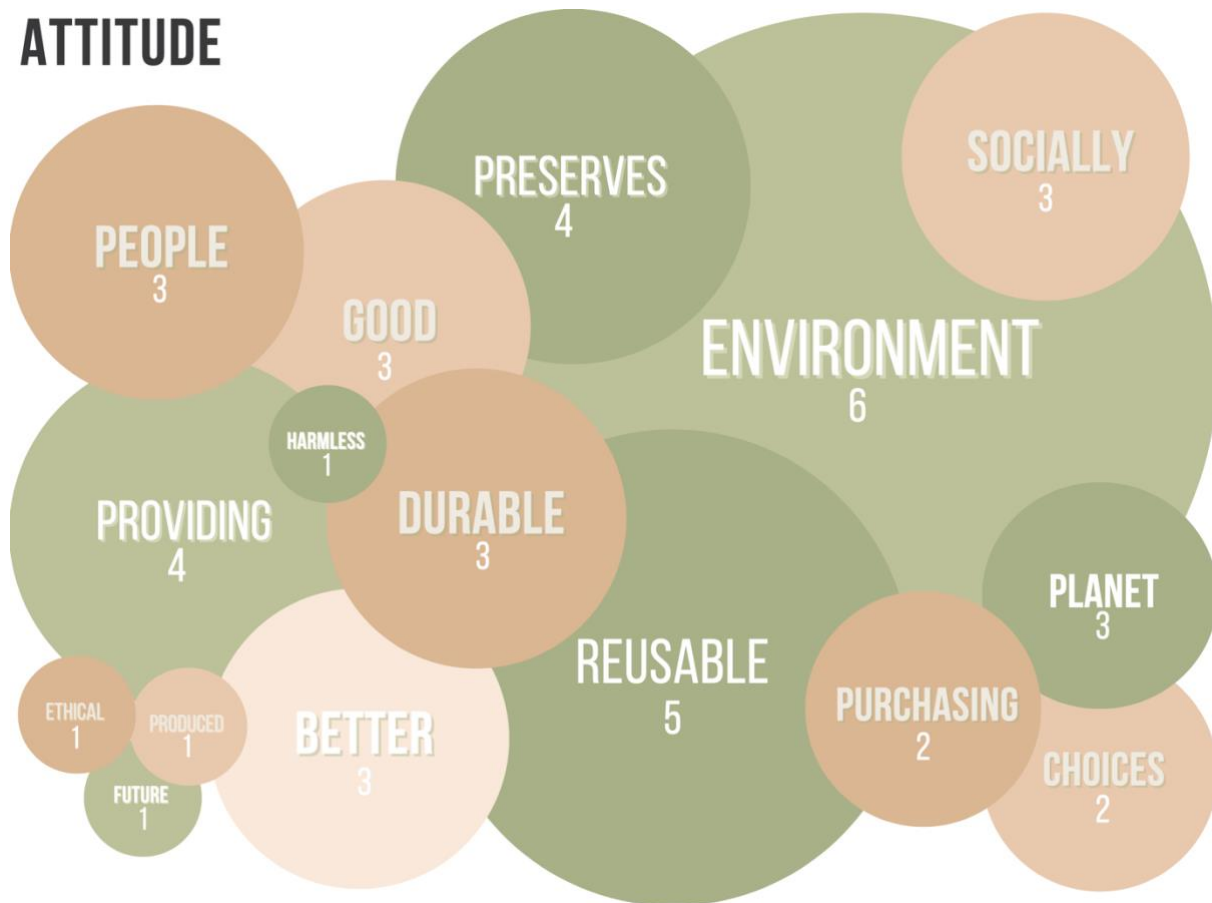
12 responses



**Figure 2:** 91% of respondents are willing to practise sustainable consumption.

With 91% of respondents willing to practise sustainable consumption, this has demonstrated that the majority of consumers, within the selected population, have a favourable personal assessment of the outcome associated with sustainable behaviour. This confirms the thinking of Musova, Musa, Drugdova, LazaroIU and Alayasa (2021) in that consumers are genuinely willing to support sustainability within the fashion industry. It is also evident that the consumers in the broader population care about their impact and are willing to practise sustainable behaviour. With regards to sustainable fashion consumption, 58% of the survey members claimed to have a high level of behavioural intention relating to the of purchasing sustainable fashion.

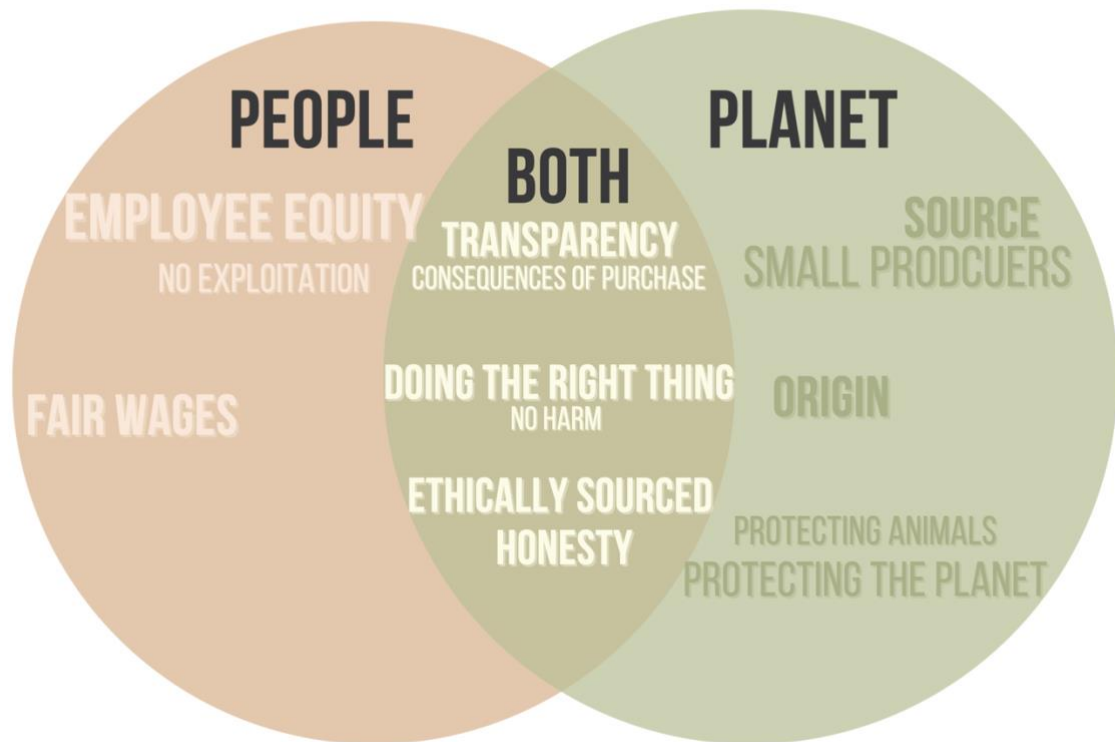
## ATTITUDE



**Figure 3:** The sample's definition of sustainability.

The semi-structured interviews revealed that consumers, within the sample, had varying levels of insight and understanding into sustainability. The environment, reusability, preserving and providing were common themes amongst the majority of the Participants. Participant 1 understood sustainability as an effort to be harmless in the production process to both people and planet. Whereas Participant 2 recognised sustainability as ethical practise in the production process, in a bid to provide a better future to the next generation. Participant 3 perceived sustainability as making subjectively ethical choices. Participant 4 recognised sustainability as durability and reusability. Participant 5 accepted protection of the planet as sustainability; whereas Participant 6 accepted protection of people, planet and profit as sustainability. As such, it is evident that the Participants of this study displayed varying levels of individual intention to perform sustainable behaviour, this is evident through positive personal attitudes towards sustainable outcome. In this way, the Participants revealed that their personal assessment, and attitude towards, the outcome of sustainable behaviour was majorly favourable and positive.

# ETHICAL PURCHASING



**Figure 4:** The sample's understanding of ethical purchasing.

The semi-structured interviews revealed that consumers, within the sample, also had varying levels of insight and understanding into ethical purchasing. The Participants level of insight into ethical purchasing varied from environmental, planet, and social, people, concerns; with only some participants acknowledging both in their definition of ethical purchasing.

More specifically, Participant 1 and Participant 5 perceived ethical purchasing behaviour in terms of organisational employee equity, and fair treatment of workers. Whereas Participant 2 felt that ethical purchasing pertained to organisational honesty and transparency. Participant 3 and 6 recognised ethical purchasing as an awareness of the product origin and source, in a bid to evaluate the consequences of the purchase. Participant 4 felt that ethical purchasing behaviour related to supporting organisations that protect animals and the environment.

In the case of sustainable purchasing behaviour within the fashion industry, the broader attitude towards this behaviour has been impacted by a lack of trust in

organisational transparency. As this research seeks to unpack the developing rift in sustainable purchase intention in the fashion industry, an exploration of trust can provide insight into an existing attitudinal barrier to sustainable purchase behaviour.

#### 4.4.1 Trust

### STANCE ON SUSTAINABLY PROMOTED PRODUCTS



**Figure 5:** The sample's opinion on products that are marketed as sustainable.

Chen (2009) states that trust can influence a purchasing decision. Chen (2009) further poses the idea that consumer trust can enhance consumer commitment to a brand and is a determinant of brand equity. Unfortunately, Chen (2009) also notes that if consumers trust is impacted, brand reputation may be impaired (Chen, 2009). McNeil and Moore (2015) confirm this as a potential barrier to sustainable purchase intention, by suggesting that the fashion industry has become saturated with superficial promises of green intention. The authors believe that this has led to the development of consumer scepticism regarding the transparency of fashion brands, which has intensified consumer cynicism around the marketing of sustainable products (McNeil and Moore, 2015). Neumann, Martinez and Martinez (2020), further suggest that this stems from the belief that green marketing is merely a proliferation tactic that has previously been used to justify higher pricing.

The semi-structured interviews revealed that consumers, within the sample, had varying levels of trust into organisational sustainability. The majority of participants displayed scepticism when asked for their opinion on products that are marketed as sustainable. The same majority claim it is imperative to gauge sustainability, and transparency, prior-to-purchase. This confirms the thinking of McNeil and Moore (2015). However, half of the participants claimed that sustainable marketing, regardless of transparency, can create a sense of gratification and result in an ego boost. This contradicts the thinking of Chen (2009) in that trust holds no influence over their individual purchasing decisions.

When asked their opinions regarding products that are marketed as sustainable, Participant 3 and 6 suggested that this would incite purchase. However, Participant 3 displayed scepticism regarding organisational transparency; yet, suggested that sustainable iconography would incite purchase. Participant 1, 2, 4 and 5 similarly displayed scepticism regarding organisational transparency. This affirms the thinking of Tabuchi (2022), as a lack of organisational transparency within the industry makes it incredibly difficult for consumers to discern the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions. Participant 4 suggested that the level of scepticism ranges based on place of purchase. Participant 2 noted that smaller, local companies are more trustworthy; however, Participant 2 understands that research is required to affirm sustainability prior to purchase. Participant 1, while sceptical, suggests that there is a sense of gratification to sustainable purchasing, even without organisational transparency.

To avoid this, Polonsky and Jevon (2006) suggest that the leveraging of CSR issues must be carefully considered, as over-use can create scepticism in the consumer-base. Further, a study by Jestratišević, Uanhoro and Creighton (2020) found that by implementing sustainable solutions and sharing honest, transparent information about these solutions, transparency transformed into trustworthiness in the eyes of the consumer.

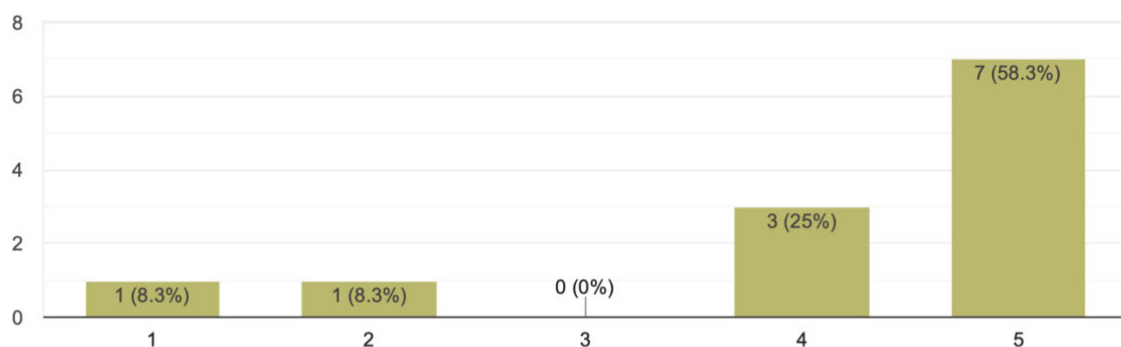
## 4.5 Subjective Norm

Ajzen (1991) suggests that subjective norms aid in the internal assessment, or evaluation, of a behaviour as these norms guide individuals to behave in a certain way through a perceived social pressure relating to the behaviour. This study takes the position that subjective norms create intention through the combination of individual attitude, and the opinion of those around the individual, regarding a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). With regards to this study, subjective norms can create intention through the combination of individual attitude, and the opinion of those around the individual, regarding a behaviour. For the purposes of this study, the subjective norms associated with sustainable purchase intention have been explored to gain insight into the level of intention, and social pressure, held by broader South African society regarding sustainable purchasing behaviour in the fashion industry.

Exploration into the subjective norm of the population revealed that 75% felt no familial pressure to purchase sustainable clothing. 50% felt unimpacted by the opinions of the people they value regarding sustainable fashion consumption; however, 16% claim to have an established subjective norm, regarding sustainable purchase behaviour, with their friends.

Please rate the following statements: Whether or not I buy environmentally-friendly fashion is up to me

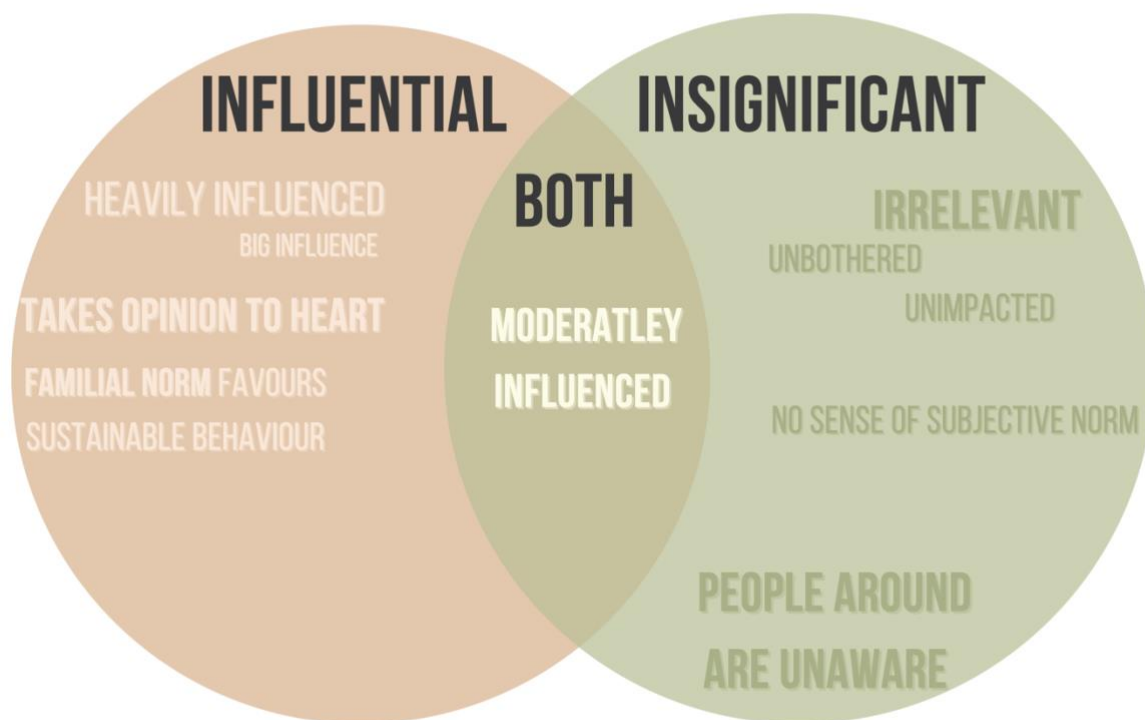
12 responses



**Figure 6:** All participants take responsibility for their actions with 58% of respondents claiming that the only barrier to their sustainable consumption, is themselves.

66% of respondents felt unimpacted by people important to them regarding sustainable consumption. However, when asked more generally about the opinion of family, 66% of respondents claimed to be highly susceptible. With regards to friends, 50% of respondents claimed to be easily impacted by their opinion. All participants take responsibility for their actions with 58% of respondents claiming that the only barrier to their sustainable consumption, is themselves.

## SUBJECTIVE NORM



**Figure 7:** Relevance of subjective norm when purchasing sustainable fashion.

The semi-structured interviews revealed that consumers, within the sample, had varying levels of subjective norm regarding sustainable purchasing behaviour. These levels of subjective norm were separated according to the answers of the sample, either influential or insignificant; with only one participant acknowledging both sides.

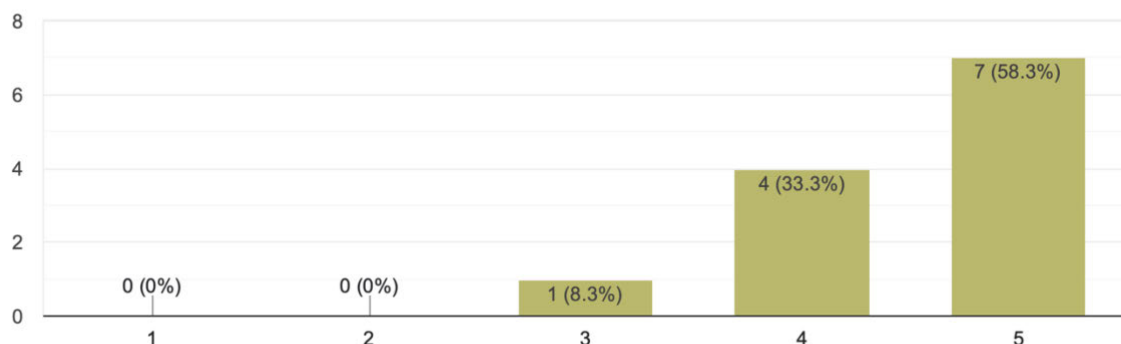
Participant 1, 3, 5 and 6 claimed to have no sense of established subjective norm regarding sustainable purchasing behaviour. Participant 1, 3, 5 and 6 claimed to be unimpacted by this lack of sustainable subjective norm, with both Participant 1 and 3 believing that they are more sustainable in their purchasing behaviour than those

around them. Whereas, Participants 2 and 4 suggest that their purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by the opinions of those around them, especially regarding sustainable purchasing behaviour.

## 4.6 Perceived Behavioural Control

Ajzen (1991) suggests that perceived behavioural control is an indicator of an individual's understanding of the level of difficulty associated with a behaviour. This study takes the position that perceived behavioural control refers to the individuals' level of control experienced, and involvement required, while performing a behaviour as well as the level of participation, resources and opportunities required prior to performing a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). With regards to this research, perceived behavioural control refers to the individuals' level of control experienced, and involvement required, while performing a behaviour. Perceived behavioural control refers to the level of participation, resources and opportunities required prior to performing a behaviour. For the purposes of this study, perceived behavioural control has been investigated alongside attitude and subjective norms to gain insight into South African consumers level of intention associated with sustainable purchasing decisions in the fashion industry. This is particularly pertinent with regards the potential barriers to sustainable consumption, as consumers may feel that sustainable behaviour is out-of-reach due to budget. A feeling of inaccessibility has the potential impact an individuals' feeling of perceived behavioural control and can be a potential barrier to sustainable purchase intention.

Please rate the following statements: Environmentally-friendly fashion is hard to find  
12 responses

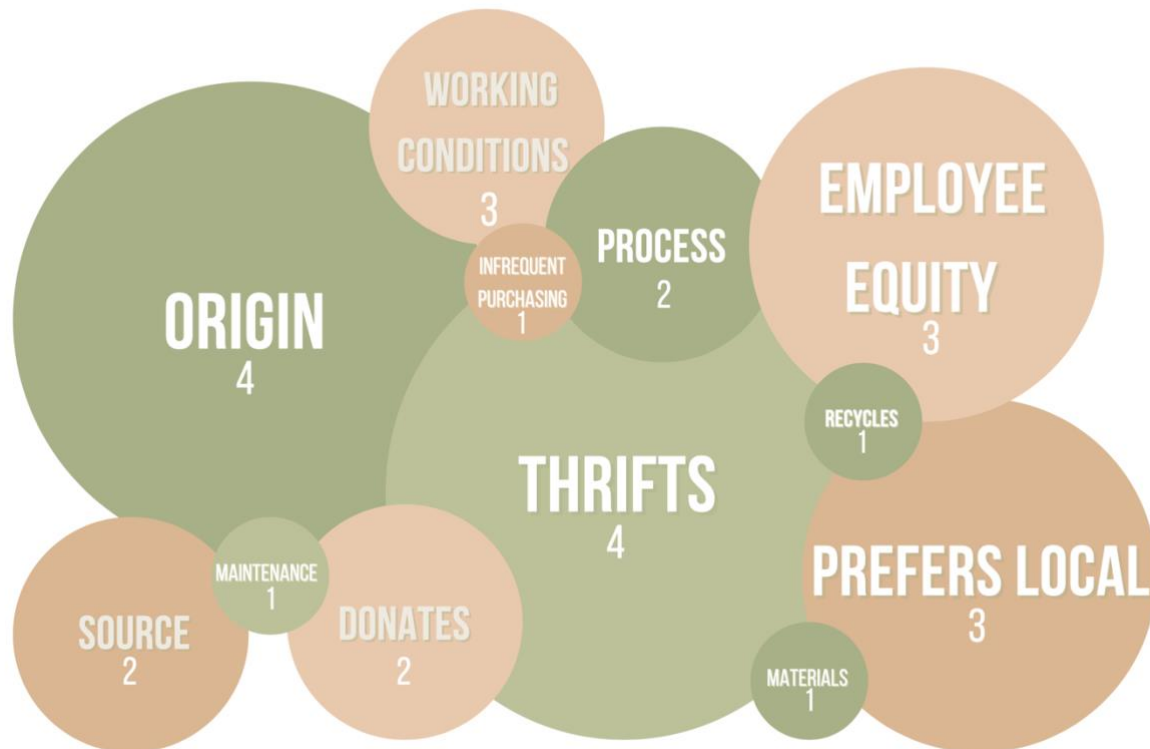


**Figure 8:** 83% of the population felt that there is insufficient accessibility to sustainable fashion in urban Gauteng.

93% of respondents felt the importance of protecting the environment moderately to incredibly; however, when asked if they protect the environment 41.7% of the population disagreed. In this way, the respondents confirmed that there is a gap in sustainable intention and actual behaviour. Further, the respondents confirmed the

thinking of Soares de Lira et al., (2022), in that purchasing environmentally friendly products requires a higher level of effort from the consumer, in the form of research, as well as a higher price.

## SUSTAINABLE CONSIDERATION



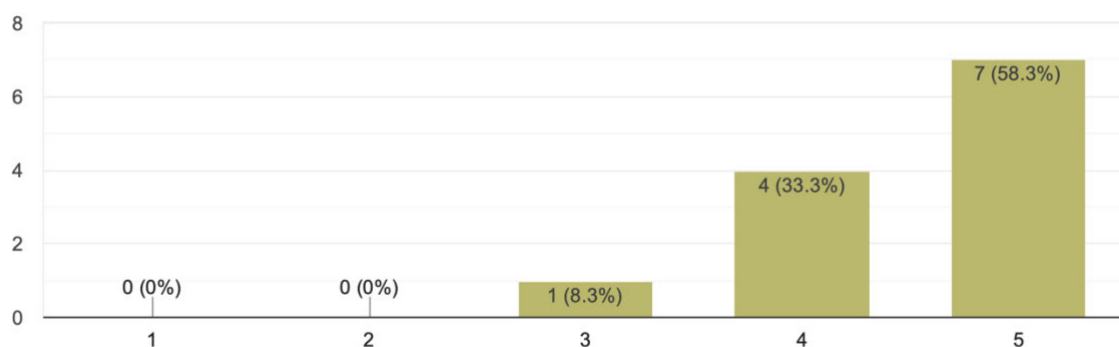
**Figure 9:** Aspects of sustainability considered prior to clothing purchase.

The semi-structured interviews revealed that consumers, within the sample, had varying levels of perceived control regarding sustainable purchasing behaviour. Probing at the Participants degree of sustainable consideration prior to clothing purchase revealed that consumers consider the origin of the item above all else. The Participants also revealed that employee equity is of major concern to South African fashion consumers. Participants suggested that thrifting and participating in the local fashion economy were safe ways of preventing participation in unsustainable purchasing behaviour. Participants 1 and 2 consider means of production to be the determinant of sustainable purchasing; however, Participant 2 emphasised employee equity. Participants 3 and 6 prefer to purchase second-hand clothes, by means of thrifting, as a means to ensure the sustainability of their purchase. Participant 3 also claims to keep pieces until they deteriorate and recycles or donates out-of-trend items as a means of participating in the circular economy. Participant 4, similar to 1 and 2,

considers means of production to be the determinant of sustainable purchasing; however, Participant 4 prefers to purchase local boutique fashion as a means of ensuring the sustainability of her purchasing behaviour. Similarly, Participant 5 regards local production to be a determinant of sustainability. However, only Participants 1 and 2 claim to do their research prior to purchase, as a means to ensure the sustainability of their purchasing decision. Further, confirming the thinking of Soares de Lira et al., (2022), in that purchasing environmentally friendly products requires a higher level of effort from the consumer, in the form of research, as well as a higher price.

Please rate the following statements: Environmentally friendly fashion is more expensive than conventional fashion

12 responses

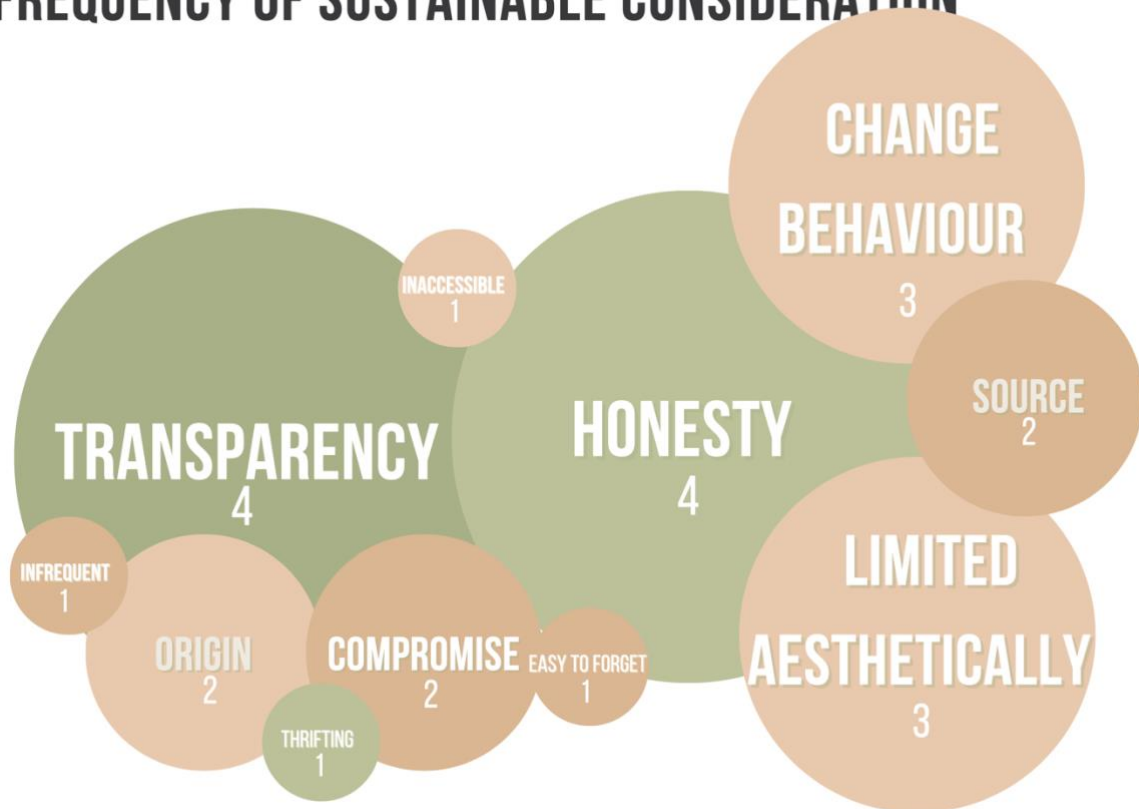


**Figure 9:** 58% of respondents claim that environmentally friendly fashion is more expensive than conventional fashion.

The screening survey also revealed that 58% of the population felt that having reduced expenses were of moderate to incredible importance to them. With 58% of respondents also claiming that environmentally friendly fashion is more expensive than conventional fashion. With a further 50% of respondents feeling as if they do not have access to the resources, time, and opportunities to practise sustainable consumption. This confirms the thinking of Mandarić, Hunjet and Kozina (2021), in that buying clothes is not an act of altruism, that generally consumers are not as concerned with sustainability as they are with price point. This also affirms the thinking of Soares de Lira et al., (2022), in that purchasing environmentally friendly products requires a higher level of effort from the consumer, in the form of research, as well as a higher price. This also confirms the thinking of Neumann et al (2020), in that the growth of fast-fashion has led to the creation of the perception, and attitude, that sustainable fashion can be over-priced. This perception is a potential barrier to sustainable

purchase intention as it leads consumers to believe that sustainable purchasing behaviour is expensive and out-of-reach, negatively impacting the consumers perceived behavioural control.

## FREQUENCY OF SUSTAINABLE CONSIDERATION



**Figure 10:** Frequency of ethical or sustainable consideration prior-to-purchase.

The semi-structured interviews revealed that consumers, within the sample, had varying levels of perceived control regarding sustainable purchasing behaviour. The Participants revealed that transparency and honesty are of prime importance while considering a sustainable purchase. Interestingly, the sample noted that a barrier to sustainable purchasing behaviour, in the South African context, could be aesthetics. The perception of a limited aesthetic in sustainable fashion is a barrier to sustainable fashion consumption as consumers feel that they would need to compromise or change their behaviour in order to be sustainable.

When probed about the frequency of ethical or sustainable consideration prior-to-purchase, Participant 1 noted that sustainable fashion is inaccessible to her. Participant 1 suggested that the aesthetic of sustainable clothing was a barrier to purchasing sustainably. Participant 1 then furthered this statement suggesting that

fast-fashion retailers offer on-trend, aesthetically pleasing items, in a more accessible way than sustainable, slow-fashion retailers. Further confirming the thinking of Neumann et al (2020), in that the growth of fast-fashion has led to the creation of the perception, and attitude, that sustainable fashion can be inaccessible. Further, Participant 1 also confirmed the thinking of Momberg et al. (2012) that South African consumers prioritise price, fit and aesthetics above all other product attributes, including sustainability (Momberg et al., 2012). Participant 1 also confirmed that the South African consumer-base has a preference for price, fit and quality over ethical sourcing (Nilssen, Bick and Abratt, 2019).

When asked about the frequency of ethical or sustainable consideration prior-to-purchase, Participant 2 claimed to consider honesty and transparency prior to every purchase. Participant 3 claims to consider ethics and sustainability the majority of the time; however, noted that in a rush sustainability was easy to forget prior to purchase. Participant 4 noted that her consideration depended on the type of purchase; however, when asked about clothing purchases specifically she claimed to consider the products origin as a determinant of sustainability and ethics. Participants 5 and 6 claim to consider ethics or sustainability prior to purchase, infrequently. In this way, it is evident that there are varying levels of perceived control regarding sustainable purchasing behaviour.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The use of a younger population, and well-educated sample, will limit the transferability of this research, with regards to the broader South African population (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The samples' level of knowledge into sustainability, as well as the fashion industry, means that this research may not be replicable with a different sample, further impacting the transferability of this research (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The limitation of one researcher and a small, five-person, sample could also impact this research; however, a sampler has been used in a bid to combat this and establish holistic understanding. The use of the non-probability sampling methods, and screening questionnaire to narrow down the population into a usable sample, is also a potential limitation to the transferability of this research (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Axiological constructivism seeks to explore individual realities and values, (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014), as such this research will not be value-free and is subject to bias; however, in a bid to delimit this research, all insight and understanding established has been supported by academic sources.

Ethical considerations such as ethical clearance, informed consent, and freedom to withdraw at any point have been embedded into this research (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). All sample and population members were treated with respect throughout the process. All unethical questions were avoided, and the sample has remained confidential (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Avoidance of plagiarism, falsification, and an elimination of bias through the selection of a representative sample, and the inclusion of representative questions has been embedded into this research, in a bid to gain holistic insight (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). To prevent researcher bias, all researcher views and analysis, are supported by academic sources or interview insight; regardless of the researcher's initial perception of sustainability, as a means to ensure the ethical validity and reliability of this research.

This research sought to gain insight into a potential path to bridging the gap between conscious-consumer intention, and the actual purchasing behaviour, through an exploration of consumers attitude towards sustainability. The establishment of this insight has been guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Aijzen, 1991). This model has supplemented exploration into the potential barriers to performing a sustainable behaviour. This study confirmed the thinking of Musova et al., (2021) in that consumers are genuinely willing to support sustainable practise within the fashion industry; however, require a greater level of knowledge and insight into the industry to-do-so. Participants expressed that their subjective barriers to sustainable purchase intention were accessibility, affordability, and their individual attitude. Further exploration into consumers and the existing attitudinal barrier of trust revealed that trust has

only holds minor influence on a sustainable purchasing decision, contrary to the thinking of Chen (2009).

The results indicate consumer attitude towards sustainable purchasing behaviour within the fashion industry is favourable. The sample also demonstrated a higher regard for the subjective norm and opinions of their peers, than for their families with regards to sustainable purchasing behaviour within the fashion industry. The sample further demonstrated that the barriers to their perceived level of control, with regards to sustainable purchase intention within the South African fashion industry, were aesthetics, price, and accessibility. This demonstrates that there is an audience for sustainable fashion in South Africa; however, based on this research the market is seeking an improvement in aesthetic, accessibility, and price-point to incite intention.

The screening-survey revealed that South African men are also a viable and passionate market with regards to sustainable fashion. This goes against the thinking of Hementa (2021), that women are more likely to understand and practise sustainable behaviour. Considering this, it is recommended that further research is done with regards to the attitude of this audience towards sustainable behaviour. Further, the research revealed that members of the sample feel a sense of gratification post-sustainable-purchase, regardless of organisational transparency; however, transparency and honesty are also of prime importance to this audience prior-to-purchase. This is a potential gap in knowledge that could be explored further.

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## Appendices or Annexures

### Annexure A: Consent form

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Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Stephanie Brickman, and I am a student at Vega. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Anthony Wingfield about sustainability in the fashion industry. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of attitudes towards sustainable consumption.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

---

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

---

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you have been identified as a member of the ideal study sample. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to interview you on your opinions, feelings and experience regarding sustainability in the fashion industry.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

---

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

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Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your attitude towards sustainable consumption. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

---

Do I have to participate in the study?

- 
- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
  - If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
  - Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

---

Will my identity be protected?

---

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Vega, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

---

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

---

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Honours in Strategic Brand Communications. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

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## Annexure B: Ethical Clearance



**Date:** 13 June 2022

**Student name:** Stephanie Brickman

**Student number:** [REDACTED]

**Campus:** Pretoria

**Re: Approval of RESE8419/RMET8429 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!

#### 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.

## **ANNEXURE C – Concept Document Template**

|                                      |                      |                   |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| <b><u>Project details</u></b>        |                      |                   |
| <b>Your Name: Stephanie</b>          | <b>Student</b>       | <b>[REDACTED]</b> |
|                                      | <b>Number:</b>       |                   |
| <b>Supervisor: Anthony Wingfield</b> | <b>Date: 2/12/22</b> | <b>Version:6</b>  |

|                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b><u>Proposed Title</u></b>                                                                                      |
| <b>Title: An exploration of consumer attitude and sustainable purchase intention within the fashion industry.</b> |

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b><u>Research details</u></b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Problem statement</b>       | There is an emerging gap between sustainable consumer intention and actual purchasing decisions (de Lira, da Silva, Costa and Araujo, 2022). This intention-behaviour-gap, in sustainable purchasing behaviour, will be the center-point of this research, which will be undergone to understand consumers attitudes towards sustainability in the fashion industry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Purpose statement</b>       | This research seeks insight into the emerging intention-behaviour-gap regarding sustainable purchasing behaviour and intention within the South African fashion industry. This research endeavours to gain insight into a potential path to bridging the gap between conscious-consumer intention, and the actual purchasing behaviour, through an exploration of consumers attitude towards sustainability. The establishment of this insight will be guided by the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), this model will supplement exploration into the potential barriers to performing a behaviour such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. This theory will also aid in understanding consumer intention and actual performed behaviour regarding |

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     | <p>sustainable purchasing decisions in the South African fashion industry. The primary purpose of this research is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge, through an exploration of individual South African consumer perceptions of sustainability within the fashion industry. As such, this research will be undertaken to identify the barriers to sustainable consumption within the fashion industry. The identification of these barriers will supplement exploration into the ways in which members of the fashion industry can harness sustainability, as a means to gain a competitive advantage.</p> |
| Research question/s | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are South African consumers attitudes towards sustainability within the fashion industry?</li> <li>• What are the subjective norms impacting South African consumers attitudes, regarding sustainability within the fashion industry?</li> <li>• What level of perceived behavioural control is experienced by South African consumers regarding sustainable purchase intention?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Aims/<br>Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To gain insight into consumers attitudes towards sustainability in the fashion industry.</li> <li>• To explore the subjective norms impacting consumers attitudes towards sustainability in the fashion industry.</li> <li>• To explore the level of perceived behavioural control experienced by South African consumers of the fashion industry.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Research rationale  | <p>The global fashion industry is believed to be one of the largest devastators to the environment and has been described as one of the most pollutant industries in the modern marketplace (Hementa, 2021). Consumer consciousness, a result of advancing technology, led to a growing desire for sustainability from within the fashion industry's consumer-base (McNeil and Moore, 2015). This has presented an opportunity for fashion brands that adopt sustainable, ethical business practices. As by aiding in the</p>                                                                                             |

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|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p>mitigation of unsustainable practices, through the holistic instillment of sustainable behaviour, there is potential for the development of a competitive advantage in the emerging, conscious-consumer driven, sustainable marketplace (Chen, 2009).</p> <p>To fully leverage this opportunity for sustainable development, in a bid to cultivate a competitive advantage, a holistic analysis of the current global fashion landscape is pertinent. This is partly due to ever-increasing technological advancement, which has contributed towards the emergence of “waste couture,” (Neumann et al., 2020) or fast-fashion. The emergence of fast-fashion has led to the development of impulse buying as a consumer purchasing trend, as well as the establishment of the perception that sustainable fashion can be over-priced (Neumann et al., 2020). This phenomenon is exacerbated by industry-led superficial promises of green intention and sustainable practise, to justify a higher price tag (McNeill and Moore, 2015). This is further aggravated by the belief that green marketing is merely a proliferation tactic used to justify higher pricing (Neumann et al., 2020). In this way, authentic transparency has become imperative in establishing solid consumer-relations, as well as to solidify competitive advantage in the current marketplace (Neumann et al., 2020).</p> <p>As a fashion-loving consumer, with a tertiary level of knowledge in branding and a passion for sustainability, the researcher has a level of pre-established knowledge into the broader topic of sustainable fashion consumption. This exploration into consumer attitudes towards sustainability seeks to understand, and unpack, the barriers to sustainable consumption within the fashion industry. This will be done in a bid to understand the full spectrum of the sustainability-driven opportunities available to members of the fashion industry. As by exploring the barriers to sustainable consumption, this research seeks to understand the ways in which members of the fashion industry can leverage a sustainability-</p> |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|  |                                                                                                                               |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | driven competitive advantage (Chen, 2009), in one of the most pollutant industries in the modern marketplace (Hementa, 2021). |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| <b><u>Literature overview</u></b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                        |                            |                         |                                   |                                              |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Key theories                      | The theory of planned behaviour proposes that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control shape individual behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1985). The theory of planned behaviour suggests that all behaviour is conscious, this can aid in the foundation of this research as sustainability, and its associated behaviour, is subject to attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control these shape individuals' subjective behavioral intentions, in this case sustainable purchase intention.                                                                                                                 |                                        |                            |                         |                                   |                                              |
| Seminal authors/sources           | (Ajzen and Madden, 1986); (Ajzen,1991); (Conner and Armitage, 1998); (McNeil and Moore, 2015); (Polonsky and Jevon, 2006)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                        |                            |                         |                                   |                                              |
| Literaturereview themes           | <u>Theme 1</u><br>Organisational Perspective                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <u>Theme 2</u><br>Consumer Perspective | <u>Theme 3</u><br>Attitude | <u>Theme 4</u><br>Trust | <u>Theme 5</u><br>Subjective Norm | <u>Theme 6</u><br>Perceived level of control |
| Sources                           | <p>Ajzen, I. and Madden, T. J. 1986. <i>Prediction of goal-directed behavior: Attitudes, intentions, and perceived behavioral control</i>. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, (Vol. 22. No. 5): pp. 453-474. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(86)90045-4">https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(86)90045-4</a> [Accessed 23 April 2022].</p> <p>Ajzen, I. 1991. <i>The theory of planned behavior</i>. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, (Vol.50. No.2): pp 179-211. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T">https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T</a> [Accessed 23 April 2022].</p> |                                        |                            |                         |                                   |                                              |

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|              | <p>Conner, M. and Armitage, C.J. 1998. <i>Extending the Theory of Planned Behavior: A Review and Avenues for Further Research</i>. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, (Vol.28 No.15): pp 1429-1464.</p> <p>McNeill, L. and Moore, R. 2015. <i>Sustainable fashion consumption and the fast fashion conundrum: fashionable consumers and attitudes to sustainability in clothing choice</i>. International Journal of Consumer Studies, (Vol. 39 No. 3): pp. 212-222. [Online]. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12169">https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12169</a> [Accessed 11 March 2022]</p> <p>Polonsky, M. J., &amp; Jevon, C. 2006. <i>Understanding issue complexity when building a socially responsible brand</i>. European Business Review, (Vol. 18 No.5, 2006): pp.341-347. [Online]. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/09555340610686930">https://doi.org/10.1108/09555340610686930</a> [Accessed 17 March]</p> |
| Key concepts | Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioural Control and Behavioural Intention.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| <b><u>Provisional Research Approach</u></b> |                 |                                                                      |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                             | <u>Paradigm</u> | <u>Epistemology</u>                                                  | <u>Ontology</u>                                                                                            | <u>Axiology</u>                                                                                                        |
| Paradigm                                    | Constructivist  | Learning is based on previous experience, background, and knowledge. | Existence does not exist independently of the mind; it is rather, constructed by the mind than discovered. | Reality is individually constructed, dependent on subjective knowledge. As such, social inquiry is bound by, and laden |

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| Approach / design | Constructivist Axiological. This aids in this research as ethics and values are subjective and personal to every individual (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This translates to sustainable purchasing behaviour being a subjective decision, which is the basis of this research. Qualitatively, this research seeks insight into consumers perception of sustainability, in relation to purchase intention in the South African fashion industry; by means of phenomenology, in the form of a literature review, as well as ethnographic research, in the form of individual interviews. The sample for the interviews will be determined after a precursory screening survey has been shared with members of the broader population. The narrowing down of the population into a sample will be determined by knowledge, awareness and understanding of sustainability in the fashion industry; to establish a holistic understanding of South African consumer perception through the operationalization of terms such as sustainability, to gauge consumer understanding, awareness, and knowledge. This will be done to achieve a more representative sample and gain holistic insight into consumer perception of sustainability within the South African fashion industry, and the relation of this perception to individual purchase intention. |  |  |                  |
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| <b><u>Provisional Research Plan</u></b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| Population                              | 20–25-year-old knowledgeable, educated South African female consumers of the fashion industry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Sampling                                | Non-probability, purposive sampling of 20–25-year-old urban South African females that are consumers of the fashion industry. The desired sample is well-educated and has a level of understanding and a varying degree of insight into sustainability. This sample will be selected by means of a screening survey, in a bid to establish a |

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|                           | holistic understanding into broad population, and their behaviour, with a limited sample of five.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Data collection method(s) | Interview survey to narrow down broader population into a usable sample through the operationalization of perception, to gauge holistic insight into consumer perceptions of sustainability within the fashion industry. Further, a set of semi-structured individual interviews of the sample will take place in a bid to gain individual insight into individual perception and intention with regards to sustainability in the fashion industry. As well as ethnography, in the form of a literature review to unpack the culture of conscious behaviour. |
| Data analysis method(s)   | Content analysis, in the form of a literature review will be utilized. Further, Thematic and Discourse analysis will be used to unpack the insight, and perspectives, gained from the individual interviews as well as the understanding gained by means of the literature review.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

| <b><u>Ethical considerations and limitations</u></b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| Ethics                                               | Ethical considerations such as ethical clearance, informed consent, and freedom to withdraw at any point will be embedded into this research. All sample and population members will be treated with respect throughout the process; further, unethical questions will be avoided, and the sample will remain anonymous to preserve confidentiality. Participants will also be granted access to findings post-analysis. Avoidance of plagiarism, falsification, and an elimination of bias through the selection of a representative sample, and the inclusion of representative questions will be embedded into this research, in a bid to gain holistic insight. Further, to prevent bias, all researcher views and analysis, will be supported by academic sources or interview insight; regardless of the researcher's initial perception of sustainability, in a bid to ensure the ethical validity and reliability of this research. |
| Limitations                                          | The use of a younger population, and well-educated sample, limits the iteration of this research with regards to the broader South African population. Further, the samples' level of knowledge into                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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|  | <p>sustainability, as well as the industry, means that this research may not be replicable with a different sample. The limitation of one researcher and a small, five-person, sample could also impact this research; however, a sampler will be used in a bid to combat this and establish holistic understanding. The use of the non-probability sampling methods, and screening questionnaire to narrow down the population into a usable sample, is also a potential limitation to the transferability of this research. Axiological constructivism seeks to explore individual realities and values, as such this research will not be value-free and is subject to bias; however, in a bid to delimit this research, all insight and understanding established will be supported by academic sources.</p> |
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