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Barriers to Slow Fashion

A comparison between the perceptions of
Generation X, Y and Z

Carolina de Sousa Gomes da Silva Santos

Católica Porto Business School
November 2023



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Master's Final Assignment in the modality Dissertation presented to the
Catholic University of Portugal for the degree of Master of Management

by

Carolina de Sousa Gomes da Silva Santos

under the supervision of
Prof. Dr. Jorge Manuel Soares Julião

Católica Porto Business School
November 2023

Acknowledgements

I begin with my heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Dr. Jorge Manuel Soares Julião for his insightful guidance, valuable feedback, and unwavering motivation. His mentorship played a pivotal role in critical stages of the development of this master thesis. His contributions have been indispensable to this work, and I am truly grateful for the guidance and expertise.

Additionally, my deepest gratitude to my parents, sister, family, and closest friends for their unwavering love, support, dedication, and assistance throughout my journey. They have been the closest witnesses to all my triumphs, accomplishments, as well as my moments of frustration and challenges. Their constant presence and encouragement have provided me with the strength and courage I needed. It is with immense appreciation that I dedicate this work to my family - my parents and sister. They have always believed in me and played an integral role in propelling me forward. Your unwavering support has been absolutely indispensable.

Abstract

In the face of a growing population responsible for levels of consumption that exceed the sustaining capacity of the planet, it has become increasingly evident that humans hold the potential to be instrumental in the resolution of the current environmental problems, particularly the younger generations who are assuming a leading role in the environmental movement. This surge of environmental responsibility has encouraged transformative changes in various industries, notably the fashion sector, infamous for its significant environmental impact. Slow fashion has emerged and gained visibility as a sustainable alternative, nonetheless, due to its slow uptake in the market, it is essential to identify the obstacles hindering the adoption of slow fashion and explore a generational perspective to understand how these generational cohorts, who are in charge of the environmental future, perceive the challenges.

For this purpose, this master thesis identifies the main barriers to slow fashion consumption through the literature and compares the perception of Generation X, Y and Z regarding some of the barriers, namely lack of trust, price perceptions and limited accessibility, according to their self-reported level of favour or disfavour to each of the statements that construct the variables.

Through an online questionnaire aimed at Portuguese consumers, it was concluded that Generation Z presents lower levels of trust than Generation X, however, contrary to what was suggested, there is no consistent evidence of a difference in the perceptions of price and accessibility between the generational cohorts.

Keywords: Slow fashion consumption, Barriers to slow fashion consumption, Trust, Price, Accessibility Generational cohort, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z.

Resumo

Perante uma população em crescimento responsável por níveis de consumo que ultrapassam a capacidade de sustentação do planeta, tornou-se cada vez mais evidente que os seres humanos detêm potencial para serem instrumentais na resolução dos atuais problemas ambientais, especialmente as gerações mais jovens que assumem um papel proeminente no movimento ambiental. Este aumento de responsabilidade ambiental tem incentivado mudanças transformadoras em várias indústrias, nomeadamente no setor da moda, conhecido pelo seu significativo impacto ambiental. A *slow fashion* emergiu e ganhou visibilidade como uma alternativa sustentável, no entanto, devido à sua lenta aceitação no mercado, é essencial identificar os obstáculos que dificultam a adesão à mesma e explorar uma perspetiva geracional para compreender como os grupos geracionais que detêm o futuro ambiental percecionam os desafios.

Com este propósito, esta tese de mestrado identifica as principais barreiras ao consumo de *slow fashion* através da literatura e compara a perceção das Gerações X, Y e Z relativamente a algumas dessas barreiras, nomeadamente a falta de confiança, perceções de preço e limitada acessibilidade, de acordo com os níveis reportados de concordância ou discordância face a cada uma das afirmações que compõem as variáveis.

Através de um questionário online direcionado a consumidores portugueses, concluiu-se que a Geração Z apresenta níveis de confiança inferiores à Geração X. No entanto, contrariamente ao que foi sugerido, não existem evidências consistentes de diferenças nas perceções de preço e acessibilidade entre os grupos geracionais.

Palavras-chave: *Slow fashion*, Barreiras ao consumo de *slow fashion*, Confiança, Preço, Acessibilidade, Grupos geracional, Geração X, Geração Y, Geração Z.

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Characterized by a growing population responsible for levels of consumption that cross the sustaining capacity of the planet, beginning in the mid-1980s, consumption-driven growth has increased concern regarding commercial activities and consumer behaviours that foster non-environmentally friendly practices (Sheoran & Kumar, 2022). A collective awakening emerged, prompting the realization that our utilization of resources may have come at the expense of people, communities, and the environment.

The fashion industry, particularly clothing production, has been implicated in the exploitation of both resources and labour (Fletcher, 2010; Gazzola et al., 2020; Nikolina, 2019). The awareness of the impact of fashion consumption and production has grown, leading to calls for a re-design of current unsustainable fashion practices (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010; Gazzola et al., 2020), with a triple-bottom-line approach that incorporates environmental and social responsibilities into business strategies. Nowadays, this is not an option, it is a requirement for long-term legitimacy and subsistence (Charter et al., 2002).

As a consequence of a shifting towards a more conscious mindset, new models have emerged such as slow fashion. Ideally, the adoption of environmental

efforts would consequently reward companies and trigger consumers to recognize them as leaders towards change (Gleim et al., 2013). However, empirical evidence suggests that even though the attitudes towards sustainable consumption are positive, and an increasing number of consumers absorbed values of ethical consumerism, the translation of those interests into ethical purchasing decision is more complex and a change of behaviour is considerably less evident (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Moraes et al., 2012).

Due to its significant social and ecological impact, sustainable fashion consumption is also a subject that has garnered extensive research. Previous studies focusing on slow fashion hold promise for a more sustainable future. However, despite the potential benefits, consistent with the attitude-behaviour gap, barriers persist, hindering the widespread adoption of this transformative approach (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015).

Engaging in slow-fashion consumption requires more than just awareness (Domingos et al., 2022; Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Şener et al., 2019). Consumers navigate purchasing decisions, often without full awareness of the intricate interplay of the factors influencing their natural inclination to overlook the environmental implications (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). These obstacles need a deeper examination and proactive strategies to bridge the gap and drive the fashion industry on the right path.

1.2. Purpose and Research Definition

This thesis is driven by a fundamental belief in humanity's dual role as consumers in environmental matters. While they bear significant responsibility for current environmental issues, they also hold the potential to be instrumental in their resolution, particularly the younger generations. Thus, exploring this

subject is fundamental for effectively promoting alternatives that contribute to environmental protection. This research attempts to cultivate a deeper sense of responsibility.

Several studies have been conducted in the pro-environmental consumption field related to slow fashion, the factors that influence human behaviour, the barriers to sustainable consumption, and other diverging topics. However, there is little research that approaches the barriers from a generational cohort perspective.

Therefore, this master thesis objective is to provide a distinctive viewpoint, comparing the generational cohorts' perceptions on some of the barriers to sustainable consumption identified in the literature, with emphasis on slow fashion and focusing on Generation X, Y and Z. For that reason, the following research question has been formulated:

RQ: Is there a discernible divergence in the perceptions of Generation X, Y, and Z regarding the barriers to slow fashion consumption?

Chapter 2

2. Literature Review

2.1. Fast Fashion Industry

The fashion industry is a highly competitive global business of around 1.7 trillion dollars (Amed et al., 2023). It represents a significant economic force and an important driver of global GDP, that has managed to achieve fast growth and tremendous transformation in the last decade while facing financial crisis, sudden changes, and a very uncertain environment (Gazzola et al., 2020). Nonetheless, similarly to other sectors, the costs of its growth model are mostly endured by agents external to the corporations who hold the profits. Workers, communities and the environment are the ones who borne the real impacts of its activity, facing problems such as increasing pollution, resource exhaustion and climate change (Fletcher, 2010).

Environmentally, the industry is responsible for most serious actions including the usage of huge quantities of non-renewable resources, such as fertilizers for cotton plantations, oil in the production of synthetic fibbers and chemicals for staining and finishing fabrics, in a total of 98 million tons annually (Gazzola et al., 2020). As well as using 93 billion cubic meters of water, aggravating drought conditions, it also emits around 1.2 billion tons of CO₂ and dumps thousands of microplastic fibbers into the oceans (Gazzola et al., 2020).

This industry's growth encourages a fast-paced consumption model, characteristic of fast fashion, that self-endures in mass production at high volumes and low prices, through a standard of extracting, producing, and disposing of resources, that leads to large volumes of sales (Hugo et al., 2021).

It was estimated that, between 1966 and 2012, over half of unwanted clothes were not recycled, ending up among household waste where they were consequently sent to incinerators or landfills (Nikolina, 2019), where their life cycle shortly ends. Fast fashion constantly releases new collections, which leads consumers to perceive cheap items as perishable goods, encouraging rapid product turnover (Fletcher, 2010; Nikolina, 2019).

Fast fashion thrives by mass-reproducing luxury trends in low-cost versions at the expense of quality (Joy et al., 2012). Its business model is so attractive due to the speed of availability, great variety and limited editions at reasonable prices (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). Joy et al. (2012) conclude that even though it is an affordable option that offers up-to-date fashion trends while being profitable for companies, it fosters fundamental ethical issues.

2.2. Slow Fashion

As a problem of increasing importance, sustainable consumption is one of the few subjects that combine the triviality of human behaviour with the abstract aspect of moral responsibility and the man-nature interrelation (Kostadinova, 2016).

Sustainability can be perceived on a broader approach as the act of balancing economic, ecological and social goals with the corresponding consequences (Schaefer & Crane, 2005), to guarantee that the community's actions do not pressure the viability of the planet for future generations. It focuses on consumer

behaviours that are driven by their environmental concerns and intentions to reduce the consumption of natural resources (Moraes et al., 2012). Either by purchasing products that represent a green choice (Carrigan et al., 2004) or by avoiding using products that cause pollution or animal cruelty, green behaviours involve any form of activity that is embraced with the particular purpose of reducing or limiting negative impacts on the environment (Schaefer & Crane, 2005). According to Kostadinova (2016), sustainable consumption “is not only about consuming differently but it is also about consuming less” (p. 231).

It is in this context that the concept of slow fashion is introduced as an emerging fashion alternative that slows down the consumption and production processes while protecting the well-being of the workers, communities and the environment (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010; Jung & Jin, 2016). It comprises environmental, social and economic concerns, that enable a holistic conception of sustainable fashion integration (Pears, 2006), creating emphasis on quality and increased consciousness from producers to consumers, in a sustainable process that includes design development, production sourcing, and consumer education (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010).

This slow approach stands against the unsustainable effects of the fast-moving fashion cycle; however, it is not diminished as the opposite of fast (Fletcher, 2010). The author argues that “slow” represents a different approach in which the agents are more conscious of the impacts. Additionally, in contrast to disposable fashion, slow fashion’s purpose is to lower the number of trends and seasons, reassuring quality in production to increase the value of items, while focusing on three components – placing value on local resources and economies, transparency in the production system, and creating products with a longer usable life (Clark, 2008). Ultimately, slow fashion advocates for equilibrium which raises the question of why this consumption alternative is not more widely favoured over fast fashion?

2.3. Barriers to Slow Fashion Consumption

Empirical evidence suggests that even though the attitudes towards sustainable consumption are positive and an increasing number of consumers absorbed values of ethical consumerism, the translation of those interests into ethical purchasing decision is more complex and a change of behaviour is considerably less evident (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Shaw et al., 2006). This discrepancy is identified as the attitude-behaviour gap (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Chan & Wong, 2012; De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Niinimäki, 2010; Reimers et al., 2016; Roberts, 1996).

This is partially explained by social desirability bias, implying that the gap is exaggerated due to inflated measures of intentions and an overestimation of ethically minded consumers (Auger & Devinney, 2007; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; De Pelsmacker et al., 2005). While sustained by Carrington et al. (2010), the authors provide further reasons, suggesting that truly ethically minded consumers “do not always walk their talk” (p. 141) as a result of several constraints that arise up to the purchasing moment and inhibit their ethical behaviour. This approach acknowledges the existence of barriers when converting attitudes into purchase behaviours (Carrington et al., 2010; Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

2.3.1 Emotions

According to Joshi and Rahman (2015), studies indicate that environmental concerns have a positive and direct impact on environmental knowledge, purchase intention and actual purchase behaviour. However, Ehrich and Irwin (2005) advocate that consumers who are most concerned about the issue are more inclined to maintain a level of "wilful ignorance" to avoid negative emotions

(Ehrich & Irwin, 2005). By refusing to acknowledge problems or distancing themselves from painful emotions, denial, apathy, rational distancing and delegation are defence mechanisms that inhibit pro-environmental behaviour (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). For example, people tend to produce apathy or rejection to admit personal responsibility when they believe the situation cannot be changed (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). This occurs because individuals desire to preserve a positive self-view (Dunning, 2007), adopting self-defencing reactions (Dickinson, 2009). At the same time, consumption is still associated with a pleasurable and liberatory activity that brings excitement to the consumer in the form of positive emotions and, in particular, the consumption of fashion is also validated by being linked to identity construction, self-fulfilment and well-being (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015).

2.3.2 Perceived Consumer Effectiveness

According to Joshi & Rahman (2015), several studies reveal that perceived consumer effectiveness indirectly shapes consumer attitude, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control, determining green purchase intention and behaviour in a positive correlation. On the other hand, Gleim (2013) suggests that many consumers rarely connect consumption practices with outcomes as they believe that they cannot individually mitigate environmental impact. Based on the impression that a single purchase or the purchases of one sole individual do not have a significant effect on the outcome, which contributes to the validation of non-environmental habits. Individuals are also reluctant to engage in sustainable consumption because they believe large organizations and governments are the main accountable (D'Astous & Legendre, 2009; Laroche et al., 2001). Engagement in sustainable consumption behaviour involves personal effort which, in turn, depends on the motivation to change the lifestyle towards

a greener way (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). Therefore, to this extent, individual motivation is likely to decrease if individuals feel powerless, helpless, or ineffective at solving environmental and ethical problems (Thøgersen, 2005).

2.3.3 Trust

Previous research shows that the lack of transparency and trust in environmental statements and initiatives is a noteworthy barrier towards green consumption behaviours (Braga Junior et al., 2019; Chen & Chang, 2013; Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Ensuring that ethical standards are applied throughout the entire operational process is a challenge (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). This may be due to limited information and knowledge about the environment, and a lack of previous experience with pro-environmental options, which can negatively impact consumer's beliefs about claims and trust in green products (Odhiambo Joseph, 2019). At the same time, the trust consumers may develop for green products may be eroded when they discover unethical practices led by deceiving marketing strategies, such as misleading advertising and packaging, or when the products fail to meet claimed expectations (Odhiambo Joseph, 2019).

The inconsistencies and ambiguities around ethical claims provoke scepticism about the social and environmental consequences of consumption actions, encouraging consumer incredulity (Young et al., 2010) and preventing people from opting for pro-environmental behaviours, green consumption options or even eco-friendly lifestyles (Joy et al., 2012; Niinimäki, 2010). Companies that often use dishonest and misleading marketing approaches by claiming their products or services are sustainable when they are not are resorting to a practice that is called greenwashing and is responsible for depriving consumers of identifying the real implications of their purchase behaviours, once they have

difficulty distinguishing true claims from deceiving ones (Chen & Chang, 2013). It also induces suspicion and scepticism towards green initiatives which inhibits environmental efforts (Braga Junior et al., 2019), and at the limit leads to distrust in all environmental efforts of marketers and manufacturers resulting in loss of support for the environmental movement (Chen & Chang, 2013).

One example of greenwash is when brands use inadequate terms such as “organic” or “better cotton” in their labelling with the intention of leading customers into believing that the products are greener because of that (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). Due to this type of actions that deliberately misuse information and meanings to promote confusion, customers also cease to fully trust labelling and product information (Thøgersen, 2005), consequently, cancelling the effectiveness of labels as promoters of green consumption.

2.3.4 Information and Knowledge

According to Ozdamar Ertekin and Atik (2015), most consumers are unaware of the true negative consequences of fast fashion consumption and how resource-intensive they are. As they cannot visualise impacts such as carbon or water footprints, individual consumers tend not to connect consumption practices with the outcomes (Gleim et al., 2013). In a certain way, globalization fostered a detachment between production and consumption and disconnection from resource origins and environmental impacts (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

Although sometimes company practices and policies are stated on their website, the degree of effort to acquire this information is discouraging, especially since it is not available at the point of purchase (Shaw et al., 2006). Furthermore, greenwash is also responsible for customer confusion, which is associated with the inability to interpret different aspects of a product or service due to information being too complex, ambiguous, similar or overstated, creating

misinterpretations (Chen & Chang, 2013). Therefore, while some authors argue that lack of information can negatively disturb green purchase behaviour (Connell, 2011; Padel & Foster, 2005), others suggest that, as consumers are restricted in their cognitive ability, information overload can lead to poor purchasing decision (Chen & Chang, 2013; Langer et al., 2007). Carrigan and Attalla (2001) suggest that there is so much knowledge for a consumer to acquire, that information can frequently weaken choice. Langer et al. (2007) provide an example of information overload with the over usage of eco-labels as a marketing strategy that intensifies confusion, and according to Enrich and Irwin (2005), this also creates a source of stress during the decision-making process.

In this sense, different levels of knowledge can be distinguished. Customers need to have fundamental knowledge about environmental issues and practices that are the origin of those, however, very detailed technical information is difficult to process and does not seem to be valuable and fails to foster pro-environmental behaviour (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002).

2.3.5 Price

Economic factors often influence consumers' inclination towards affordable, low-cost fashion. Various studies report that higher price often overshadows ethical principles, contributing to the attitude-behaviour gap in the segment of pro-environmental consumption behaviour (Connell, 2011; Gleim et al., 2013; Padel & Foster, 2005; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Young et al., 2010). Accordingly, it was found that a lack of economic resources exacerbates the perception of price among consumers (Connell, 2011). Consumers with low personal income may avoid purchasing high-priced green products as a way of saving money (Gleim et al., 2013). Nevertheless, sometimes it is not only the high price but the perception of higher price since their lasting durability is not deliberated

(Niinimäki, 2010; Thøgersen, 2005; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Young et al., 2010). Either due to inadequate financial resources or the desire to get the most value for money prevailing over ethical beliefs, economic rationalization easily dominates during the decision-making process (Eckhardt et al., 2010).

2.3.6 Habits and Convenience

Engaging in sustainable consumption often involves replacing automatic behaviours with more effortful actions (White et al., 2019). This might be a challenge because it means giving up regular practices driven by convenience, with which consumers feel comfortable, and people are likely to resist change (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

Additionally, negative attitude towards sustainable consumption choices has been connected to the slow uptake of pro-environmental products in the market (Odhiambo Joseph, 2019). Associated with lack of availability, attainability, affordability, and necessary infrastructures to support these product alternatives, consumers appraise the adoption of eco-friendly behaviours and lifestyles as being inconvenient (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). It is argued that limited availability and difficulty accessing green products inhibit consumers from engaging in green consumption practices (Padel & Foster, 2005; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Young et al., 2010) because it leads consumers to believe that they have restricted options and entails more time and effort (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). Due to the progressively strenuous lifestyles in today's society, consumers are unwilling to spend a lot of time searching, decision-making and purchasing greener products (Young et al., 2010). Inadequacies in the distribution system for green products weaken the effect of product consciousness and hinge the conversion to pro-environmental alternatives. As consumers perceive sustainable consumption as time-consuming, difficult and

requiring significant energy (McKenzie-Mohr, 2000), environmental impacts and labour conditions may be neglected (Eckhardt et al., 2010). The need for comfort and convenience become significant barriers (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002).

In a study presented by Joergens (2006) about ethical fashion consumption, consumers revealed they believe they have limited alternatives to unethical products, particularly in conventional outlets and high streets. Even though there are a few ethical clothing brands, those mostly only have an online presence (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). Moreover, as consumers are unable to physically examine and try on products before purchasing them, shopping online implies an associated risk (Parment, 2013).

2.3.7 Product Attributes

Whereas at first, the main justification for clothing consumption was functionality, studies show that fashion is associated with social symbolism, belongingness and a form of art expression where aesthetic takes a fundamental role (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015). The visual aspect of fashion products is considered the strongest decision factor during purchase and the central element that influences clothing desirability (Joy et al., 2012), in opposition to their ethical nature (Gam, 2011). Fashion and style are important factors considered during the clothing purchase decision process, as it can represent an individual's identity and self-expression (Shaw et al., 2006). Unfortunately, fashion, style, and colour are among the barriers to pro-environmental clothing consumption (Joergens, 2006; Niinimäki, 2010; Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015; Shaw et al., 2006). This happens because many people perceive sustainable options as unfashionable (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Connell, 2010; Shaw et al., 2006) and, consequently, green fashion currently merely interests specific groups (Niinimäki, 2010).

2.3.8 Brand Image

Studies state that consumers usually have their favourite brands, and they prefer them over others regardless of being green (Young et al., 2010). Additionally, it is also acknowledged that they are considered a guide for product research (Bray et al., 2011). In the context of slow fashion, there are only a few ethical clothing brands that are known and recognized among consumers, which entails an obstacle to ethical clothing consumption (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001).

2.4. Characterization of Generation X, Y and Z

According to the cohort theory, as a generation comprehends individuals of similar age, who generally experience the same political, social, and economic events as well as sharing a collective perception centred on values, attitudes and mutual beliefs that influence purchasing and consumption patterns of that generation (Brand et al., 2022), different generations have different perceptions of sustainability and behave differently towards it, making it imperative for marketers to understand dissimilarities in order to develop effective strategies for reaching each group (Portolese Dias, 2003).

Among the 6 existing generational cohorts, Generation X, born between 1965 and 1979, Generation Y, also known as Millennials and born between 1980 and 1994, and Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2010, are going to be the subject of analysis.

Generation X, often referred to as 'digital transactors,' possesses a unique blend of characteristics shaped by the era they grew up in. This generation witnessed the emergence of the first computers during their teens and early

adulthood (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2018). They exhibit a strong tendency for efficient and time-saving approaches, underscoring their aversion to wasting time, energy, and relationships (Williams & Page, 2011).

Highly educated and inquisitive, Generation X harbours curiosity about product features and their utility, concurrently demanding trustworthiness from organizations (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2018; Williams & Page, 2011). They are often dismissive of advertising directed at them (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). In terms of their purchasing habits, while motivations to fit in and create an identity do influence their choices, cost-consciousness takes preference (Portolese Dias, 2003). Despite their digital adaptability, Generation X, due to the era they grew up in, often rely on traditional search and decision-making methods, prioritizing a deep understanding of product features and necessity, while seeking risk avoidance and exhibiting lower tolerance for uncertainty (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Additionally, they place great value on convenience, strong community relations, and well-established branding in their purchasing decisions (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). With more established careers and higher incomes compared to their younger counterparts, Generation X navigates consumer choices with a combination of digital literacy and traditional values. It's important to note that during much of their lives, concerns about climate change and environmental pollution received less media attention and public interest than they do today, shaping their consumer outlook (Brand et al., 2022).

Generation Y is the first high-tech generation, it came of age during the strong emergence of social media and during an environmental consciousness era, which translates into a generation more likely to embrace environmentally friendly behaviour (Muposhi et al., 2015). They demonstrate a strong civic and social awareness, valuing quality goods and showing a willingness to invest more in sustainable options and recognized brand names (Bernardes et al., 2018; Moser, 2016; Noble et al., 2009). However, there are noted inconsistencies in their

consumption patterns, suggesting a complex interplay of values and choices within this cohort (Muposhi et al., 2015; Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017). Driven by increased knowledge about fashion, it is characterized by a high consumption orientation and sophisticated tastes in purchasing habits (Parment, 2013), due to the abundance and availability of products and services where clothing serves as a means of communicating their identity and displaying wealth and purchasing power (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016; Moreno et al., 2017). They seek to differentiate themselves from their peers and emphasize their uniqueness, partly driven by self-esteem considerations (Naderi & Van Steenburg, 2018; Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017).

Self-interest is a compelling characteristic of Millennials (Hume, 2010). They are often referred to as the "me generation" once they emerged during an era of economic prosperity, placing a strong emphasis on self-focus. They tend to be more idealistic and assertive (Francis Tracy, 2018). Simultaneously, the increase in retail and product options led to a culture of entertainment and experience associated with the act of shopping (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016) that normalized socialization in a materialistic society.

Regarding brand loyalty, it is characterized by its fluidity, influenced by fashion trends and brand popularity, with an emphasis on style and quality over price, nevertheless, availability and affordability also hold significant value for this cohort (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016; Naderi & Van Steenburg, 2018). Overall, Generation Y's consumer behaviour is shaped by a dynamic interplay of technology, sustainability awareness, individualism, and a desire for meaningful experiences in their shopping activities.

Lastly, Generation Z is the true digital native since, from earliest age, it has been exposed to the internet, social networks, mobile systems and online shopping (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2018). They possess an innate aptitude for quickly gathering and cross-referencing information from various sources,

reflecting their adeptness in processing information at a rapid pace (Francis Tracy, 2018). Compared to Gen Y, this is a more pragmatic and realistic generation of consumers that expects to access a broad range of information before making purchases, to assess not only what they buy but also the act of consuming itself, as they developed a sophisticated understanding of media and advertising and are highly critical of inauthentic messaging (Francis Tracy, 2018).

They are less loyal to brands and speed is important for Gen Z, they have an eight-second attention thresholding in which they are able to decide what is attractive to them or not (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Gazzola et al., 2020). One of their first independent acts of purchase was associated with clothing items, they similarly use fashion as a way of expression (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Nonetheless, are more socially and environmentally conscious, they have higher expectations about fashion brands as they want them to be more sustainable, ethical, transparent and authentic, to provide positive contributions to the ecosystem (Gazzola et al., 2020). Accordingly, they are willing to pay a premium price for products with sustainable attributes, that come from brands that reflect similar values (Brand et al., 2022; Gazzola et al., 2020).

Chapter 3

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Question and Hypotheses

The previous chapter discussed the main concepts of the topic and provided a contextualization of the theoretical approaches that aim to interpret consumer behaviour, with particular emphasis on the key determinants that act as barriers to slow fashion consumption and seek to explain the attitude-behaviour gap widely mentioned in literature. Since the relationship between these factors and consumer behaviour is extensively explored in a broad range of literature, the current objective is to comprehend if these barriers are understood differently across generational cohorts. Following this argument, the following research question emerges.

RQ: Is there a discernible divergence in the perceptions of Generation X, Y, and Z regarding the barriers to slow fashion consumption?

According to the foregoing literature studies, lack of trust, price perceptions, and lack of convenience associated with limited accessibility are dominant negative influencing factors of sustainable consumption (Braga Junior et al., 2019; Bray et al., 2011; Domingos et al., 2022; Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Ozdamar Ertekin

& Atik, 2015). Therefore, to answer the previous question, this thesis will focus on the assessment of these factors across different generations. Among the six generational cohorts, Generation X, Y and Z are the focus of this study because they are the generations with the highest fashion consumption rate, and the ones who bear the responsibility for shaping the future of our planet.

3.1.1 Lack of Trust

There is evidence in previous research that, compared with older generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X), younger consumers (Generation Y and Z) reveal higher levels of concern about environmental degradation and a strong responsibility towards the environment, having stronger motivation to acquire sustainable alternatives (Brand et al., 2022). Nonetheless, it is also suggested that they demonstrate more scepticism towards advertising strategies as they tend to be more critical about marketing tactics and do more research on claims and products before making a purchase. Furthermore, as the internet is part of their consumers' identity and having higher technological knowledge and better information access than the previous generations, both cohorts expect environmental practices to be fully acknowledged and supported by a transparent and sustainable supply chain.

Based on a recent survey from Statista Search Department (2022) among adults in the United States, members from Generation Z were the most distrustful of brands' sustainability claims. From the respondents, 28% of Gen Z said they did not believe them, compared to 20% of Gen Y and 19% of Gen X. Conversely, 62% of Millennials and members of Generation X said they believed in brands' sustainability claims compared to only 52% of Generation Z.

This might be justified because, as true digital natives who have grown up surrounded by technology and access to vast amounts of information, Gen Z has

developed a sophisticated understanding of media and advertising and is highly critical of inauthentic messaging from organizations (Francis Tracy, 2018) and hyperconscious about greenwashing. Trust is a crucial factor for Gen Z when it comes to engaging with brands. However, according to *The State of Fashion 2023* by McKinsey, only 25% of Gen Z think brands are genuine in their efforts. Clique ou toque aqui para introduzir texto.

H1: Different cohorts have different perceptions of trust about brands' sustainability claims.

H1.1: Gen Z has lower levels of trust in brands' sustainable claims than Gen Y and Gen X.

3.1.2 Price Perceptions

Slow fashion products are often more expensive than fast fashion items due to the higher costs associated with sustainable materials, fair labour practices, and smaller-scale production. Some consumers may prioritize affordability over sustainability, especially in times of economic constraints. In terms of price, either due to inadequate financial resources or the perception of sustainable products being perceived as more expensive because their lasting durability is not reflected, this factor is one of the most influential during the decision-making process (Eckhardt et al., 2010). Alongside demonstrating a strong responsibility towards the environment, evidence suggests that younger generations (Generation Y and Z) are willing to pay a premium for sustainability attributes (Brand et al., 2022; Gomes et al., 2023; Noble et al., 2009). In turn, Generation X is the more price-conscious (Portolese Dias, 2003). A study by Simon-Kucher and Partners (2021) revealed that Generation Z (39%) and Generation Y (42%) were more likely to pay more for sustainable products or services than Generation X (31%) or Baby Boomers (26%) (Manley et al., 2023). However, in a conventional

non-sustainable context, younger consumers were found to be more price-sensitive, preferring low-quality clothes, whereas older generations opt for high-quality ones (Brand et al., 2022).

Millennials and Gen Z grew up during a time when sustainability and environmental issues became more prominent in public discourse, as a result, they have been more inclined to seek out brands that align with their values and are willing to pay a premium for sustainable, eco-friendly, and ethically produced products (Brand et al., 2022; Gazzola et al., 2020).

H2: Different generational cohorts have different perceptions of price.

H2.1: In a sustainable context, Gen X perceive slow fashion as more expensive than Gen Y and Gen Z.

3.1.3 Limited Accessibility

As mentioned in the previous chapter, convenience aspects are often associated with accessibility issues because slow fashion brands often have limited distribution channels, especially when compared to global fast fashion retailers with a vast network of stores and well-developed online platforms. Overall, the limited physical retail presence of slow fashion may lead to the perception that sustainable and ethical clothing is hard to find or only available to a select few, entailing more time and effort. Even though the rise of e-commerce and social media has enabled slow-fashion brands to reach wider audiences, this factor still entails a big constraint to slow-fashion consumption.

For instance, Generation X often referred to as 'digital transactors,' grew up in an era that predates the widespread development of information and communication technologies, when traditional brick-and-mortar stores dominated retail shopping. Furthermore, as consumers, they tend to rely on traditional search and decision-making methods, prioritizing a thorough

understanding of product features and their necessity (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). They exhibit a preference for risk avoidance and a lower tolerance for uncertainty, seeking customer convenience, strong community relations, and well-established branding in their purchasing decisions (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). With the limited physical retail presence of slow fashion, the absence of tactile interaction increases their perceptions of risk, as they cannot touch, feel, or try on products before making a purchase (Parment, 2013). These factors combine to create a challenge for Generation X in accessing sustainable products and the reliance on traditional decision-making methods, coupled with the limitations of online shopping, can contribute to a higher perception of limited accessibility of slow-fashion options.

On the other hand, Generation Z and Y are known for their digital savviness and online shopping habits, being more digitally connected, they are more likely to embrace e-commerce and explore online platforms for sustainable options. Furthermore, as a result of their values and beliefs, both generations might be more willing to embrace this concept of limited accessibility due to sustainability concerns or ethical considerations. Nonetheless, limited physical presence might still impact consumption as they might not come across these brands during their regular shopping trips.

H3: Different generational cohorts have different perceptions of accessibility.

H3.1: Gen X perceive slow fashion as less accessible than Gen Y and Gen Z.

3.2. Research Design

Regarding research design, according to the above-mentioned objectives, this thesis adopts a quantitative approach, with recourse to ordinal scales to measure

the degree of favour or disfavour in relation to the barriers to pro-environmental consumption.

Quantitative research design is indispensable for research in the social and behavioural sciences (Creswell, 2009; Salkind, 2018). It allows for objective measurement through numerical data, enabling precise and reliable assessments of phenomena (Creswell, 2009). By quantifying the strength and direction of relationships between variables, quantitative research offers a nuanced understanding of complex human behaviour and social phenomena (Saunders et al., 2009). This systematic approach, grounded in standardized measurement and statistical procedures, helps mitigate researcher bias and produces reliable, replicable insights that contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the social and behavioural sciences (Salkind, 2018).

Data can be subjected to rigorous statistical analysis, unveiling patterns, relationships, and trends that offer empirical support to the determined hypotheses by using objective and reliable measurement tools, that formulate predetermined, unbiased, and objective responses (Gray, 2016). Additionally, this approach also excels in facilitating comparisons between different groups (Creswell, 2009), which helps analyze the perceptions of different generational cohorts aiding in the discernment of variable effects.

3.3. Research Strategy

A research strategy encompasses the overall methodological framework, data collection methods, and analytical techniques that researchers employ to address their research questions or objectives (Saunders et al., 2009).

Since the research purpose is to compare the behaviour of different generational cohorts towards the barriers to slow fashion consumption,

descriptive research will be conducted. This approach aims to describe the characteristics, behaviours, and attributes of a particular group or phenomenon accurately and systematically, without attempting to explain why or how things are the way they are (Salkind, 2018).

Regarding the research approach, the deductive approach is applied in this thesis, a research methodology that starts with a clear theoretical framework or hypothesis and then seeks to gather data to confirm or refute it (Saunders et al., 2009). Researchers begin with a general theory and then narrow it down to specific hypotheses that can be tested through empirical observation or data collection (Saunders et al., 2009).

Hence, among the descriptive research strategies, the one that was chosen is the survey. This strategy is frequently associated with deductive research (Saunders et al., 2009) and involves collecting data from a sample of individuals or groups through structured questionnaires or interviews, providing a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2009). The primary objective of survey research is to gather data directly from individuals in a systematic and standardized manner which ensures uniformity in data and allows for the collection of quantifiable information that can be analysed quantitatively through descriptive and inferential statistics, enhancing the reliability and comparability of results (Salkind, 2018). Furthermore, survey research proves to be a cost-effective and efficient means of data collection, allowing researchers to collect information from a large number of respondents in a timely manner (Creswell, 2009).

3.4. Data Collection

The data collection for this study utilized a computer-administered structured questionnaire because of its ability to reach a diverse audience and facilitate analytical exploration of variable relationships (Gray, 2016; Salkind, 2018). Online surveys were specifically employed due to their cost-effectiveness, absence of interviewer bias, and convenience (Saunders et al., 2009).

The survey was deployed online using Google Forms. This platform was chosen for its user-friendly interface, ensuring easy navigation for respondents and due to compatibility with various devices, leading to adjustments in the presentation format for a responsive design. By requiring all questions to be answered before submission, the survey achieved a complete dataset without any missing values.

Overall, the choice of computer-administered structured questionnaires, specifically online surveys, was driven by its capacity to efficiently reach a broad audience, its suitability for statistical analysis, and the advantages it offered in terms of cost, convenience, and statistical robustness. This methodological approach aligns with established research practices and optimally serves the objectives of this study.

3.4.1 Sampling Procedure

In this study, a non-probability sample technique is applied in which certain individuals within the population have a higher, although undisclosed, likelihood of being chosen compared to others (Salkind, 2018; Saunders et al., 2009). Falling under the category of non-probability sampling design, convenience sampling is a chosen method. This approach allows researchers to conveniently distribute surveys through social media, facilitating quick data

collection (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, snowball sampling is employed, leveraging personal and professional networks that meet the specified criteria to invite additional participants, thereby expanding the sample size and enhancing external validity.

3.4.2 Survey Construction

The survey consists of two sections and an introduction to the questionnaire, where it was identified the topic under analysis, the academic nature of the study, and contextualization about slow fashion to establish a uniform understanding of the concept just prior to addressing questions related to various associated constructs.

The first part was developed based on the literature review and focuses on the three previously described factors that hinder Portuguese consumers from purchasing slow fashion clothing: *Trust* (TR), *Price* (PR) and *Accessibility* (AC).

The questions are divided into multiple-choice questions and a 5-point Likert Scale. The first part comprises two multiple questions about purchase habits and the preferred factors when purchasing clothes. In the remainder of this section, structured statements were provided, and respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each according to a 5-point Likert Scale from (1) “Strongly disagree” to (5) “Strongly agree”, facilitating an easy response process for the participants. Some of the statements were drawn from relevant academic studies while others were self-constructed in order to align with the purpose of the study, as can be seen in Table 1.

The second part of the survey encompasses standard sociodemographic inquiries, including age, nationality, gender, education level, occupation, and income. This is done to enhance comprehension of the consumer's profile and to filter out individuals who may not meet the criteria for this research. The

questionnaire was conducted in Portuguese since the targeted participants were Portuguese, to facilitate their enrolment, however, an English version is included in Appendix A.

Prior to the survey release, a pilot study was conducted. It was person-administrated, and six participants were requested to provide feedback on potential issues related to the content and phrasing of the questions. From this trial, one statement (“Sustainable companies are those that are truly ethical”) was excluded from the questionnaire, as it raised confusion among participants. Moreover, clarification was added regarding the difference between sustainable and conventional clothing. Finally, regarding occupation, the “retired” option was added, since the questionnaire includes participants over 58 years although they will later be excluded from the analysis.

Dependent variable	Construct measure	Items	Sources
<i>Trust</i>	Level of trust in sustainable claims and sustainable product attributes with regard to slow fashion	11 items (5-point Likert scale statements)	(Joshi & Rahman, 2016; Braga Junior et al., 2019)
<i>Price</i>	The price perception of slow fashion clothing	8 items (5-point Likert scale statements)	(Chang, 2011; Braga Junior et al., 2019)
<i>Accessibility</i>	The accessibility perception associated with slow fashion consumption	9 items (5-point Likert scale statements)	(Fully self-constructed)

Table 1: Measurement instruments of the variables.

3.5. Data Analysis

In the described research methodology, quantitative data is gathered to assess the extent of favourability or disfavourability towards various variables serving as barriers to slow fashion consumption. This data was meticulously processed to investigate and characterize the relationships between generations. To achieve

this, the data was seamlessly transferred into the specialized statistical analysis tool, IBM SPSS Statistics. By leveraging this software, it is possible to yield results with heightened efficiency and comprehensiveness, concisely enabling the presentation of findings.

Furthermore, IBM SPSS Statistics allowed for the implementation of advanced analytical techniques, ensuring a robust exploration of the intricate interplay between the identified variables and generational cohort perceptions.

3.6. Limitations of Methodology

Usually, quantitative research provides more valuable and accurate outcomes, and online surveys offer numerous benefits over traditional paper-based methods. On the other hand, challenges may arise in the form of potential cooperation issues and survey integrity, primarily stemming from reduced accountability. These surveys may be susceptible to non-responses or the submission of fraudulent or fictitious answers (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, the absence of an interviewer to provide guidance, clarification, and probing may result in lower response rates and less trustworthy data. Furthermore, self-administered questionnaires exhibit lack of versatility to ask a broader range of question types, limiting their scope and applicability (Salkind, 2018).

Moreover, the usage of non-probability sampling, due to its reliance on subjective criteria in participant selection, tends to be less generalizable in comparison to probability sampling methods, which introduces potential biases that can restrict the applicability of findings to the broader population (Salkind, 2018). There is a risk associated with possible biased participants, associated with the convenience and snowball sampling.

Chapter 4

4. Results and Data Analysis

4.1. Sample Profile

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are analysed by six categories: age, nationality, gender, education, occupation, and monthly income. The research targets Portuguese consumers thus, respondents whose country of origin is not Portugal were excluded. As for age, the scope of the research is individuals from three generations, Generation Z, Y and X, therefore, participants over 58 years old were also excluded from the sample. Therefore, the total number of respondents with the above-mentioned characteristics is 237, 30.4% of individuals with ages between 18 and 28 ($n=72$), 31.6% between 29 and 43 ($n=75$), and 38.0% between 44 and 58 ($n=90$).

The overall sample consists of 54.4% females ($n=129$) and 45.6% males ($n=108$). Among Generation X and Y, there is a relatively even representation of genders, suggesting a rather equivalent distribution. Conversely, a significant majority of Generation Z respondents are female (71.4%). Regarding the educational background, the majority of respondents have a higher educational degree (61.2%), with 40.9% of respondents having a bachelor's ($n=97$), 18.6% having a master's ($n=44$) and 1.7% having a PhD ($n=4$). Finally, concerning the income level, most of the respondents reported having a medium or medium-low

income, 41.8% ($n=99$) and 34.6% ($n=82$), respectively. Additionally, results demonstrate a correlation between age groups and income, showing an increase with older generational cohorts. Table 2 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the total sample, offering a detailed characterization of the socio-demographic factors for each generational cohort.

		% of the total sample ($n=237$)	% of Generation Z ($n=72$)	% of Generation Y ($n=75$)	% of Generation X ($n=90$)
Gender	Female	54.4%	71.4%	54.9%	52.2%
	Male	45.6%	28.6%	45.1%	47.8%
Educational Background	Middle School ("2º Ciclo")	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
	Middle School ("3º Ciclo")	3.4%	0.0%	9.9%	1.1%
	High School	34.6%	45.7%	36.6%	35.6%
	Bachelor's degree	40.9%	37.1%	35.2%	48.9%
	Master's degree	18.6%	14.3%	15.5%	11.1%
	PhD	1.7%	2.9%	2.8%	1.1%
Employment Situation	Student	12.7%	51.4%	2.8%	1.1%
	Fulltime worker	73.4%	28.6%	81.7%	88.9%
	Parttime worker	7.2%	11.4%	7.0%	2.2%
	Unemployed	4.6%	8.6%	7.0%	3.3%
	Retired	1.7%	0.0%	1.4%	3.3%
	Other	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
Income	Low	16.9%	54.3%	5.6%	7.8%
	Medium – Low	34.6%	31.4%	45.1%	28.9%
	Medium	41.8%	14.3%	46.5%	48.9%
	Medium – High	4.6%	0.0%	2.8%	8.9%
	High	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%

Table 2: Sample sociodemographic characterization.

4.2. Reliability

Cronbach's alpha is a crucial statistical tool in survey analysis as it assesses the internal consistency or reliability of a set of survey questions designed to measure a specific construct (Hair et al., 2014). It provides a single numeric value, that indicates how well the questions in a survey instrument work together to capture the intended construct. A high Cronbach's alpha suggests that the items in the

survey are strongly correlated and collectively measure the underlying concept consistently (Hair et al., 2014). This is essential for ensuring that the survey instrument is reliable and produces consistent results, and crucial for making valid inferences about the population being studied, giving assurance that the responses collected are a true reflection of the underlying construct.

Values ranging from .60 to .70 are considered the minimum threshold for acceptability, with a construct deemed reliable if the *Alpha* (α) value exceeds .70 (Hair et al., 2014). However, it is relevant to note that Cronbach's alpha is significantly influenced by the scale's length. When a test comprises a relatively small number of items, the *Alpha* value tends to be lower.

As can be observed in Table 3, results revealed that the *Trust* scale with 11 items ($\alpha=.802$) and the *Accessibility* scale with 9 items ($\alpha=.711$) were found reliable since the *Alpha* value is higher than .70, nonetheless, the *Price* scale with 8 items revealed an *Alpha* of .663 which indicates moderate internal consistency reliability. While this is below the commonly recommended threshold of 0.70, it is not automatically a cause for concern. This is the construct with lower number of items which might have influenced the *Alpha* value.

	Items	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Trust	11	237	2.87	.609	.802
Price	8	237	3.45	.559	.663
Accessibility	9	237	2.99	.622	.748*

Table 3: Results from Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. Note: * refers to Cronbach's Alpha after the removal of item AC3.

Regarding the corrected item-total correlation, observable in Table 4, results from the *Price* variable show that there are two items (PR4 and PR8) with values below .30. It suggests that the item may not be capturing the same underlying construct as the other items in the scale, and it might be worth considering

whether the item should be excluded. In this case, the removal of either item does not significantly improve the *Alpha* value therefore, it will not be excluded.

Additionally, despite having an *Alpha* of .711, the *Accessibility* scale presents a negative value of corrected item-total correlation (AC3), observable in Table 5. This indicates that the item is inversely related to the overall construct, which is counterintuitive and suggests concern. After careful examination, and since it was a self-constructed item, it was concluded that there was a mistake in its formulation, and therefore, it was excluded from the construct to perform a more reliable analysis. After exclusion, the *Accessibility Alpha* is .748, which presents a significant improvement.

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PR1	23.95	15.082	.527	.589
PR2	23.88	15.227	.505	.595
PR3	23.34	16.411	.333	.637
PR4	24.57	17.246	.198	.670
PR5	23.93	14.964	.483	.597
PR6	24.41	16.328	.364	.630
PR7	24.12	15.664	.344	.635
PR8	23.91	17.635	.134	.688

Table 4: Item-total Statistics (*Price*).

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
AC1	23.59	28.667	.128	.730
AC2	23.46	28.682	.147	.725
AC3	23.34	30.751	-.033	.748
AC4	24.48	23.505	.570	.648
AC5	24.04	22.460	.618	.635
AC6	24.24	22.025	.660	.625
AC7	24.49	22.725	.556	.648
AC8	24.12	29.469	.098	.729
AC9	23.70	22.406	.665	.627

Table 5: Item-total Statistics (*Accessibility*).

4.3. Relationships between Variables

To compare the different factors that represent barriers to slow fashion consumption between Generation X, Y, and Z, the one-way ANOVA analysis of variance was employed. ANOVA is a statistical technique used to compare the means of three or more groups to determine if there are significant differences between them, and involves one categorical independent variable, also known as a factor, that has three or more levels or categories and one dependent continuous variable. In this case, the independent variable is the generational cohort that translates into three categories, Generation X, Y, and Z, and each of the three dependent variables (*Trust*, *Price* and *Accessibility*) are analysed separately. Additionally, resulting from significant differences between groups, post-hoc tests are conducted to determine which specific groups differ from each other. Tukey's HSD is one of the most conservative and commonly used tests, so it will be employed in this study.

Before conducting a one-way ANOVA analysis, it is imperative to examine the data for outliers and confirm its adherence to a normal distribution. Firstly, the ANOVA test presupposes that the data within each group conforms to a Gaussian (normal) distribution. Failing to meet this assumption may result in misleading conclusions. Outliers, in particular, potentially distort the variability within groups. Furthermore, the presence of outliers and deviations from normality can escalate the risk of Type I errors, magnifying the likelihood of erroneously identifying significant differences between groups. Equally noteworthy is the need to uphold the assumption of homogeneity of variance, as outliers have the potential to violate this crucial condition.

4.3.1 Descriptive Statistics

When it came to pinpointing potential outliers, the boxplot method was the preferred choice. Its reliance on visual representations makes it particularly effective for visually identifying outliers. The interpretation hinges on detecting any data points that fall beyond the whiskers being deemed potential outliers (Hair et al., 2014). Examining the results provided in Appendix C, it is evident that there are only a few potential outliers for each variable. In the event of a larger number, it could imply potential issues with the data or that the variable might have multiple underlying distributions. Furthermore, the representation of all points with circles, rather than asterisks, indicates that they are mild outliers. This suggests the absence of any significant outliers in the dataset.

In the assessment of normality, the chosen method was Skewness and Kurtosis, as they offer valuable insights into the distribution's shape and enable the detection of deviations from normality (Hair et al., 2014). Skewness serves to quantify the asymmetry within the data distribution. Ideally, values should fall within the range of -2 to 2 and proximity to zero suggests a relatively symmetrical distribution, indicative of normality. In turn, Kurtosis gauges the "tailedness" or the degree of outliers within a dataset. Ideally, Kurtosis should fall within the range of -3 to 3, with values closer to zero indicating a normal distribution. As can be seen in Table 6, it is evident that for every variable and generational cohort, both Skewness and Kurtosis values hover near zero. Skewness values range from -.149 to .595 and Kurtosis values range from -.366 and .789. This proximity strongly suggests an assumption of normal distribution.

		<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
					Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Trust	Generation Z	72	2.70	.580	.250	.283	.379	.559
	Generation Y	75	2.90	.597	.180	.277	.748	.548
	Generation X	90	2.97	.622	-.149	.254	-.366	.503
Price	Generation Z	72	3.46	.705	.548	.283	-.277	.559
	Generation Y	75	3.49	.521	.486	.277	-.240	.548
	Generation X	90	3.41	.453	.595	.254	.183	.503
Accessibility	Generation Z	72	2.81	.768	.475	.283	.040	.559
	Generation Y	75	2.90	.643	.448	.277	.000	.548
	Generation X	90	3.02	.664	-.127	.254	-.367	.503

Table 6: Descriptive statistics.

4.3.2 One-way ANOVA and Post-hoc Comparison

Interpreting one-way ANOVA results involves examining several key components. First, the null hypothesis assumes that there is no significant difference between the group means. If the *p*-value falls below the conventional significance threshold of .05, we reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is evidence of a significant difference between at least one pair of group means (Hair et al., 2014).

It is also relevant to note that ANOVA relies on the assumption of homogeneity of variance or homoscedasticity in its classical form which means that the variances of the dependent variable should be roughly equal across all groups being compared (Hair et al., 2014). The Levene's Test was employed. It provides a *p*-value, if this *p*-value is greater than a chosen significance level (commonly .05), there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, which suggests that the variances are roughly equal across groups and therefore homogeneous.

Table 7 presents the one-way ANOVA results, as well as the test of homogeneity of variance. Regarding the test of homogeneity of variances, for *Trust* (*p*=.834) and *Accessibility* (*p*=.376), the non-significant Levine's statistic indicates a lack of substantial evidence to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests

that the assumption of equal variances holds for both *Trust* and *Accessibility* variables. However, for *Price* ($p < .001$) the equal variance is not assumed. Consequently, the ANOVA results for the *Price* variable are based on Welch's ANOVA as a robust alternative approach and, for post-hoc comparisons, the Dunnett T3 method is preferred to assess the relationships between groups.

As for the ANOVA results, the statistically significance difference at the $p < .05$ was only observed in one of the studied variables, *Trust*, with $F=4.077$ and $p=.018$. H1 is then accepted. Conversely, H2 and H3 are rejected as the remaining variables reported a p -value greater than .05, reaching .597 (*Price*) and .180 (*Accessibility*) and, therefore, it is suggested that the scores of the groups do not differ significantly.

		Mean	Standard Deviation	n	Test of Homogeneity of Variances		ANOVA	
					Levine's Statistics	p	F	p
Trust	Generation Z	2.70	.580	72	.182	.834	4.077	.018
	Generation Y	2.90	.597	75				
	Generation X	2.97	.622	90				
Price	Generation Z	3.46	.705	72	9.469	<.001	.517*	.597*
	Generation Y	3.49	.521	75				
	Generation X	3.41	.453	90				
Accessibility	Generation Z	2.81	.768	72	.982	.376	1.729	.180
	Generation Y	2.90	.643	75				
	Generation X	3.02	.664	90				

Table 7: One-way ANOVA results. Note: * refers to Welch ANOVA as an alternative to one-way ANOVA since the Levine's test for that variable indicates that equal variance is not assumed.

Furthermore, upon examining the post-hoc comparison outcomes, we can discern the specific generational cohorts that exhibit significant differences from one another at the $p < .05$ level. The test indicates that, within the *Trust* variable, the mean score for Generation Z ($M=2.70$, $SD=.580$) differs significantly from Generation X ($M=2.97$, $SD=.622$), at the level of $p=.016$. However, no significant differences were detected across Generation Z and Y, nor Generation Y and X, and according to the previous ANOVA analysis, there is also no significant

difference between any group of either *Price* or *Accessibility* variables. Table 8 summarizes the post-hoc comparison results.

		Mean	Standard Deviation	n	Generation Z vs. Generation Y		Generation Z vs. Generation X		Generation Y vs. Generation X	
					Mean Diff.	p	Mean Diff.	p	Mean Diff.	p
Trust	Generation Z	2.70	.580	72	-.201	.108	-.265	.016	-.064	.777
	Generation Y	2.90	.597	75						
	Generation X	2.97	.622	90						
Price	Generation Z	3.46	.705	72	-.030*	.988*	.047*	.947*	.077*	.681*
	Generation Y	3.49	.521	75						
	Generation X	3.41	.453	90						
Accessibility	Generation Z	2.81	.768	72	-.086	.733	-.201	.159	-.115	.536
	Generation Y	2.90	.643	75						
	Generation X	3.02	.664	90						

Table 8: Turkey’s HSD results. Note: * refers to Dunnett T3 as an alternative analysis since the Levine’s test for that variable indicates that equal variance is not assumed.

4.4. Assessment of the Research Hypotheses

Regarding the research hypotheses proposed for the testing of the variables, none proved to be accepted, as presented in Table 7.

As can be observed, in H1.1, the mean difference between Generation Z and Y ($MD = -.201$) and Generation Z and X ($MD = -.265$) is negative, indicating that the relationships align with the expected direction. However, statistical significance is only observed between Generation Z and X ($p = 0.016$). Consequently, the hypothesis is partially accepted as it can be concluded that Generation Z displays significantly lower levels of trust in brands’ sustainable claims compared to Generation X.

Concerning the remaining hypotheses, there is no significant difference between any generational cohort, nonetheless, it might be worth analysing the direction of the relationships for each variable. Regarding *Price*, it was suggested that Generation X perceived slow fashion as more expensive than Generation Z

and Y, nonetheless, the apparent relationship is the opposite, as the mean difference between Generation X and Z ($MD = -.047$) and Generation X and Y ($MD = -.077$) are negative. As for *Accessibility*, even though there is no statistical significance, the mean difference between Generation X and Z ($MD = .201$) and Generation X and Y ($MD = .115$) are positive, indicating that they align with the expected relationship direction.

Research Hypothesis	Suggested Relationships	Comparison	Mean Diff.	<i>p</i>	Relationship Testing	Hypothesis Testing
H1.1: Gen Z has lower levels of trust in brands' sustainable claims than Gen Y and Gen X.	Generation Z < Generation Y Generation Z < Generation X	Generation Z vs. Generation Y	-.201	.108	Not supported	Rejected
		Generation Z vs. Generation X	-.265	.016	Supported	
		Generation Y vs. Generation X	-.064	.777	Not applicable	
H2.1: In a sustainable context, Gen X perceive slow fashion as more expensive than Gen Y and Gen Z.	Generation X > Generation Z Generation X > Generation Y	Generation X vs. Generation Z	-.047	.947	Not supported	Rejected
		Generation X vs. Generation Y	-.077	.681	Not supported	
		Generation Z vs. Generation Y	-.030	.988	Not applicable	
H3.2: Gen X perceive slow fashion as less accessible than Gen Y and Gen Z.	Generation X > Generation Z Generation X > Generation Y	Generation X vs. Generation Z	.201	.159	Not supported	Rejected
		Generation X vs. Generation Y	.115	.536	Not supported	
		Generation Z vs. Generation Y	-.086	.733	Not applicable	

Table 9: Hypotheses testing.

Chapter 5

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

This master's thesis seeks to investigate if there are different perceptions about the barriers to slow-fashion consumption and the relationships between Generation Z, Y, and X. The study establishes comparisons by examining self-reported levels of trust, and perceptions of price and accessibility across each generational cohort in Portugal.

Regarding *Trust*, there is evidence that different generational cohorts have different levels of trust in brands' sustainability claims, however, it was not possible to establish relationships between the three proposed generational cohorts. The study shows significant evidence that Generation Z has lower levels of trust than Generation X. This finding partially aligns with the initially formulated hypothesis since it is consistent with the notion that individuals belonging to Generation Z, being true digital natives, have grown up with unparalleled access to a wealth of information (Francis Tracy, 2018) and with a heightened sense of awareness regarding issues like greenwashing and deceptive practices within sustainable claims. However, the absence of a substantial disparity between Generation Z and Generation Y may be attributed to their closer environments and orientation, contributing to not-so-different levels of

trust, even though the baseline trust levels in Generation Y are moderately higher.

In terms of *Price*, there is no consistent evidence of a difference in the perception of price across the three generational cohorts. As it was previously mentioned, in this context, price comprehends not only the monetary cost of products but the intrinsic value associated with quality, durability, and the buyer's income level and environmental consciousness. These factors collectively influence the willingness to invest more in such products. It has been suggested that Millennials and Generation Z have come of age during a period where sustainability and environmental concerns have gained significant prominence in public discourse (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2018). This has led to a heightened awareness of the impact of fashion on ecological and labour practices, studies indicating that these demographic groups tend to actively seek out brands that align with their values and demonstrating a willingness to pay a premium for sustainable, eco-friendly, and ethically produced goods (Brand et al., 2022; Gomes et al., 2023; Noble et al., 2009). Consequently, they would inherently perceive slow-fashion products as possessing greater value and view them as less expensive compared to Generation X. On the other hand, as advocated by Lissitsa and Kol (2016) and substantiated through the consideration of the income levels of the participants, Generation X often have more established careers and higher incomes than their younger counterparts and that can lead them to perceive price points differently. The hypothesis was likely refuted due to the interplay of factors within the price concept, which counterbalanced each other, resulting in similar levels across the generational cohorts.

Finally, concerning *Accessibility*, there is also no consistent evidence of a difference in the perception of accessibility across the three generational cohorts. This can be related to the fact that this study focused on the perceptions of online shopping and the surge in online purchasing was significantly accelerated by the

pandemic (Diaz-Gutierrez et al., 2023). A shift that was fuelled by various advantages, including the convenience of receiving goods at home, access to a wider range of products and information, and the ease of comparison shopping amplified by health concerns for in-person shopping that contributed to a positive general attitude towards online shopping (Diaz-Gutierrez et al., 2023). This historic event, which strongly shaped society in many ways, may have contributed to attenuating possible inequalities between the generations.

5.2. Conclusion and Implications

The impetus behind this master's thesis was to compare the perceptions held by different generational cohorts in Portugal, on the barriers to adopting slow-fashion consumption. The initial phase of the study focused on the identification of the barriers linked to sustainable consumption within the realm of slow fashion and posterior selection of three of the most relevant, through the literature review, to perform the cross-generational analysis and a characterization of each cohort according to these different identified factors. Lastly, aimed to compare the self-reported level of favour or disfavour to each factor between the proposed generational cohorts to identify possible differences.

The obtained results led to the conclusion that contrary to what was expected, regarding *Price* and *Accessibility* there is no significant difference across the generational cohorts under scope. Conversely, regarding *Trust*, the analysis confirmed that there is a statistically significance disparity across different generational cohorts, with Generation Z presenting lower levels of trust than Generation X, nonetheless, it was not possible to establish a consistent relationship between the three proposed generational cohorts.

Analysing how different generational cohorts perceive barriers to slow fashion consumption is instrumental in promoting pro-environmental consumption and even if the study concludes that there are not significant general differences between generational groups, the analysis of their perceptions about the barriers to slow fashion consumption remains valuable. It provides a baseline understanding of the shared challenges and perspectives that cut across generations. This knowledge can still be useful by highlighting the need for universal strategies and initiatives that resonate with consumers of all ages.

5.3. Limitations and Further Research

Apart from the limitations of methodology previously addressed in Chapter 3, there are other constraints associated with this study. Generation Z participants were required to be at least 18 years old, potentially leading to a narrower representation of ages within this cohort. This may have contributed to the observed similarities in the characterization of Generation Z and Y, as a broader age range within Generation Z might have unveiled distinctions. Moreover, as a result of the abundance of information about the barriers to pro-environmental consumption in literature, it was somewhat challenging to find and cluster relevant information about the specific barriers to slow fashion. While there is an extensive body of research on obstacles to sustainable consumption in various domains, such as food, energy, and second-hand fashion, resources concerning slow fashion were comparatively scarce and there was also a notable dearth of research characterizing generational cohorts based on their attitudes towards slow fashion consumption. Consequently, the formulation of the survey relied on and was adapted from the exploration of sustainable consumption in

general and the *Accessibility* section necessitated the creation of tailored items to suit the specific context of this study.

In examining price perceptions, as previously discussed, the hypothesis may have been refuted due to the intricate interplay of various dimensions within the concept of price. These factors interact in a way that possibly offsets any significant generational differences, ultimately resulting in a similar perception across different cohorts. As a next step, it could be valuable to delve into a cross-generational comparison of the multifaceted dimensions that collectively influence the perception of price.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a master's thesis in Management at Universidade Católica Portuguesa | Católica Porto Business School. The aim of this research is to examine and explore the perception of distinct generations in relation to different factors that influence slow-fashion consumption.

Slow fashion is introduced as an emerging fashion alternative that slows down consumption and production processes while protecting the well-being of workers, communities and the environment. Therefore, throughout this survey, the use of expressions, such as "green" or "sustainable", is inherently associated only with the consumption of slow fashion.

The questionnaire is anonymous and confidential, and the information collected will be used only for the purpose of this research. Your answers are essential for the development of the research. This questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Thank you in advance for your availability and participation.

Part I

The following questions are regarding your consumption habits and preferences.

Note: sustainable clothing is clothing produced according to environmental and ethical principles, while conventional clothing is considered non-sustainable.

Q1. How often do you purchase slow-fashion clothes?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Every week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Every month
<input type="checkbox"/>	Every 3 months

	Every 6 months
	Every year
	Less than once a year

Q2. Which dimensions are important to you when purchasing clothes? (choose up to 3)

	Recent trends
	Price
	Brand
	Quality
	Ethicality and environmental impact
	Convenience
	Style and fashion
	Other _____

The following segment is about trust in sustainable claims and individual trust in sustainable product attributes.

Q3. (please rate this statement on a scale according to your level of agreement considering that (1) “Strongly disagree”, (2) “Disagree”, (3) “Neither disagree nor agree”, (4) “Agree” and (5) “Strongly agree”)

	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident about the credibility of sustainable product labels					
I do trust the sustainability claims of fashion brands					
I try to check if the information about sustainable claims clothes is true					
I am sure that sustainable apparel exists only in advertisements					
Most of the sustainable clothes do not present important information to make them appear more sustainable than they really are					
I have trouble proving that a given product is green					

I am sure that sustainable clothing, in the majority, is only sustainable on their labels					
Most sustainable clothes “disguise” their true characteristics to make them greener than they really are					
There is no sustainable apparel, only those that improve a few environmental practices					
Retail stores/websites exaggerate their products’ sustainable characteristics					
The advertising of green products is never true					

The following statements concern the price of sustainable fashion.

Q4. (please rate this statement on a scale according to your level of agreement considering that (1) “Strongly disagree”, (2) “Disagree”, (3) “Neither disagree nor agree”, (4) “Agree” and (5) “Strongly agree”)

	1	2	3	4	5
Sustainable clothes are expensive					
Sustainable clothes cost more than conventional clothes					
Green product prices are higher than their quality					
I am willing to pay more for clothing which is sustainable or helps protect the environment					
Sustainable clothes are cheaper than conventional clothes					
Green product prices represent their quality					
If sustainable clothing costs 30% more than regular clothing, I am willing to buy it					
If my income was higher, I would make more sustainable clothing purchases					

The following statements concern the accessibility of sustainable options.

Q5. (please rate this statement on a scale according to your level of agreement considering that (1) “Strongly disagree”, (2) “Disagree”, (3) “Neither disagree nor agree”, (4) “Agree” and (5) “Strongly agree”)

	1	2	3	4	5
I feel that sustainable fashion is difficult to access					
I feel that sustainable consumption entails more time and effort					
I feel positive about buying clothes online					
I believe that buying online is convenient					
I feel that online shopping provides more sustainable product alternatives					
I feel uncomfortable buying online					
I believe that buying in physical stores is more convenient					
I believe that if sustainable fashion was readily available, similar to fast fashion, I would buy it					
I feel comfortable buying clothes online					

Part II

The following questions are demographic questions. Please remember that your answers are entirely anonymous and will be used for research purpose only.

Q6. What is your age gap?

	13 – 28
	29 – 43
	44 – 58
	> 58

Q7. What is your nationality?

	Portuguese
	Other _____

Q8. What is your gender?

	Female
	Male
	Other _____
	Prefer not to say

Q9. What is your highest level of completed education?

	Elementary School
	Middle School ("2º Ciclo")
	Middle School ("3º Ciclo")
	High School
	Bachelor's degree
	Master's degree
	PhD

Q10. What is your current employment situation?

	Student
	Fulltime worker
	Parttime worker
	Unemployed
	Retired
	Other _____

Q11. What is your monthly income?

	< 500€
	500€ - 999€
	1000€ - 2499€
	2500€ - 3999€
	> 4000€

Appendix B – Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Code	Source
Trust	I am confident about the credibility of sustainable product labels	TR1	(Joshi & Rahman, 2015)
	I do trust the sustainability claims of fashion brands	TR2	(Joshi & Rahman, 2015)
	I try to check if the information about sustainable claims clothes is true	TR3	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
	I have trouble proving that a given product is green	TR4	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
	I am sure that sustainable clothing, in the majority, is only sustainable on their labels	TR5	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
	Most of the sustainable clothes do not present important information to make them appear more sustainable than they really are	TR6	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
	Most sustainable clothes “disguise” their true characteristics to make them greener than they really are	TR7	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
	I am sure that sustainable apparel exists only in advertisements	TR8	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
	There is no sustainable apparel, only those that improve a few environmental practices	TR9	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
	Retail stores/websites exaggerate their products’ sustainable characteristics	TR10	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
	The advertising of green products is never true	TR11	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
Price	Sustainable clothes are expensive	PR1	(Chang, 2011)
	Sustainable clothes cost more than conventional clothes	PR2	(Chang, 2011)
	Green product prices are higher than their quality	PR3	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
	I am willing to pay more for clothing which is sustainable or helps protect the environment	PR4	(Chang, 2011)
	Sustainable clothes are cheaper than conventional clothes	PR5	(Chang, 2011)
	Green product prices represent their quality	PR6	(Braga Junior et al., 2019)
	If sustainable clothing costs 30% more than regular clothing, I am willing to buy it	PR7	Self-constructed
	If my income was higher, I would make more sustainable clothing purchases	PR8	Self-constructed
Accessibility	I feel that sustainable fashion is difficult to access	AC1	Self-constructed
	I feel that sustainable consumption entails more time and effort	AC2	Self-constructed
	I believe that if sustainable fashion was readily available, similar to fast fashion, I would buy it	AC3	Self-constructed
	I feel positive about buying clothes online	AC4	Self-constructed
	I believe that buying online is convenient	AC5	Self-constructed
	I feel comfortable buying clothes online	AC6	Self-constructed
	I feel uncomfortable buying online	AC7	Self-constructed
	I feel that online shopping provides more sustainable product alternatives	AC8	Self-constructed
	I believe that buying in physical stores is more convenient	AC9	Self-constructed

Appendix C – Tables and Graphs

	% of the total sample (n=237)	% of Generation Z (n=72)	% of Generation Y (n=75)	% of Generation X (n=90)
Every week	2,5%	0,0%	1,3%	5,6%
Every month	4,2%	4,2%	5,3%	3,3%
Every 3 months	13,1%	16,7%	13,3%	10,0%
Every 6 months	13,1%	11,1%	12,0%	15,6%
Every year	22,4%	20,8%	21,3%	24,4%
Less than a year	44,7%	47,2%	46,7%	41,1%

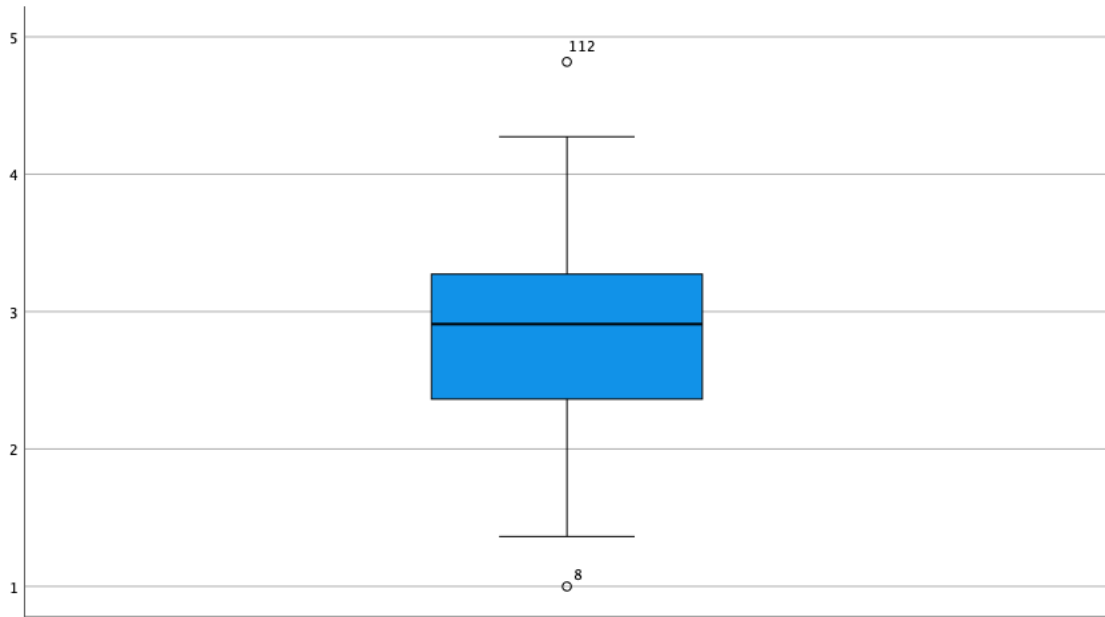
Table 10: Results to the question “How often do you purchase slow-fashion clothes?”.

	% of the total sample (n=237)	% of Generation Z (n=72)	% of Generation Y (n=75)	% of Generation X (n=90)
Quality	31,4%	28,3%	33,0%	32,5%
Price	33,1%	30,4%	36,0%	32,9%
Brand	5,4%	4,2%	6,1%	5,9%
Ethicality and environmental impact	7,0%	7,3%	6,1%	7,6%
Style and fashion	10,7%	14,7%	9,1%	8,9%
Recent trends	3,4%	6,8%	1,5%	2,1%
Convenience	8,3%	7,9%	7,6%	9,3%
Other	0,6%	0,5%	0,5%	0,8%

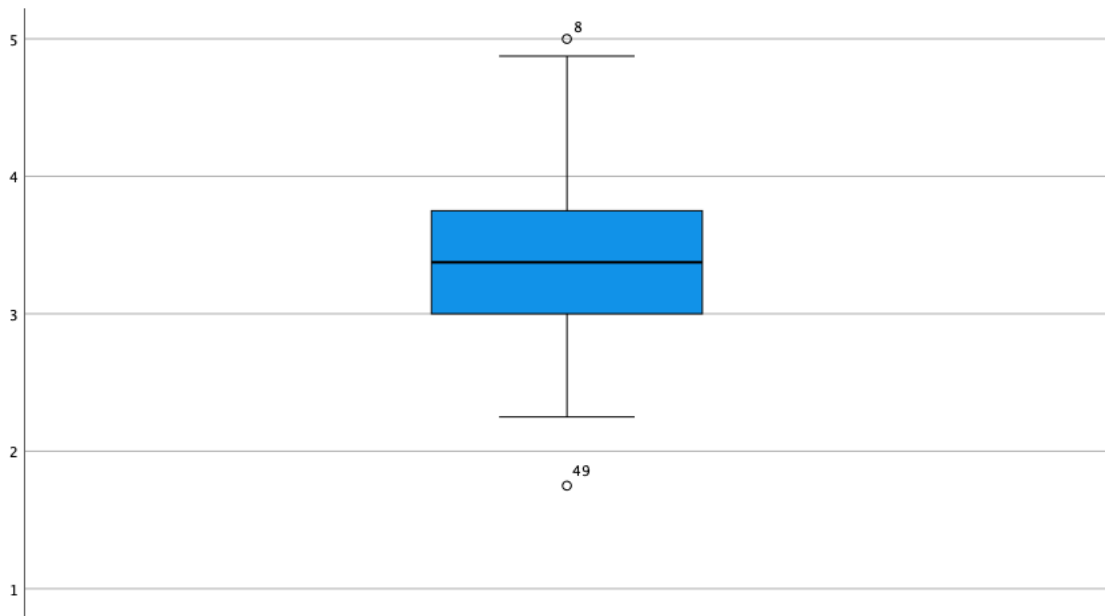
Table 11: Results to the question “Which dimensions are important to you when purchasing clothes?”.

	Higher	Moderate	Lower
Trust	X (2.97)	Y (2.90)	Z (2.70)
Price	Y (3.49)	Z (3.46)	X (3.41)
Accessibility	X (3.02)	Y (2.90)	Z (2.81)

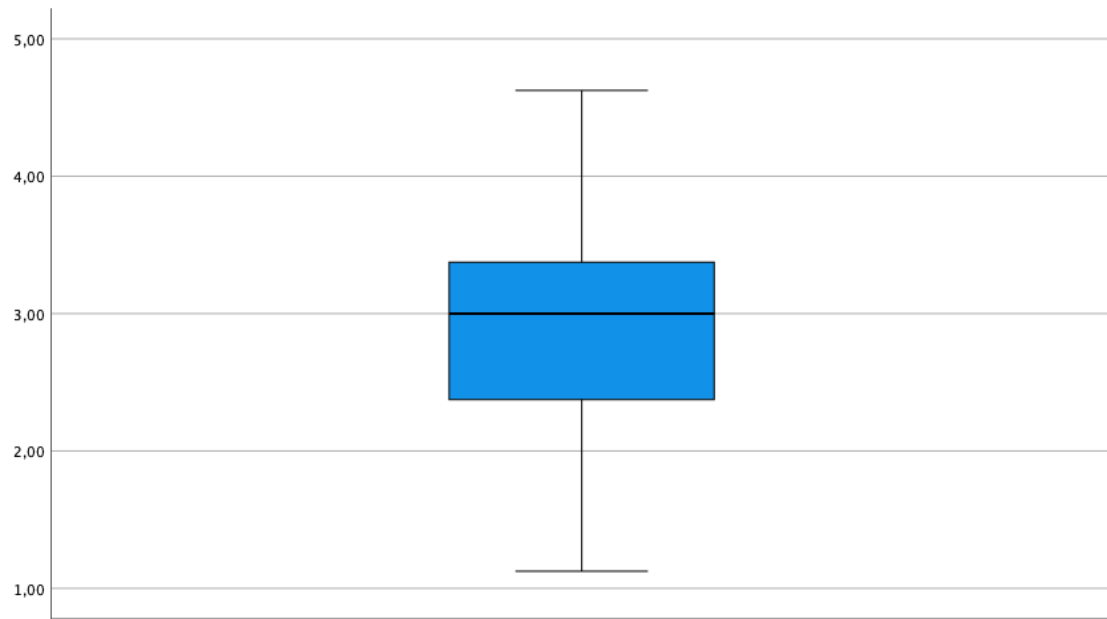
Table 12: Total mean scores ranked.



Graph 1: Boxplot of *Trust* variable to the identification of outliers.



Graph 2: Boxplot of *Price* variable to the identification of outliers.



Graph 3: Boxplot of *Accessibility* variable to the identification of outliers.