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CATÓLICA
PORTUGUESA

UNDERSTANDING GENERATION Z'S PERCEPTIONS OF
SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Dissertation to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain
a Master's Degree in Communication Studies –
Communication, Marketing and Advertising

By

Maria Lemos dos Santos

Faculty of Human Sciences

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Abstract

The fashion industry plays a crucial role in the global economy, emphasizing both its cultural influence and its economic relevance. However, its environmental impact is increasingly scrutinized, as this sector is responsible for significant greenhouse gas emissions, high water consumption, and waste generation. This reality has led to growing pressure on companies in the sector to adopt more sustainable practices, in line with the expectations of an increasingly aware and demanding consumer regarding environmental issues.

Generation Z has established itself as one of the first generations to grow up in a highly digital environment and is marked by an accentuated and growing awareness of environmental crises. This group is emerging as a key player in redefining consumption patterns, imposing on brands the need for greater transparency, social responsibility and sustainability. What was once seen as a niche strategy has become, for this audience, a central requirement in terms of brand loyalty and support.

Despite the growing concern about ethical and sustainable consumption, Generation Z faces several barriers in realizing these intentions into actual purchases. Among the main obstacles are the high cost of sustainable products and the difficulty of accessing these options, which are often restricted to specific markets. This discrepancy between sustainability ideals and purchasing behavior reveals the complexity of sustainable consumption within this group. Although there are already solutions to overcome some of these barriers, such as the rise of resale platforms and the popularization of second-hand brands, these alternatives are still not widely accepted or accessible to everyone.

In this context, this study aims to explore Generation Z 's perceptions of sustainability in the fashion sector, investigating the practices and values that this generation associates with the concept of sustainable fashion. It also aims to identify the factors that influence their purchasing decisions and how environmental concerns shape their consumption behavior. This research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of sustainable consumption by this group, providing new perspectives that can help the fashion industry adapt to more ethical, sustainable and socially responsible business models.

This exploratory and descriptive research adopts a qualitative approach based on individual semi-structured interviews with twenty participants aged between twenty and twenty-seven. This methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of how Generation Z understands and interacts with sustainable fashion concepts, collecting detailed narratives and personal experiences. The cross-sectional study captures current attitudes and behaviors, providing a comprehensive view of this group's perceptions of sustainability in the fashion industry.

The study results highlight Generation Z's strong emphasis on sustainability and their awareness of its importance in the fashion industry. Although they value practices such as eco-friendly materials, ethical working conditions and brand transparency, there is a gap between their sustainability ideals and actual purchasing behavior. Despite these obstacles, participants express an interest in supporting sustainable fashion if it becomes more accessible and affordable, and are already starting to do so by supporting second-hand fashion. This underlines the crucial role of Generation Z in defining the future of sustainable fashion, emphasizing the need for the industry to prioritize sustainability and address this generation's unique perspectives and challenges to promote more sustainable consumption patterns and greater environmental and social responsibility.

Keywords: Sustainability, Sustainable Fashion, Generation Z, Qualitative Research, Consumption Paradoxes.

Resumo

A indústria da moda desempenha um papel crucial na economia global, destacando-se tanto pela sua influência cultural como pela sua relevância económica. No entanto, o seu impacto ambiental é cada vez mais escrutinado, uma vez que este setor é responsável por significativas emissões de gases com efeito de estufa, elevado consumo de água e geração de resíduos. Esta realidade tem conduzido a uma crescente pressão sobre as empresas do setor para adotarem práticas mais sustentáveis, em linha com as expectativas de um consumidor cada vez mais consciente e exigente em relação às questões ambientais.

A Geração Z, tem-se afirmado como uma das primeiras gerações a crescer num ambiente fortemente digital e marcada por uma consciência acentuada e crescente das crises ambientais. Este grupo emerge como um agente fundamental na redefinição dos padrões de consumo, impondo às marcas a necessidade de maior transparência, responsabilidade social e sustentabilidade. O que antes era visto como uma estratégia de nicho, tornou-se, para este público, uma exigência central no que toca à fidelização e ao apoio das marcas.

Apesar da crescente preocupação com o consumo ético e sustentável, a Geração Z enfrenta várias barreiras na concretização dessas intenções em compras efetivas. Entre os principais obstáculos estão o custo elevado dos produtos sustentáveis e a dificuldade de acesso a estas opções, muitas vezes restritas a mercados específicos. Esta discrepância entre os ideais de sustentabilidade e os comportamentos de compra revela a complexidade do consumo sustentável dentro deste grupo. Embora já existam soluções para ultrapassar algumas destas barreiras, como o aumento de plataformas de revenda e a popularização de marcas de segunda mão, estas alternativas ainda não são amplamente aceites ou acessíveis para todos.

Neste contexto, o presente estudo tem como objetivo explorar as perceções da Geração Z relativamente à sustentabilidade no setor da moda, investigando as práticas e os valores que esta geração associa ao conceito de moda sustentável. Pretende-se ainda identificar os fatores que influenciam as suas decisões de compra e de que forma as preocupações ambientais moldam o seu comportamento de consumo. Com esta investigação, procura-se contribuir para uma compreensão mais profunda das dinâmicas do consumo sustentável por parte deste

grupo, fornecendo novas perspectivas que possam ajudar a indústria da moda a adaptar-se a modelos de negócio mais éticos, sustentáveis e socialmente responsáveis.

A presente investigação adota uma abordagem qualitativa, baseada na realização de entrevistas individuais semiestruturadas a vinte participantes, com idades compreendidas entre os vinte e os vinte e sete anos. Esta metodologia possibilita uma exploração aprofundada da forma como a Geração Z entende e interage com os conceitos de moda sustentável, recolhendo narrativas detalhadas e experiências pessoais. O estudo, de natureza transversal, permite captar atitudes e comportamentos atuais, proporcionando uma visão abrangente das perceções deste grupo relativamente à sustentabilidade na indústria da moda.

Os resultados do estudo destacam a forte ênfase da Geração Z na sustentabilidade e a sua consciência sobre a sua importância na indústria da moda. Embora valorizem práticas como materiais ecológicos, condições laborais éticas e transparência das marcas, existe uma lacuna entre os seus ideais de sustentabilidade e os comportamentos reais de compra. Apesar destes obstáculos, os participantes expressam interesse em apoiar a moda sustentável se esta se tornar mais acessível e económica, sendo que já o começam a fazer apoiando a moda em segunda mão. Isto sublinha o papel crucial da Geração Z na definição do futuro da moda sustentável, enfatizando a necessidade de a indústria priorizar a sustentabilidade e abordar as perspectivas e desafios únicos desta geração para promover padrões de consumo mais sustentáveis e uma maior responsabilidade ambiental e social.

Palavras-chave: Sustentabilidade, Moda Sustentável, Geração Z, Investigação Qualitativa, Paradoxos no Consumo.

You are not someone else's opinion of you. You are not damaged goods just because you've made a few mistakes in your life. You are not going nowhere just because you haven't gotten where you want to go yet. On the other hand, you are wiser for the mistakes you have made. You are brave because you were bold enough to put yourself in a position to take risks and make mistakes. And you are someone who has walked through a bunch of rainstorms and kept walking.

Source: Taylor Swift (2015, 1989 World Tour)

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Introduction

The fashion industry is a significant player in the global economy, exerting cultural and economic influence while leaving a significant environmental footprint. As environmental concerns mount, companies are increasingly pressured to embrace sustainable practices to cater to the increasing demands of environmentally conscious consumers, especially Generation Z.

With a heightened awareness of environmental crises, this cohort demands greater brand transparency, social responsibility, and sustainability. What was once a niche approach to business has become essential for companies looking to secure the loyalty and trust of Generation Z consumers. The demands of this demographic for ethical and sustainable fashion have placed significant pressure on the industry to evolve.

This study aims to answer the research question: *“How do Generation Z’s perceptions of sustainability about the fashion industry influence their intentions and behaviors regarding sustainable fashion?”* The primary objective is to explore how Generation Z perceives sustainability, examining the values and practices they associate with it. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the factors that influence their decision-making process and to understand the barriers that may hinder them from fully aligning their intentions with their behaviors.

To achieve this, a qualitative research approach was utilized, involving semi-structured interviews with twenty participants aged between twenty and twenty-seven. This methodology allows for an in-depth examination of how Generation Z perceives sustainability within the fashion industry, their attitudes toward sustainable practices, and the factors influencing their intentions and behaviors. Framed by Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior, this study also explores how attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control influence Generation Z’s sustainable fashion consumption.

The structure of this thesis is organized into three main parts. Part I presents the theoretical framework, beginning with exploring the concept of sustainability in general terms and within the fashion industry. It then examines Generation Z’s demographic, psychographic, and behavioral traits, mainly focusing on their ethical consumption and purchasing behavior.

This section concludes with an analysis of Generation Z's perceptions of sustainability, particularly in the context of fashion. Part II details the empirical study, including the research methodology and the semi-structured interviews used to gather data. The results are presented and discussed, focusing on Generation Z's understanding and engagement with sustainability, the social influences on their fashion choices, and the barriers they encounter in purchasing sustainable fashion. Finally, Part III offers the final considerations, which include conclusions based on the research findings, theoretical and practical contributions, and suggestions for future research.

Part I:
Theoretical Framework

Part I – Theoretical Framework

1. Sustainability Concept in the Fashion Industry

1.1. Definition and Evolution of the Sustainability Concept

The last two centuries have been characterized by the Industrial Revolution, which has significantly expanded production and consumption. However, this period of remarkable progress has overlooked the profound environmental and social impact it has brought. The pursuit of industrial expansion has been beneficial for economic growth, but at the same time, it has led to significant ecological damage, which cannot be ignored (Oenning, 2012).

As society begins to acknowledge the consequences of this impact, we are witnessing a shift towards a more conscious approach to consumption. The delicate balance between social needs and ecological requirements is becoming increasingly clear, and people are more aware of the need to make sustainable choices. Sustainability has emerged as a prominent force, profoundly influencing consumer awareness and expanding the spectrum of choices available (Smith, 2020).

To understand the roots and evolution of the term “*sustainability*”, it is crucial to know that it is derived from the Latin word “*sustinere*”, which means “*to hold*”. In dictionaries, “*sustainability*” is defined as “*maintaining*”, “*supporting*”, “*enduring*”, or other similar terms. Since the publication of the Brundtland Commission’s report “*Our Common Future*” in 1987, the term “*sustainability*” has generally been associated with the concept of development (Onions, 1964; Brundtland, 1987).

This association with development and the growing need to protect our environment have elevated sustainability and sustainable development to fundamental and interconnected concepts. While sustainability represents the ultimate goal – a harmonious balance maintaining ecological integrity, economic stability, and social equity – sustainable development is the strategic path to achieving this goal (Carvalho, 2019). Furthermore, sustainability and sustainable development have proven to be crucial frameworks in

scientific research and in the development of environmental management and economic strategies (Ruggerio, 2021).

Sustainability is a term that has been widely adopted across various fields, but it is often subject to different interpretations depending on the context in which it is used. As Portney (2015, p.53) points out, perspectives on sustainability can have several meanings depending on the context, namely, “*ecology, energy, environment, agriculture, population dynamics and demographics, and economics*”. This diversity in interpretation underscores the complexity and multifaceted nature of sustainability, making it a concept that adapts and evolves across various disciplines and application areas.

When it comes to sustainability, there are a variety of viewpoints to consider. Some hold the strictest interpretation, emphasizing the preservation of nature in its purest form, untouched by human influence. While this view has merit, it is not the prevailing one, as it often ignores the essential needs of human society when taken too far. In contrast, a more widely accepted and flexible approach to sustainability revolves around maintaining a sustainable economic ecosystem in which nature is seen as a valuable resource provider (Ruggerio, 2021). This latter approach recognizes the importance of protecting the environment and supporting human progress.

In this way, a comprehensive analysis of sustainability reveals a spectrum of definitions, each highlighting interconnected elements of this multifaceted concept. For instance, Leach et al. (2010, p.5) define it as the ability to maintain “*human well-being, social equity, and environmental integrity*” over indefinite periods of time. For Portney (2015, p.4), sustainability “*is a concept that focuses on the condition of Earth’s biophysical environment, particularly with respect to the use and depletion of natural resources... The basic premise of sustainability is that Earth’s resources cannot be used, depleted, and damaged indefinitely*”. Ben-Eli (2018, p.1339) further broadens the scope of sustainability by describing it as: “*the integrity and health of the planet’s biosphere, and the future well-being of humanity*”. Together, these authors emphasize the fundamental essence of sustainability, which is about understanding and addressing the interconnectedness of different aspects of our planet in order to promote a sustainable future.

In this rich context, Leslie Burns (2019) offers a concise definition that captures the essence of sustainability as maintaining or improving our quality of life while preserving natural resources for current and future generations (Burns, 2019). This definition aligns with the broader sustainability ethos, which emphasizes the need for a harmonious balance between meeting the needs of the present and safeguarding the ecological health of our planet for the long term.

Building upon these concepts, Elkington (1997) presents a more holistic approach, framing sustainability as the principle of ensuring that our actions today will not limit the range of social, economic, and environmental options available to future generations. As Castro (2019) highlights, Elkington's perspective necessitates an integration of environmental, economic, and social dimensions, a notion epitomized by his Triple Bottom Line (TBL) concept introduced in the 1990s.

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model has gained substantial recognition and has inspired various adaptations, including the popular 3Ps framework, signifying Profit, People, and Planet. These three pillars represent the core dimensions of sustainability: economic (Profit), social (People), and environmental (Planet). The essence of the TBL framework lies in its emphasis on integrating these aspects harmoniously, thereby ensuring a sustainable future that does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Elkington, 1997).

As advocated by Elkington (1997), this integrated approach has not only influenced corporate strategies but has also resonated with consumers. The rise in consumer awareness regarding social and environmental concerns has led to a noteworthy shift in market dynamics. This shift involves the segmentation of markets based on consumers' social consciousness and values. Consumers' focus extends beyond personal satisfaction to encompass the broader well-being of society and the environment (Anderson & Cunningham, 1972).

According to the Capgemini Research Institute report *"How sustainability is fundamentally changing consumer preferences"* there is growing concern about environmental challenges

and the need to conserve natural resources. This shift toward sustainability is changing consumer buying preferences. The report shows that 79% of consumers change their purchasing decisions based on sustainability and social responsibility. These people are increasingly paying attention to waste reduction and choosing products with eco-friendly packaging. Adopting sustainable habits provides them with a sense of fulfilment and strengthens their loyalty to brands that engage in sustainable practices. These observations suggest that sustainability has immense potential to profoundly impact consumer experiences and satisfaction (Capgemini Research Institute, 2021).

This heightened environmental consciousness, driven by concerns about the exhaustion of natural resources and the limitations on economic growth, has placed substantial pressure on companies to innovate and develop environmentally friendly products and services.

Recently, companies have come under intense pressure to adopt more sustainable practices. This urgency stems from increasing concern for the environment. Sustainability lays emphasis on meeting the present needs while ensuring a brighter future. This vision requires a forward-looking approach that encompasses economic, social, and environmental aspects, prioritizing the needs of future generations. Therefore, sustainable development emphasizes strategic management that balances economic and social objectives while countering short-term goals that focus solely on economic prosperity (Cho et al., 2021).

In navigating this landscape, organizations have various business models at their disposal that focus on sustainability and social change. One such model is the corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework. As Stobierski (2021) notes, this framework encompasses four pivotal elements: environmental, ethical, philanthropic, and economic responsibilities. Integrated into the business plan, these aspects ensure that all employees are consistently mindful of sustainable practices in their daily operations.

Another influential model is the Triple Bottom Line, which, as already mentioned, is based on three fundamental pillars: Profit, People and the Planet. Profit in this context refers to the company's traditional financial performance or economic sustainability. People refer to the company's corporate social responsibility metrics, which include health and safety, human

rights and community impact and relate to social sustainability. On the other hand, Planet focuses on the company's environmental responsibility. It includes factors such as carbon footprint, recycling and reuse of resources, and initiatives to reduce water and energy consumption and pollution, corresponding to environmental sustainability. This model goes beyond financial performance alone and encourages companies to prioritize the well-being of people – including stakeholders, employees and the community – and the planet alongside profitability (Elkington, 1998).

Each of these models offers a distinct yet complementary perspective on sustainability. The unifying theme across these models is that businesses must recognize and incorporate sustainability into their strategies. This shift is both a moral imperative and a strategic one, as businesses that fail to adapt may risk their long-term viability in a market where consumers and stakeholders are increasingly environmentally and socially conscious.

This emphasis on sustainability has elevated the concept to a prominent position in international discourse and has found its place on the agenda of numerous organizations. People's rapidly growing interest in sustainability and environmental protection has attracted greater attention not only from individuals but also from the broader media landscape. This increased awareness has made environmental protection an issue with global resonance in recent years (Nagurney & Yu, 2012; Thanikaivelan et al., 2005).

The report "Our Common Future" by the World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainability as meeting the present needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs while balancing economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being (Brundtland 1987). Following this foundational understanding, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda outlines 17 Sustainable Development Goals as a global compass to tackle significant social, environmental, and economic challenges. The importance and relevance of this agenda are further highlighted in recent discussions and documents, such as the "*Global Sustainable Development Report 2023*" (UN, 2023).

Throughout history, various milestones have marked governments' formal recognition of environmental concerns. For instance, in the United States, environmental regulations were first introduced in the mid-1970s (Arslan, 2019; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2020). Similarly, the first ecological movements in Portugal emerged in the 1980s, leading to greater public awareness of environmental concerns (Paiva & Proença, 2011).

In fact, Portugal's commitment to environmental sustainability was further solidified in 2001 with the introduction of the Green Paper - a European framework for the social responsibility of companies. This was seen as a sustainability milestone in the country, which was reflected in the following years in the attitude of companies towards the environment through NGOs, events and campaigns (Evangelista, 2010). As a result, many companies in Portugal have since adopted a more environmentally responsible approach.

On this basis, corporate social responsibility (CSR), mainly through the disclosure of non-financial information covering social, environmental and corporate governance aspects, plays a central role in assessing corporate performance and impact on society. This reporting form helps identify sustainability risks and strengthens investor and consumer confidence. As Ferreira (2017) emphasizes, sustainability reports are crucial for disclosing both positive and negative impacts on the environmental, social and economic context. These disclosures provide a transparent overview of a company's comprehensive impact beyond traditional financial metrics.

Over the past few decades, various studies conducted by KPMG have shown that the number of companies publishing specific reports, such as the Sustainability Report, has been increasing. Companies are sharing increasingly comprehensive information regarding their social and environmental performance in order to complement financial information (KPMG, 2015; KPMG, 2017; KPMG, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has unexpectedly impacted the public's perception and behavior regarding sustainability. It has reminded people of the interdependence between humans and nature, leading to a reassessment of purchasing habits. This has resulted in a shift towards brands prioritizing sustainability and demonstrating a commitment to the environment and

broader societal welfare (Degli Esposti et al., 2021). This shift reflects a more profound transformation in consumer values and indicates that consumers hold companies accountable for their environmental impact. Today's consumers are increasingly conscious of the environment and societal welfare and tend to favor companies that prioritize sustainability and actively contribute to the planet's well-being and communities (Hardie, 2021).

Looking towards the future, it is evident that sustainability will play an increasingly critical role in shaping the business landscape. To remain competitive in a world where sustainability is a competitive advantage, companies must continue to innovate by embracing circular economy principles, investing in green technologies, and promoting a culture of sustainability within their organizations (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). Creating a sustainable future requires a collaborative and integrative approach wherein businesses, governments, and civil society work together to ensure that economic growth is pursued in harmony with environmental preservation and social well-being (Stiglitz, 2010). It is essential for developed countries to support developing nations in their sustainability journey by providing technology transfer, financial assistance, and capacity-building initiatives. Such inclusive and cooperative efforts are crucial in enabling all nations, irrespective of their economic status, to actively participate in and contribute to a sustainable global future (UN, 2023).

Sustainability is a continuous process characterized by the interaction and adaptability of social and ecological systems. It is not only about preserving but also about improving the ability of ecological systems to enrich social systems. The concept of sustainability requires a deep understanding of the feedback mechanisms and dynamic interactions between the environment and human societies. As we gain a deeper understanding of these complex relationships, the challenge for both organizations and individuals is to navigate this tangled landscape. The goal is to find a harmonious balance that ensures our planet's health and well-being while meeting society's needs. This balanced approach is critical to fostering a sustainable relationship with the planet Earth that maintains both ecological integrity and social well-being (Berkes et al., 2003; Van der Leeuw, 2000).

1.2. Definition and Evolution of the Sustainability Concept in the Fashion Industry

Fashion has evolved into a fundamental element in the dynamic world of the 21st century, reflecting the rapid shifts in consumer behavior and cultural trends. As pointed out by Solomon (2002), fashion is “*the process of social diffusion by which a new style is adopted by some group(s) of consumers*” (p. 503), emphasizing how it plays an integral role in our daily lives.

According to Solino et al. (2020), the fashion industry plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between consumers and products, constantly innovating to cater to ever-evolving desires for newness and relevance. In today's fast-paced environment, where immediacy and gratification are highly valued, fashion has emerged as a significant player in shaping consumer preferences and driving market trends.

Lipovetsky (2009) observes that fashion reflects society's trends and values, offering insights into cultural changes over time and across regions. Today, consumers are drawn to the latest and most impressive products, valuing quick satisfaction. However, this growing trend towards rapid consumption has significant downsides, particularly in the fast fashion industry. Having said this, the dark side of this industry is associated with fast fashion (Madsen et al., 2007), where its costs are felt by society as a whole, but more specifically at the level of workers and the environment (Fletcher, 2010).

The term “*fast fashion*” was first used by The New York Times in 1989, coinciding with the opening of Zara's first store in New York (Gazzola et al., 2020). Since then, brands like Zara and H&M have revolutionized the fashion industry by democratizing it and making the latest fashion trends quickly and affordably accessible to the masses (Hill & Lee, 2015). These companies strive to introduce new products and replace old ones as quickly as possible, aiming to be the first to respond to trends and capture greater value from consumers. To achieve this, they minimize the time and cost of design and production. On average, these stores introduce hundreds of new products each week, offering more collections beyond the traditional Spring-Summer and Autumn-Winter seasons. (Caro & Martínez-de-Albéniz, 2015).

Over the last 15 years, clothing production has significantly increased, with the industry doubling its output (Hanson, 2019). However, this trend has also been coupled with a decrease in the lifespan of clothing, with consumers wearing a single item for less than half of its potential usage before discarding it (Remy et al., 2016). This shift in consumer behavior, coupled with the practices of fast fashion brands, has led to increased production and decreased utilization, resulting in adverse environmental and ethical impacts.

Furthermore, this industry, associated with the high turnover of trends, exploits consumer desires for novelty (Fletcher, 2010), leading them to purchase more than they need (Bennie et al., 2010). In this way, it promotes systematic consumption, as acquiring these items, considering the cycles, allows consumers to differentiate themselves through fashion objects (Berger & Heath, 2007). This behavior is motivated by the desire for acceptance within a social group (Pears, 2006). Thus, the success of this model is linked to its ability to adapt to consumers who seek variety, the latest trends, the possibility of buying in large quantities, and spending little money, overcoming the poor quality of the items (Barnes et al., 2013).

The fast fashion industry has been criticized for relying on cheap fibers, both natural and synthetic, and for outsourcing production and distribution to companies and suppliers across the globe. This practice often leads to a lack of control over the entire process, resulting in concerns about the environmental and ethical impact of the industry. Furthermore, the constant turnover of clothing not only drives up production but also exacerbates these concerns, as noted by Hobbs (2010).

Despite its popularity and its role in transforming the fashion industry, fast fashion raises critical concerns about sustainability. The rise of the fast fashion industry has led to an increase in the volume of clothing that consumers purchase and dispose of quickly, thereby escalating concerns about its social and environmental impact (Heinze, 2020).

The growing concern for the impact of fashion on the environment and society has led to a remarkable shift towards sustainability in the industry. As highlighted by Rzeczycki (2023), this shift is not just a passing trend but a critical response to today's challenges. The industry's focus on sustainable practices clearly indicates its evolution, with an increasing recognition

of fashion's environmental and social impact and a commitment to taking responsibility for it.

The fashion industry is experiencing a profound shift towards sustainability, driven by an increasing demand for “*green*” products. (Cervellon & Carey, 2011). This trend indicates a growing awareness and concern for preserving the environment during production has gradually gained momentum (Refosco et al., 2011). These products promote reducing compulsive purchases and increasing their lifespan to avoid the growth of disposable fashion.

In this emerging landscape, the concept of “*sustainable fashion*” has arisen, introduced by pioneers like Beard (2008) and de Brito et al. (2008). Sustainable fashion is defined as “*clothes that incorporate fair trade principles with sweatshop-free labor conditions while not harming the environment or workers by using biodegradable and organic cotton*” (Joergens, 2006, p. 361). This approach to fashion is characterized as an ideal that embraces values of sustainability, extending beyond environmental concerns to include human rights and the welfare of workers involved in the entire process, with an emphasis on both social and environmental impacts (Henninger et al., 2016).

The slow fashion movement is a prime example of how conscious fashion can be achieved through thoughtful and deliberate consumption. This movement focuses on reusing garments, whether they are repurposed or not, recycling materials, and reducing waste without being limited to whether these practices are biodegradable. The ultimate goal, as succinctly put forth by Martins (2017), is not to restrict consumption but to significantly heighten awareness and consideration for sustainability. This fosters a deeper, more intentional relationship between consumers and their fashion choices, which is crucial in pursuing a more sustainable future.

Watson and Yan (2013) argue that slow fashion consumers prioritize purchasing based on their actual needs, quality, and versatility rather than quantity and trend-following. This principle ensures that consumers do not regret their purchases since each item is thoughtfully chosen to be used over a long period. According to Jung (2014), consumers oriented towards

slow fashion show concern for environmental and social issues in the fashion industry. They place greater importance on how products are produced, preferring artisanal techniques, small-scale production, and local trade.

Additionally, these consumers favor simpler, more versatile designs that do not follow fleeting trends. They are also more attracted to limited editions that allow for greater self-expression. This approach encourages consumers to critically assess their purchasing habits, considering their choices, social and environmental impacts (Fletcher, 2018). Despite challenges like limited availability and higher prices of sustainable products, slow fashion has the potential to significantly influence the fashion industry's future, guiding it towards a more sustainable and ethical direction (Jung & Jin, 2016).

As the fashion industry strives to achieve sustainability, it is actively working towards integrating environmental, economic, and social considerations at every stage of its supply chain. To reduce the ecological impact of clothing production, the industry is focusing on using eco-friendly materials, conserving water and energy, and implementing waste reduction strategies. These efforts are essential in reducing the environmental footprint of fashion, as emphasized by Niinimäki et al. (2020).

Alongside environmental efforts, social sustainability is gaining increasing attention. This aspect involves ensuring that the fashion industry positively impacts communities, upholds human rights, and promotes fair and equitable working conditions, as Armstrong et al. (2015) emphasize. Furthermore, economic sustainability is seen as equally vital. It entails the development of systems that support fair trade, ethical labor practices, and sustainable economic growth, ensuring that such growth does not compromise the industry's environmental and social responsibilities (Joy et al., 2012). By balancing environmental, economic, and social aspects, the fashion industry can create a sustainable future for itself and the planet.

Despite being comparable to the seventh-largest global economy (Niinimäki et al., 2020), the fashion industry faces sustainability challenges that affect its extensive supply chain. However, the industry's shift towards sustainability gained critical importance within

economic prominence. Fashion brands are increasingly adopting sustainable practices, recognizing the ethical imperative and the commercial viability of such measures. By shifting towards more sustainable operations, they are improving resource efficiency, reducing waste and solidifying their ethical reputation among consumers and stakeholders (Joy et al., 2012). The urgency of this transformation is underscored by the industry's increasingly visible negative environmental impacts, prompting calls for drastic operational changes from consumers, activists, and regulatory bodies alike (Jung & Jin, 2016).

The fashion industry is becoming increasingly aware of sustainability, but it still faces significant challenges in achieving widespread sustainable consumption. These challenges range from internal to external factors such as a lack of understanding about the environmental benefits of sustainable fashion, perceptions that sustainable clothing lacks style, and concerns about higher costs. Moreover, the industry lacks adequate infrastructure to support sustainable production methods. However, the growing awareness among consumers regarding the environmental and social impacts of their fashion choices highlights the urgent need for public education on the importance of sustainable fashion (Harris et al., 2016).

Technological developments have revolutionized the way brands engage with consumers, particularly the younger generation, who have unprecedented access to information about sustainable fashion. Despite the increased awareness facilitated by these digital tools, there is still a significant gap between consumer knowledge and actual purchasing decisions. To bridge this gap, the fashion industry must ensure that sustainable products are not only environmentally friendly but also competitive in terms of quality and affordability. By achieving this balance, the industry can more effectively influence consumer preferences towards sustainable fashion, utilizing both social marketing and digital platforms to influence purchasing decisions (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

With the proliferation of information on digital platforms, today's consumers have become more informed and connected than ever. They can easily investigate the sustainability practices of their favorite brands, which emphasizes the need for brands to be accountable and transparent. However, the abundance of information also presents a challenge, as

consumers are now tasked with discerning authentic sustainable practices from marketing ploys. Clear, consistent, and verifiable communication about sustainability efforts becomes crucial for brands to build trust and guide consumers toward making genuinely sustainable choices (Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014).

To bridge the gap between growing consumer awareness and actual behavior, the fashion industry needs innovative and sophisticated marketing strategies that focus on social marketing. Social marketing aims to reshape societal norms and stimulate consumer behavioral change. By engaging consumers through a narrative that goes beyond cost, social marketing can highlight the broader value of sustainable fashion, including its ethical and environmental aspects. Effective social marketing can play a crucial role in promoting consumption patterns that align with sustainable principles, fostering a transition from mere awareness to active, ethical consumer choices in fashion (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010).

Currently, the fashion industry is undergoing a significant transformation, primarily fueled by the consumers increasing demand for transparency and authenticity. As consumers become more aware and assertive about sustainability, the industry is responding by prioritizing environmental and social responsibility in its business strategies. This shift reflects a broader change in the industry's landscape, where success is increasingly measured not only by financial gains but also by a brand's commitment to global sustainability efforts. This transformation is being driven by consumers who are not only informed but also increasingly insistent on sustainable practices, underscoring the fashion industry's critical role in global sustainability efforts (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

The current market landscape presents an opportunity to drive positive change through increased awareness and consumer engagement. However, it is essential to consider how values like price and style are balanced against ethical and sustainable practices. One effective way to encourage sustainable purchasing is by enhancing the quality and style of sustainable products. Consumers might perceive sustainable products as more expensive than their non-sustainable counterparts. Nevertheless, if sustainable products are presented as being on par with or superior in quality and style, consumers may be more inclined to justify the higher cost. Brands can play a vital role in shifting consumer preferences towards

more sustainable options by integrating sustainable features with desirable design and quality, making sustainable purchasing an ethical and fashionable choice (Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014).

The fashion industry has undergone a significant transformation towards more sustainable practices, with many leading brands setting new standards and benchmarks for others to follow. This shift is not just about following a moral imperative; it also provides a competitive advantage in the marketplace. As sustainability becomes a core aspect of a brand's identity, it can change the entire industry, shaping consumer preferences towards more responsible and ethical fashion choices (Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014).

Every consumer plays a pivotal role in the fashion ecosystem, and their choices significantly influence the industry's shift towards sustainability (Shen, 2014). To secure a sustainable future in fashion consumption, it is essential to focus on enhancing consumer awareness about sustainability, influencing behavior, and understanding the emotions associated with sustainable consumption (Niinimäki et al., 2020). Despite the allure of low prices and compelling marketing driving fast fashion, there is an emerging positive attitude towards sustainability, particularly among Generation Z (Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014). Nevertheless, a notable discrepancy between their pro-sustainability mindset and actual purchasing behaviors presents a significant challenge, indicating a gap between attitudes and actions (Joy et al., 2012).

The journey towards a more sustainable fashion industry requires a collaborative effort between consumers and brands. However, both need to shift their mindset and recognize the significance of sustainable practices to make a real change (Clark, 2008). To bridge this gap, it is crucial to educate and inform consumers about positive attitudes towards sustainability (Harris et al., 2016). Consumers must understand the impact of their purchasing decisions on the fashion ecosystem's sustainability (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010).

According to Bernardes et al. (2018), consumers are key players in promoting sustainable fashion by making informed choices and demanding transparency from brands. Similarly, Yee et al. (2016) argue that brands also have a responsibility to prioritize ethical and

sustainable practices to reduce their environmental impact and enable consumers to make informed choices. By working together, consumers and brands can create a fashion ecosystem that values sustainability and works towards a more responsible and ethical industry. Notably, recent literature highlights that consumer-related factors, such as lack of awareness, inappropriate retail environment, and social norms, are crucial in the transition from fast fashion to sustainable fashion (Zhang et al., 2021).

Consumers' informed and ethical choices increasingly shape the contemporary landscape of the fashion industry. There has been a significant shift in consumer behavior towards sustainability in fashion in recent years. This shift is driven by a growing understanding of the industry's environmental and social impact, particularly among younger generations (Brem & Puente-Díaz, 2020). Consumers are demanding more sustainable products and aligning their purchases with their values and beliefs (Ciasullo et al., 2017).

However, the relationship between consumer attitudes towards sustainability and actual purchasing behavior is complex. While there is a growing concern for ethical practices, this does not always translate into sustainable purchasing decisions, especially in the realm of fashion (Mcneill & Moore, 2015). This disparity is often attributed to a gap between consumer expectations and the perceived value of sustainable products. Consumers are found to have higher expectations of sustainable products, yet their perceptions do not always align with these expectations, leading to a discrepancy in their purchasing behavior (Biswas, 2017).

Furthermore, social influences play a significant role in shaping consumer choices in the fashion industry. Young consumers, in particular, are influenced by their social circles and the desire to belong to certain groups or classes. This influence can lead to choices that are more aligned with social norms than personal values or sustainability considerations (Ciasullo et al., 2017).

For the fashion industry to effectively navigate this shift, transparency and accuracy regarding the sustainability of its products and practices are important. Such clarity enables consumers to make more informed choices and holds brands accountable for their

environmental and societal impact. As the industry adapts to these evolving expectations, its commitment to transparency and ethical practices will be vital in maintaining consumer trust and fostering the ongoing momentum towards a sustainable fashion ecosystem (Armstrong et al., 2015).

2. Generation Z and the Fashion Industry

2.1. Demographic, Psychographic, and Behavioral Traits of Generation Z

The concept of generations has become significant in social and human sciences, as highlighted by Feixa and Leccardi (2010). It refers to individuals of the same age who have been through important historical events. While a generation does not need a specific birth date, understanding each group's values, preferences, moral backgrounds, and characteristics is crucial. This helps us gain deeper insights into the individuals belonging to these groups and identify the unique characteristics of a society. Therefore, generations are valuable tools for analyzing social changes' dynamics and the resulting "*thinking styles*" that arise from historical shifts (Mannheim, 1952). From Dilthey's (1989) perspective, generations are shaped by shared historical factors and individuals' collective relationships. This means that a generation comprises people who have gone through similar events and experiences.

Karl Mannheim is an essential figure in the development of generational theory. His notable work, "*The Sociological Problem of Generations*", is widely considered the most comprehensive definition of the subject (Mannheim, 1952). According to Mannheim (1952), generations are social constructs shaped by significant experiences and events that people collectively go through during a particular historical period. He interprets the concept of generation through a German historical-romantic lens and suggests that the precise duration of a generation is qualitative, determined by seminal events that set the pace of historical progress. Mannheim argues that birth dates alone cannot entirely define a generation. Instead, he emphasizes the broader influence of historical factors like intellectual, social, and political contexts in shaping generational identities. This nuanced approach highlights the

intricate interplay between individual experiences and broader historical forces that shape generational dynamics (Cordeiro et al., 2013; Feixa & Leccardi, 2010).

Ortega y Gasset (1967) expands on this concept, famously stating, “*I am I and my circumstance*” (p.52). Our identities are shaped by our individual selves and the experiences and circumstances we share with others. These experiences include transmitting and sharing of values, historical events, and attitudes that have undoubtedly influenced our perspectives and contributed to our personal and collective growth. Therefore, comprehending the cultural and historical context that shapes each generation is crucial for understanding individuals within a group.

Hofstede (2003) builds on this idea, stating that culture plays a significant role in shaping human nature and personality. When individuals share experiences and historical events, they develop a sense of belonging to a particular generation, influencing their beliefs, values, and attitudes. This, in turn, shapes how individuals express their personality and emotions.

Generational categorization continues to be a challenge as it is difficult to define when one generation starts and another ends accurately. Despite the lack of agreement on specific dates, presently, there are five generations coexisting, as categorized by Kotler et al. (2021): Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Generation Y (1981-1996), Generation Z (1997-2009), and Generation Alpha (2010-2025). This categorization helps to explore the unique distinctions and interactions between these groups, reflecting the evolving societal norms and technological advancements that shape each generation.

Table 1 provides a comprehensive analysis of each generation’s unique characteristics and defining experiences. By examining the specific traits and historical contexts that have shaped Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha, we gain a deeper understanding of their distinct behaviors, values, and interactions with the world. Such insights are essential for comprehending how these generations navigate their personal and professional lives, their relationship with technology, and their social and environmental concerns.

Table 1: Characteristics of Generation Z

Generation	Characteristics of Generation Z
<p>Baby Boomers (1946-1964)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grown during a period of economic stability and after World War II. • Experienced the counterculture, social activism, and environmental movements of the 1960s. • Prioritize work-life balance and uphold traditional values. • Early adopters of foundational technologies like television but cautious towards modern advancements. • Often delay retirement and stay active in the labor market.
<p>Generation X (1965-1980)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grew up during technological and economic shifts, including the 1980s recession. • Values independence, work-life balance, and close personal relationships. • Early adopter of the internet and foundational technologies. • Displays entrepreneurial spirit and pursues new ventures. • Influential members of the modern workforce.
<p>Generation Y (1981-1996)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher level of education compared to previous generations. • More culturally diverse compared to earlier generations. • Engaged with the internet from a young age. • Seek validation and approval from their social circles, often placing greater trust in peer recommendations over established brands. • Frequently research and shop online, primarily through mobile devices. • More focused on accumulating life experiences over material possessions. • Tend to be more open-minded and idealistic. • Prioritizes work that is both rewarding and enjoyable.

Generation	Characteristics of Generation Z
<p>Generation Z (1997-2009)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First true digital natives with access to technology from an early age. • Value authenticity and are skeptical of traditional advertising. • Concerned about social and environmental issues, preferring brands with aligned values. • Favor fast, efficient communication through digital platforms. • Expect personalized and customizable products and services.
<p>Generation Alpha (2010-2025)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First generation fully immersed in the 21st century. • Fully immersed in technology from birth. • Heavily influenced by Generation Y and Generation Z. • Raised with a focus on education, inclusivity, and early financial literacy. • Engage with digital content from a young age, viewing technology as an integral and personal part of their life. • Early adopters of emerging technologies such as AI and robotics • Comfort and curiosity with next-generation innovations. • Influence family decisions and market trends, even at a young age, with a strong presence on social media as influencers.

Source: Adapted from Kotler et., al 2021.

This study focuses on Generation Z, which comprises teenagers and young adults. Researchers have given this generation various names, including Digital Natives, Gen Tech, Gen Wii, Homelanders, iGeneration, and Post-Millennials (Dimock, 2019; Strauss & Howe, 1991). The letter “Z” in Generation Z originates from the verb “to zap”, which means a sudden or quick movement or change (Tapscott, 2010). Due to the constantly changing world around them, the members of Generation Z have had to develop skills to navigate these changes.

According to Töröcsik et al. (2014), Generation Z is known as the first global generation. They communicate in a distinct way, using words and phrases that might seem unfamiliar to others (Tari, 2011). Having grown up in an era dominated by the internet, they are always connected and have a strong understanding of global issues, particularly in politics and social concerns. For them, technology and the internet are not just tools but a fundamental part of their daily lives (Turner, 2015).

Generation Z has been raised with computers, the internet, and video games, which have become integral to their childhood experience. This has led them to be heavily involved in the digital world and to express themselves through social media platforms (Budac, 2015). With access to a range of mobile devices and social media platforms, Generation Z is known for their ability to create and share a wide variety of content, consistently showcasing their thoughts, opinions, and perspectives on the world around them (Dewalska-Opitek & Witczak, 2023).

This generation prefers virtual communication over traditional in-person interactions, indicating a shift in socializing and community engagement (Bevilacqua et al., 2016). However, despite this shift, in-person interaction remains essential to this generation, especially among people or groups with shared interests or lifestyles (Oliveira et al., 2012).

To further understand this generation, it is essential to recognize some notable characteristics such as entrepreneurial skills, trustworthiness, and tolerance (Ntalianis et al., 2018). However, it is essential to note that these positive traits also come with negative attributes, such as impatience, individualism, materialism, dependence on technology, and high expectations (Gazzola et al., 2020). These attributes highlight a generation at the intersection of innovation and instant gratification.

Looking ahead, Generation Z is poised to be the most formally educated group in history, spending more time in educational institutions than any generation prior (Desai, 2017). Their academic pursuits reflect a preference for dynamic and interactive learning environments, shifting from traditional pen-and-paper note-taking to digital alternatives like laptops (Dauksevicuite, 2016). This evolution in learning preferences mirrors their broader adaptation to and integration with technology, setting the stage for a future where digital proficiency is paramount.

The integration of artificial intelligence and the rise of remote and hybrid work have revolutionized the job market and transformed workplace dynamics. This has resulted in unprecedented adaptability and a shift in how businesses engage with employees and customers (Parker et al., 2016). The impact is even more profound for Generation Z, who were raised in a tech-savvy era and possess advanced technical skills. This generation values flexibility in the workplace and is highly sought after by employers (PWC, 2017). Their self-confidence, ambition, and entrepreneurial mindset set them apart, and they prioritize personal and professional growth, meaningful work, and collaboration with exceptional teams (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). The link between technological advancements and Generation Z's attitudes and behaviors in the workplace highlights a dynamic interplay that will continue to shape the future workforce.

Although technological advancements and changes in the workplace present new opportunities, nearly half of Generation Z workers feel stressed or anxious at work. This stress is due to their concerns about their financial future, daily expenses, and family well-being. Heavy workloads, poor work-life balance, and negative team cultures significantly affect their stress levels. Furthermore, social media can positively and negatively influence Generation Z. While some people may view it positively, others believe it can worsen their loneliness and add pressure to maintain a particular online image (Deloitte, 2023).

The younger generation, also known as Digital Natives, has witnessed significant transformations and occurrences, which have resulted in a faster pace of life than previous generations (McCrindle, 2014). Digital Natives are highly motivated to remain informed and acquire knowledge from various sources, but they also show a heightened awareness of how their actions and attitudes can impact society. Furthermore, they can think beyond conventional limits, which is a valuable trait (Williams & Page, 2011).

Generation Z is often described as more realistic than previous generations, such as the Millennials. According to Kotler et al. (2021), this realism is reflected in their behavior with friends and on social media, where they share unfiltered and authentic aspects of their lives rather than just the perfect moments. This search for authenticity is also evident in their worldviews. As Turner (2015) notes, Generation Z is the most accepting and open-minded

generation yet. Growing up in a world where global connectivity is the norm has made them more empathetic and supportive of different cultures and social issues.

Generation Z is recognized for their active opposition to gender, race, and sexual orientation-based discrimination (Twenge, 2017), which sets them apart from previous generations. Growing up in a world where social movements and marginalization of communities like the LGBTQIA+ community were frequently discussed (Bitterman & Hess, 2021) has made them more aware of global issues (Witt & Baird, 2018). As a result, they are more sensitive to social injustices, which inspires them to advocate for positive change (Topić & Mitchell, 2019).

In addition to advocating for social justice, Generation Z is committed to environmental consciousness (Topić & Mitchell, 2019). Max Mihelich (2013) observed that individuals from this generation possess a heightened awareness of environmental issues, taking responsibility for natural resources and actively seeking to improve their surroundings. As they gain greater purchasing power, they increasingly drive social change towards more responsible and sustainable consumption patterns (Le et al., 2022). Mindful of their choices, these individuals strive to reduce their consumption by purchasing within their possibilities and avoiding unnecessary shopping (Djafarova & Foots, 2022), as demonstrated by their conscientious consumption habits (Gomes et al., 2023).

Despite growing up in a world impacted by terrorism, economic crises, and cultural diversity, this generation is increasingly tolerant and open-minded. They are highly motivated to impact the world positively and represent a significant shift in societal behavior (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

2.2. Digital Behavior and Communication Preferences of Generation Z in the Fashion Industry

Social media has undergone significant changes throughout the years and has become an essential part of many people's lives. It has managed to cut across various generations, and for Generation Z, it has become the primary platform for social interaction and self-expression. How they interact with each other has undergone a significant transformation,

and self-expression has also changed significantly. Social media platforms offer ample space for this generation to express their opinions, share their activities, and build their identity (Siagian & Yuliana, 2023).

Regarding entertainment and information consumption habits, many of Generation Z prefer digital content over traditional media such as live TV, radio, and newspapers. Social media has become a significant part of their daily routine, as they spend a considerable number of hours online connecting, learning, and entertaining themselves (LADbible Group, 2022).

Social media platforms were initially created to enable people to stay connected with their friends. However, currently, they are more focused on finding content through these platforms. Generation Z has adopted these platforms to seek advice, research brands, and find entertainment. Unlike previous generations, they primarily discover new brands and products through social media instead of search engines. Gen Z determines brand loyalty online based on a brand's ability to connect with them. Therefore, they prefer brands that are relatable, trendy, youthful, and humorous (GlobalWebIndex, 2022).

Over the last decade, the internet has significantly increased communication, changing how people interact (Kim & Haridakis, 2009). The overwhelming influence of social media has significantly impacted the daily lives of Generation Z members. As enthusiastic users of social media platforms, Generation Z's buying behavior is often influenced by marketing strategies on these platforms. Their purchasing decisions are shaped by the brand's personality and equity, which they associate with themselves (Thilina, 2021).

The effect of social media on how Generation Z perceives brands is significant and intricate. This group, which has grown up with digital technology, forms opinions about a brand based on its online presence, the quality of the content shared, and the customer interactions they observe. Personalized experiences play a vital role in influencing their shopping habits. Companies that use data and artificial intelligence to create tailored social media content are more likely to strike a bond with this demographic. When brands offer personalized recommendations, targeted offers, and customized content, they resonate more deeply with Generation Z, who expect a more individualized online experience (Fazith & Nithya, 2023).

The emergence of online shopping platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have led to a considerable change in consumer behavior, especially among younger individuals. Gen Z, in particular, prefers efficient online interactions, which is why they tend to shop on digital platforms. User-generated content, including reviews, comments, and social media posts, is vital in shaping Generation Z's purchasing decisions. Brands that effectively promote user-generated content on their social channels gain greater trust and authenticity, making social media a critical tool for building consumer-brand relationships, especially with a more digitally engaged audience. This trend will likely continue and significantly impact this generation's purchasing behaviors (Fazith & Nithya, 2023).

Generation Z tends to purchase clothes as one of their first independent buying decisions. This generation views fashion as a crucial way to express themselves. However, some fashion decisions require more thought, while others may be more spontaneous. Speed is of the essence for Generation Z, and using social media platforms to seek inspiration is second nature to them since they have grown up with the internet (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Social media lets them stay updated with the latest fashion trends and even influences them to buy new fashion items (Elram & Steiner, 2015).

Clothing brands have begun to rely heavily on social media platforms as a crucial communication channel (Bruhn et al., 2012; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). These platforms are popular, offer direct customer communication, and provide a dominant visual medium. Social media has significantly influenced the fashion industry (Ahmad et al., 2015), which is now an essential tool for connecting fashion brands with customers, promoting purchase intentions, and fostering two-way communication (Sashi, 2012).

Generation Z's engagement with brands is characterized by active feedback and high regard for the opinions of others, indicating a preference for interactive and communal brand relationships (Yadav & Rai, 2017). This generation is interested in staying up-to-date with the latest product and brand trends, and factors such as service, price, quality, and exclusivity significantly influence their buying decisions (Gollo et al., 2019, p. 14499). Additionally, the substantial purchasing power of this generation and the influence of influencers or idols highlight the diverse factors that guide their buying behavior (Stachowiak-Krzyżan, 2021).

The preference of Generation Z for brands that align with their values and beliefs, rather than blindly following them, highlights the importance of brands not only adopting but also genuinely practicing what they stand for (Witt & Baird, 2018). This audience emphasizes the need for engagement and transparent dialogue, further highlighted by their sophisticated marketing awareness developed through a lifetime of exposure to advertising. They can recognize and ignore obvious marketing tactics, which underline their demand for authenticity based on a deeper understanding and skepticism towards brand messages (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

Generation Z has grown up surrounded by digital technology since they were young. As a result, they have distinct expectations and behaviors, especially regarding fashion. Their fashion choices are influenced by their access to vast amounts of information and global connections, resulting in a diverse range of global styles reflected in their own personal fashion sense (Arta & Qastharin, 2022).

2.3. Generation Z's Ethical Consumption and Purchasing Behavior in Fashion

Wearing the latest fashion trends can significantly impact an individual's self-esteem by allowing them to express their unique personalities and fulfil social needs (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). Fashion marketers and researchers often target highly involved consumers as they tend to be early adopters of new trends (Park et al., 2006). Generation Z, known for their open-mindedness and flexibility, is a group that can quickly adapt to the fast-paced changes in today's world. They have a strong sense of self-identity and are willing to grow, which allows them to remain committed to their personal beliefs while being open to new ideas (Pham et al., 2021). This unique combination of adaptability and a strong sense of self highlights their significant influence in the evolving market landscape.

Generation Z have developed a remarkable ability to navigate the marketing landscape, effortlessly moving between the real and digital worlds, viewing them as a cohesive whole rather than distinct entities (Dolot, 2018). Convenience and speed are the most important values for Gen Z, and they will purchase products through any available channels as long as the process is straightforward (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

To connect with younger demographics effectively, companies must have a deep understanding of them. Although this group is often characterized by their progressive attitudes, fearlessness, outgoing nature, and brand loyalty, gaining their trust can be challenging. Nevertheless, they become invaluable to the company once they establish a sense of loyalty (Budac & Baltador, 2014).

If brands want to attract and retain Generation Z, they must provide opportunities for engagement and co-creation. They must show their trustworthiness, transparency, and openness about their values inside and outside the market. Although this generation is interested in brands, they will remain loyal if they believe the brand delivers on its promises. To maintain a long-standing relationship with these individuals, brands must prioritize transparency and allow them to feel empowered. A brand that fails to engage with them or keep its promises will quickly lose market share to a competitor (IBM Institute for Business Value, 2017).

Generation Z's purchasing behavior is influenced by their tendency to thoroughly research and gather opinions on products and services before making a purchase. Due to the abundance of available options, Generation Z is likely to prioritize design and aesthetics to distinguish between different products. Moreover, this generation usually exhibits a high level of cognitive decision-making skills by relying on accessible sources of knowledge (Wood, 2013; Kahawandala et al., 2020).

Marketing strategies have shifted their focus towards women belonging to Generation Z as they are the primary consumers of goods and services (Williams & Page, 2011). Women tend to make impulsive purchases when shopping for clothing, jewelry, accessories, cosmetics, and perfumes. This inclination could be attributed to the pleasure that impulsive purchases bring them (Sun & Yazdanifard, 2015).

Transparency is a fundamental requirement for Generation Z, and they tend to research brands and companies before purchasing (Van de Bongardt et al., 2015). According to Van de Bongardt et al. (2014), the impact of external factors on the purchasing process typically decreases with age, except during adolescence when identity formation becomes a critical developmental task. This suggests that teenagers from this generation may be more susceptible to external influences than people from other age groups.

When making a purchase, Generation Z considers several key factors. These include the available payment options, the perceived level of enjoyment that the product can offer, the influence of their peers and social circles, the design of the product itself, and the brand's reputation behind it (Kahawandala et al., 2020). Moreover, social media and internet advertisements significantly shape purchasing decisions among Generation Z (Vasan, 2021).

Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram provide digital natives valuable information about products and services (Vasan, 2021). However, the trend has shifted towards social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, leading to a new industry focused on social media influencers (Haenlein et al., 2020). These influencers are seen as opinion leaders and are highly respected by Generation Z. They communicate messages that are viewed as trustworthy (Munsch, 2021). Therefore, partnering with genuine and honest influencers is crucial for companies targeting this generation, as digital natives tend to follow genuine and passionate people about their interests (Haenlein et al., 2020).

Many consumers, especially younger ones, who are environmentally conscious and care about ecological issues, prefer sustainable clothing. They also try to use their clothes for as long as possible and repurpose them when they are no longer wearable by donating them or giving them to people, they know (Williams & Hodges, 2020). This approach helps to reduce waste and promote sustainability. Generation Z, in particular, places a high value on sustainability and eco-friendliness, which is evident in their purchasing behavior (Kılıç et al., 2021). As a result, there has been a growing interest in supporting brands that prioritize the environment and demonstrate a solid commitment to sustainability.

Members of Generation Z are highly interested in the ethical production and origins of the clothing they wear, actively avoiding items associated with animal cruelty. Marketing approaches emphasizing environmental, sustainable, and ethical characteristics strongly resonate with this age group. These initiatives raise awareness and encourage a shift towards more responsible consumption habits, solidifying the role of Generation Z as a change generation in the movement towards sustainability (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023).

Generation Z is becoming increasingly aware of the sustainability and environmental impact of the fashion industry. However, while making purchasing decisions, other factors, such as price and quality, influence their choices. Price, in particular, is often the primary obstacle

that prevents consumers from buying sustainable products (Djafarova & Foots, 2022). Consumers often note that sustainable fashion tends to be significantly more expensive than conventional (fast) fashion due to the use of more eco-friendly materials. The higher price of sustainable clothing is frequently seen as a barrier to sustainable consumption, as consumers, even though willing to purchase such items, may need help to afford them (Mandarić et al., 2022).

Although committed to sustainability, economic limitations often make it challenging for this generation to consistently choose sustainable options. Nevertheless, their favor of brands prioritizing sustainable practices indicates a shift towards more responsible consumption (Guo et al., 2020). This emphasizes the crucial role that Generation Z plays in shaping the future of sustainable commerce (Schroth, 2019).

The purchasing habits of Generation Z differ significantly from those of previous generations, as they prioritize not only price and quality but also the environmental, social, and ethical implications of their purchases (Djafarova & Foots, 2022). They are leading the change in integrating sustainability into their consumption habits, with a deep awareness of their impact on the planet and future generations (Dabija & Pop, 2013).

3. Generation Z Perceptions of Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

3.1. Perceptions of the Sustainability Concept among Generation Z

Generation Z is known for its distinct blend of financial responsibility and social awareness, which guides its decisions when choosing products and services. They prioritize options that not only meet their personal needs but also positively impact society. Unlike millennials, this generation consumers have many unique ideas and preferences that influence their purchasing habits. They emphasize getting the best value for their money and seek products that align with their values while providing superior quality (Liu et al., 2022).

This moral approach among Generation Z indicates a willingness to embrace and advocate for sustainable practices. In today's world, there is a growing focus on social and environmental issues, with environmental concerns significantly impacting our daily lives.

To promote sustainable practices, it is crucial to educate the public on the importance of sustainability, which requires a strong understanding of sustainability and empowering individuals to make informed decisions and consume sustainable products. Therefore, raising awareness and educating the younger generation on sustainability is imperative to establish a sustainable future (Nikolić et al., 2022).

Comprising approximately 32% of the global population, Generation Z holds significant purchasing power that shapes market dynamics. This generation has faced unique challenges resulting from the environmental crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have impacted their mental and physical health, educational and employment opportunities, and heightened their sensitivity to environmental and social issues (Fu & Ren, 2023; Grénman et al., 2023). Despite these hurdles, Generation Z is more inclined towards environmental protection than previous generations. Their pro-environmental attitudes and sophisticated understanding of the human impact on the planet reflect their high educational attainment (Manley et al., 2023).

As this generation prepares to become the dominant force in the workforce and the primary consumer group by 2030, its role in driving sustainable practices becomes increasingly significant. Educating this generation on sustainability is beneficial and crucial, as they are expected to lead efforts to establish a sustainable future. Combining their unique generational characteristics with proper education and empowerment positions Generation Z as pivotal in steering society towards sustainability (Grénman et al., 2023). This holistic approach to embedding sustainability in the consciousness of Generation Z enhances their ability to make informed decisions. It ensures they are well-equipped to lead global efforts in confronting environmental challenges.

According to Deloitte Global's 2021 survey, climate change and environmental protection are among the top concerns for Generation Z (Deloitte Global, 2021). The literature recognizes these individuals as environmentally conscious, eco-friendly, and willing to pay more for eco-friendly products (Gomes et al., 2023). In addition, this generation is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and creating a sustainable future (Yamane & Kaneko, 2021). This generation's approach to consumption is characterized by a preference for reducing unnecessary waste, engaging in eco-friendly

behaviors, and upholding solid ethical standards for environmental preservation (Grénman et al., 2023).

Focusing on their ethical values and concerns regarding the impact of consumption on the environment, Generation Z is showing an increasing interest in adopting healthy habits, making ethical choices, and prioritizing the environment and sustainability (Nikolic et al., 2022). They tend to favor locally produced products and smaller brands and are open to using second-hand items. These findings suggest that their motivation to act environmentally friendly is driven by their ethical values and concerns regarding the impact of consumption on the environment (Grénman et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Generation Z understands the importance of collaboration in achieving sustainable development and is willing to volunteer and engage in community service. They are eager to work with businesses, governments, and non-governmental organizations to find innovative solutions to environmental and social challenges. Compared to other age groups, Generation Z is more inclined towards adopting sustainable practices and reducing waste through recycling. This positive outlook towards sustainability makes them appreciate companies that prioritize ethical and sustainable practices in their business strategies (Toma et al., 2023).

Organizations must refine their green marketing strategies to meet the preferences of Generation Z consumers. This demographic is more knowledgeable about sustainability and environmental issues than earlier generations. Therefore, businesses should adjust their approaches to align with the sophisticated sustainability expectations of these digital natives. These strategies should be robust, transparent, and genuinely environmentally friendly. This strategic realignment is not only an opportunity but also a necessity. Adapting to Generation Z's expectations could maintain their trust and loyalty, which are critical for long-term business success (Dragolea et al., 2023).

When it comes to making purchases, members of Generation Z still place importance on traditional factors such as price and quality. However, there has been an increase in attention paid towards ethical consumerism in recent years as people strive to make mindful choices that align with their personal and moral beliefs. While a product or company's environmental impact and charitable support are considered, they are not typically the key drivers of

purchasing decisions. Research indicates that the positive impact associated with ethical purchases can play a role in influencing decision-making, as individuals seek to make choices that make them feel good (Djafarova & Foots, 2022).

Based on recent research, women in these demographics tend to prioritize sustainability more than men when making purchases. Moreover, their decision-making process is influenced to a greater extent by peer recommendations and well-executed marketing strategies. Given the considerable purchasing power of women in this age group, marketers should concentrate on eco-friendly advertising that aligns with their ethical and emotional values (Dragolea et al., 2023).

There is a contrast between the environmental values held by Generation Z and their purchasing habits. Although this demographic has a strong interest in sustainability and often integrates environmental considerations into their daily routines, a significant gap exists between their expressed support for eco-friendly brands and their actual buying behavior. While this generation has the potential to drive a responsible fashion market, it remains uncertain whether their positive attitudes towards sustainable fashion will translate into corresponding actions when it comes to purchasing (Vogel, 2023).

Experts are currently engaged in a debate about the fashion choices of Generation Z, particularly concerning their approach to sustainable versus fast fashion. Although this generation is widely recognized for their environmental consciousness and inclination towards sustainable products, economic realities complicate their ability to make eco-friendly purchases consistently. Even though Generation Z prioritizes sustainability, the high cost of eco-friendly products often prevents them from doing so. The financial challenges faced by this generation significantly impact their spending habits and financial priorities, leading to a gap between their intentions and actions when it comes to sustainable consumption (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023).

Due to their limited financial resources, Generation Z must consider affordability when making decisions. Despite their knowledge of the importance of environmental conservation and their active search for sustainable alternatives, they often need help affording eco-friendly products. This highlights the complex relationship between economic constraints and consumer behavior within Generation Z and demonstrates how real-world challenges

can hinder good intentions (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023). While Generation Z is poised to lead the way in sustainable trends, their financial circumstances often prevent them from fully embracing these practices.

Sustainability is particularly important for this generation. While they acknowledge the significance of embracing a sustainable way of living, their fondness for newly produced goods often contradicts their values. When presented with more sustainable alternatives, they may choose not to make a purchase or rationalize their decision to support fast fashion. Despite recognizing the detrimental effects of fast fashion on the environment, they persist in their consumption habits (Priporas et al., 2017).

It remains uncertain whether or not Generation Z will align their professed values with their purchasing decisions. The upcoming years will significantly impact this generation's behaviors, perceptions, and consumer profiles, particularly when it comes to their commitment to eco-friendly products. This period will also serve as a crucial test to determine the effectiveness of green marketing strategies. Current trends among Generation Z indicate a strong emphasis on sustainability, focusing on environmental values and promoting healthy consumption practices (Dragolea et al., 2023).

3.2. Perceptions of Sustainability in the Fashion Industry among Generation Z

Generation Z is more environmentally conscious and understands eco-friendly consumption practices better than previous generations (Choudhary, 2020). As highlighted by Özkan and Solmaz (2017), they believe the world needs to be “*better able to live*” which has driven their inclination towards embracing sustainable consumption behaviors. Moreover, this group strongly tends to prefer brands that share their values, particularly those that prioritize sustainability, while actively avoiding those that do not align with their sustainability ethos (Liu et al., 2023).

Despite their sensitivity to brand ethos, Generation Z exhibits less brand loyalty compared to their predecessors. They demand innovation and are drawn to visually appealing designs and convenient products, often conducting thorough research before making purchases (Özkan & Solmaz, 2017). The minimalist fashion trend, emphasizing the “*less is more*”

philosophy, has found favor among them, indicating a preference for durable, eco-friendly, and ethically produced items. Their buying choices are primarily influenced by personal values, environmental awareness, and social factors (Liu et al., 2023).

According to a PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report, Generation Z is notably emerging as a “*guardian of sustainability*” exhibiting a strong willingness to invest more in responsibly produced items. This trend underscores their commitment to environmental consciousness and influences their broader consumer habits. While online shopping platforms are popular among them, these platforms alone do not inherently prompt impulse purchases. Instead, the quality of the website, robust privacy protections, and the effectiveness of the online shopping services significantly shape their purchasing decisions. Moreover, the enjoyment derived from the online shopping experience is a key enhancer of impulse buying behavior among this demographic (Mazanec & Harantová., 2024).

Understanding Generation Z’s complex relationship with their purchasing habits is crucial to promoting sustainability in fashion. While profoundly engaged with environmental concerns, their desire for individuality and self-expression often draws them towards fast fashion brands. This dichotomy is highlighted by a survey from ThredUp, which shows Generation Z’s significant interest in second-hand items yet reveals their struggle to balance sustainable ideals with the allure of fast fashion’s diverse and trendy offerings. This challenge underscores the need for the fashion industry to offer unique, expressive, affordable options that align with this generation’s environmental values (Liu et al., 2023).

One sustainable practice that aligns with the needs and values of Generation Z is purchasing second-hand clothing, a key component of a circular economy that promotes the reuse of clothes. Despite some negative stereotypes associated with worn clothes, the second-hand market offers several advantages, including better prices and unique pieces, making it an attractive option for those seeking both individuality and sustainability (Mazanec & Harantová., 2024). Joshi and Rahman (2015) found that Generation Z’s preference for personal expression and practicality often leads them to choose second-hand clothing over new, sustainable items, primarily because second-hand stores provide high-end brands at lower prices, catering to their desire for trendy, budget-friendly fashion.

The second-hand clothing market is expected to grow by 18% by 2030, doubling the growth rate of fast fashion. This growth indicates a shift in consumer behavior and a potential reduction in the fashion industry's environmental impact. By promoting second-hand clothing as a viable, sustainable, and fashionable choice, the fashion industry can achieve a circular economy while meeting the desires of Generation Z for expressive and environmentally responsible fashion. This approach caters to their financial constraints and supports their strong inclination towards sustainability, demonstrating a balanced path forward in reducing the environmental footprint of fashion consumption (Mazanec & Harantová., 2024).

Studies have shown that Generation Z prefers quick and efficient shopping experiences, choosing straightforward transactions over the traditional, time-consuming processes commonly associated with second-hand purchases. This preference reflects a broader trend within this generation, which is to simplify their lives and reduce time-consuming activities. To attract Generation Z, second-hand markets must adjust by providing a more streamlined and efficient purchasing experience that aligns with these consumers' expectations and values (Kawulur et al., 2022).

In addition to these preferences for efficiency, prior research has highlighted several other factors that influence consumer attitudes and behaviors towards second-hand shopping. Key among these is the role of social motives, with the stigma and embarrassment associated with purchasing second-hand items standing out as significant barriers. Furthermore, concerns over low hygiene standards and second-hand products' uncertain origins and conditions further deter consumers. These challenges collectively impact the willingness to engage in the purchase of used goods, reflecting a complex interplay of psychological and practical considerations that shape consumer preferences and highlight the need for second-hand markets to address these concerns to attract better and satisfy Generation Z consumers (Calvo-Porrál et al., 2023).

Despite being aware of the barriers, Generation Z is strongly inclined towards sustainability and cost-effectiveness. This inclination is reflected in their support for platforms like Vinted, which leverages the circular economy in fashion by merging the desire for environmental responsibility with the necessity for financial viability. This generation's values align closely

with this approach, which emphasizes using innovative solutions to overcome traditional barriers (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023).

This generation represents a new kind of investor, exhibiting unique behaviors and tendencies distinct from older generations (Quetua et al., 2023). Despite these positive trends, a persistent gap remains between Generation Z's sustainable intentions and purchasing behaviors. Naderi & Van Steenburg (2018) highlight this disconnect, emphasizing the need for deeper integration of sustainable practices within the fashion industry to better align with their expectations. This gap underscores the challenges in converting positive attitudes towards eco-friendly fashion into consistent actions.

Significant global economic events like the pandemic have shaped Generation Z's perspectives on money and spending (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023). These experiences have likely reinforced their cautious approach to financial commitments and spending, underscoring the complex interplay between their sustainability aspirations and financial realities. Collectively, these factors suggest that while Generation Z is inclined towards sustainability, however, their ability to engage fully with sustainable fashion choices is heavily influenced by financial constraints and market accessibility.

Furthermore, the high expenses associated with sustainable products create a wider disparity between Generation Z's inclination towards sustainability and their actual purchasing behaviors. Sustainable fashion, which often comes with a higher price tag, faces challenges regarding accessibility and affordability, making it less attractive to budget-conscious consumers of this generation (Chen & Chai, 2010; Naderi & Van Steenburg, 2018; Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018).

Considering the added complexity of this issue, it is crucial to consider the financial dependence of many individuals in this generation. They often rely on their parents for economic support and lack a stable income source, which can significantly influence their purchasing decisions. Despite possessing substantial spending power, Generation Z has not fully capitalized on this potential in investing. Their financial constraints continue to shape their decision-making processes, highlighting that their reliance on parental support is a key factor affecting their investment behaviors (Quetua et al., 2023).

Despite financial challenges, Generation Z firmly commits to sustainability in its consumer behavior. They prioritize eco-friendly products, even if the price is higher, as a reflection of their dedication to environmental responsibility and concern for climate change (Le et al., 2020). Furthermore, this demographic's preference for brands that share their environmental values demonstrates their deep commitment to ethical consumption.

While many young consumers still opt for unsustainable products due to affordability and trendiness, policy changes may shift Generation Z towards more environmentally friendly apparel choices (Priporas et al., 2017; Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). By addressing barriers such as cost and improving accessibility, these changes can help align Generation Z's fashion preferences with their sustainability values while meeting their needs for affordability and style. This approach suggests a holistic strategy that harmonizes ethical considerations with consumer demands, fostering a sustainable fashion industry that resonates with Generation Z.

Moreover, Generation Z's approach to buying is heavily influenced by a blend of personal ethics, peer pressure, and digital engagement. Their attitudes towards green apparel are not only shaped by materialistic values but also by the prevailing social norms and perceived behavioral controls, enhancing their readiness to invest in sustainable clothing (Nguyen et al., 2019; Su et al., 2019). This intricate interplay of factors contributes to a complex decision-making framework that presents both challenges and opportunities for fashion brands aiming to appeal to this environmentally conscious demographic.

The social environment plays a significant role in shaping the purchasing decisions of Generation Z. The influence of friends, family, and peers is crucial in promoting sustainable purchasing behaviors. Studies by Djafarova & Fouts (2022) and Noor et al. (2017) demonstrate that recommendations from these social groups are highly effective in encouraging sustainable choices. The concept of "*social value*" in fashion is particularly persuasive among peers, significantly influencing the purchasing decisions of Generation Z (Van den Bergh & Pallini, 2018). This emphasis on social influence highlights the collective nature of their decision-making process and underscores the importance of community support in encouraging sustainable behaviors.

Young people across the globe are increasingly forming their identities influenced by the vast amount of information available on the internet, especially through social media. This trend is intensified by the rising tide of social change and the flood of often conflicting information they encounter online. Social media does not only shape their personal identities but also significantly influences their purchasing habits, underscoring their reliance on social influence (Van den Bergh & Pallini, 2018).

Furthermore, the digital media engagement of Generation Z significantly influences their buying behavior, which is a manifestation of their strong reliance on social influence. These individuals possess high self-esteem and confidence in their decisions, and therefore they tend to disregard traditional marketing methods and instead turn to social media influencers, such as celebrities and key opinion leaders (KOLs) for fashion guidance. Generation Z actively interacts with such influencers through personalized content, creating a two-way conversation beyond just passive consumption. This interaction indicates their deep association with digital platforms, where peer recommendations and authoritative voices play a vital role in shaping their fashion knowledge and choices (Van den Bergh & Pallini, 2018).

The influence of social media influencers on Generation Z's shopping habits is especially significant in sustainable fashion. These influencers are crucial intermediaries, connecting sustainable brands to young consumers. They showcase products and present them in a way that emphasizes shared ethical values and lifestyles. By strategically partnering with influencers who deeply resonate with their values, sustainable brands can increase Generation Z's receptiveness to sustainable product recommendations (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022).

Generation Z consumers are known for being proactive in using social media to keep up with trends and express their preferences for brands that align with their ethical beliefs. They are not passive consumers but actively engage with content reflecting their values, thereby amplifying their influence on the fashion industry. Brands must prioritize authenticity and relevance in their marketing efforts, as Generation Z tends to support products that align with their personal and communal ethical standards. This shift towards value-driven

consumption highlights the importance of engaging with influencers authentically representing a brand's ethical commitments and sustainability goals (Dabija et al., 2019).

The rise of social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok has led to the growth of influencer marketing. These platforms have allowed individuals to build a significant following and influence online, which has not gone unnoticed by brands. Brands collaborate with digital personalities to establish genuine connections with their target audience, particularly with the environmentally conscious Generation Z (Erwin et al., 2023; Okonkwo & Namkoisse, 2023).

Instagram's visual-centric platform is handy for fashion brands in influencing the buying process. Instagram provides an immersive experience that can trigger impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z. The platform creates enjoyable experiences, a crucial factor in impulsive buying behavior. This often results in consumers needing to bypass the traditional evaluation phase of decision-making (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

The potential impact of Generation Z in transforming consumption habits offers a unique opportunity for a significant shift in values, moving away from traditional material ownership towards environmentally-conscious purchasing. This generation, known for their individuality, sense of community, and search for identity, is poised to challenge societal norms and embrace sustainable lifestyles through their consumer choices (Liang et al., 2022).

By adopting green consumption practices, this generation strengthens their self-worth and contributes to a more significant cultural movement towards environmental responsibility. As the next group of global consumers mature, their inclination towards sustainable behavior will likely establish environmentally-friendly practices as a symbol of social status and prestige for future generations (Liang et al., 2022).

4. Conceptual Framework

The fashion industry is facing increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices due to its significant environmental and ethical impacts. With global issues such as climate change

and resource depletion becoming more pronounced, it is evident that a transition to more responsible practices is imperative.

Generation Z, known for its strong environmental awareness and demand for transparency, is emerging as a key driver of this change. As this generation's influence as consumers grows, it is essential for the fashion industry to align with their values and expectations.

This study seeks to explore how Generation Z perceives the concept of sustainability within the fashion industry. By leveraging Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this research aims to gain deeper insights into the psychological and social factors that influence sustainable fashion consumption among Generation Z. According to TPB, an individual's actions are influenced by their intention to carry out the behavior, which is shaped by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2020).

The research focuses on the key factors that directly influence Generation Z's intention to purchase sustainable fashion. These factors include:

1. Generation Z's Understanding and Commitment to Sustainability

Explores how Generation Z understands the concept of sustainability and their personal commitment to it. Their comprehension of environmental responsibility and ethical fashion practices significantly shapes their positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion.

2. Generation Z's Accessibility and Engagement with Sustainable Fashion

Examines how easily Generation Z can access sustainable fashion products. If they perceive that eco-friendly fashion is readily available, convenient, and easy to purchase, it increases their sense of control and strengthens their intention to engage sustainably.

3. Social Influences on Generation Z's Sustainable Fashion Choices

How social media, influencers, and peers influence Generation Z's fashion choices. If sustainability is promoted within their social circles and by influencers they follow,

this generation is more likely to feel socially compelled to adopt sustainable fashion behaviors.

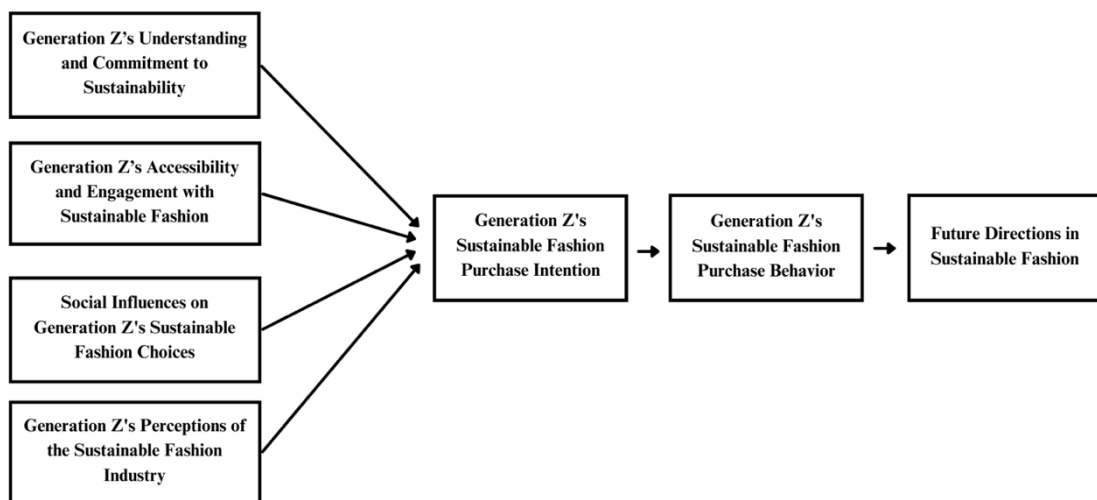
4. Generation Z's Perceptions of the Sustainable Fashion Industry

Focuses on the trust Generation Z places in fashion brands' sustainability claims. If they perceive that the industry is genuinely committed to sustainability and transparent in its practices, they will feel more confident in making informed and responsible fashion choices.

When these factors align, they significantly affect Generation Z's inclination to adopt sustainable behaviors. Once Generation Z has the intention to support sustainable fashion, this intention more easily translates into actual purchase behavior. In essence, when Generation Z holds positive attitudes, perceives social support, feels in control, and trusts the fashion industry, they are likelier to follow through with purchasing sustainable fashion. Their choices can potentially catalyze industry-wide changes and advocate for increased sustainability in the future. These actions will then shape the future of sustainable fashion, steering the trajectory of the fashion industry. Ultimately, the purchasing behaviors and preferences of Generation Z hold the potential to instigate industry changes and foster more sustainable practices in the future.

The following figure presents the Conceptual Model that summarizes this study:

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



Source: Own elaboration.

The insights gained will offer valuable guidance for both the fashion industry and academic research, helping to promote practices that align with the values of this influential consumer group.

Part II:

Empirical Study

Part II – Empirical Study

5. Methodology

5.1. Research relevance

This study seeks to explore Generation Z's perspectives on sustainability within the fashion industry. Given the sector's growing ethical and environmental concerns, it is imperative to understand the viewpoints of this demographic group, which is known for its emphasis on environmental consciousness and transparency.

As Generation Z gains more purchasing power, their well-documented commitment to environmental consciousness becomes crucial in shaping market trends. Understanding their perceptions on sustainability will enable the fashion industry to better align its strategies with the values of this influential consumer demographic, fostering a shift towards more sustainable consumption practices.

5.2. Research Question and Research Objectives

This study's research question is, *“How do Generation Z's perceptions of sustainability about the fashion industry influence their intentions and behaviors regarding sustainable fashion?”*.

Sub-Research Questions

- How does Generation Z understand and engage with the concept of sustainability in the fashion industry?
- What factors does Generation Z prioritize when selecting sustainable fashion products?
- What challenges and barriers prevent Generation Z from purchasing sustainable fashion, despite their positive intentions?

Research Objectives

- Investigate how Generation Z understands and engages with the concept of sustainability in the fashion industry.
- Identify and analyze the key factors that Generation Z prioritizes when selecting sustainable fashion products.
- Examine the challenges and barriers that prevent Generation Z from purchasing sustainable fashion, despite their positive intentions.

5.3. Research Design

In considering the most appropriate methodological approach for this study, three primary options emerge: quantitative methods, qualitative methods, and mixed methods. Each method has distinct characteristics and implications for how data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

Quantitative methods involve testing objective theories by analyzing the relationships between variables using statistical analysis. These methods aim to provide numerical representations of significant measures that can be applied to larger populations. On the other hand, qualitative methods are used to delve into and comprehend the meanings that individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem. This approach is ideal for interpreting the depth and complexity of perceptions as it embraces a constructivist worldview. Lastly, mixed methods are valuable when neither the quantitative nor qualitative approach alone is sufficient, or when combining the strengths of both methods provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2019).

To address the research question, *“How do Generation Z’s perceptions of sustainability about the fashion industry influence their intentions and behaviors regarding sustainable fashion?”* this study employs a qualitative research methodology using semi-structured individual interviews.

This methodological choice is driven by the need to delve deeply into consumer perceptions and motivations regarding sustainable fashion. The qualitative approach will facilitate an in-

depth exploration of how Generation Z defines and interacts with sustainable fashion concepts. This method will enable the researcher to gather detailed narratives and personal experiences that illuminate the underlying values and attitudes influencing Generation Z's fashion choices.

Using semi-structured individual interviews will provide the flexibility to delve deeply into individual perspectives while ensuring that all relevant aspects of the research questions are addressed comprehensively. This tailored approach ensures that the research captures the intricate and personal ways in which Generation Z consumers perceive and engage with sustainable fashion, providing valuable insights that can inform both academic understanding and industry practices (Jamshed, 2014).

The research adopts a cross-sectional study approach, wherein data is collected at a single point in time. This snapshot view will capture current perceptions and behaviors without the influence of temporal changes, offering a clear and specific understanding of the current landscape of Generation Z's sustainability perceptions in the fashion industry (Kesmodel, 2018).

5.4. Study Population and Sampling Procedures

The study employed purposive sampling as the primary sampling method. According to Etikan (2016), purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of participants based on specific characteristics directly relevant to the study's objectives. The researcher identifies key criteria for participation and selects individuals who possess the necessary knowledge or experience to provide valuable insights into the research topic.

This study focused on Portuguese individuals from Generation Z who demonstrated a strong interest in and commitment to both fashion and sustainability. This particular group was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of their unique perspectives, intentions, and attitudes toward sustainable fashion practices. Generation Z was selected as the primary focus of this research due to their growing influence on current consumer trends and their potential long-term impact on market behaviors, particularly in the context of sustainability. These individuals, who are considered future leaders and consumers, are facing urgent climate

challenges, underscoring the importance of this research. Their open-mindedness, level of education, and up-to-date knowledge of environmental issues make them the ideal population to study (Liu et al., 2022; Choudhary, 2020).

By targeting participants who met these criteria, the researcher ensured that each respondent could contribute valuable and relevant opinions, enhancing the richness and depth of the findings. The final sample consisted of twenty participants, aged between twenty and twenty-seven, who met all the inclusion criteria and actively participated in the study. This sample size was considered adequate to fully understand Generation Z's perceptions and behaviors regarding sustainable fashion.

5.5. Research strategy: semi-structured interviews

For the purpose of the study, one-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture the most pertinent and profound insights from individuals. A total of twenty interviews were planned, each designed to allow for an in-depth exploration of the participants' personal views and experiences related to sustainable fashion.

The interviews were conducted online, using videoconferencing tools to maximize accessibility and convenience for all participants. Each session lasted between 35 and 45 minutes and was audio-recorded, with the participant's consent. The interview format was semi-structured, with an interview guide containing open-ended questions formulated to elicit detailed responses regarding the participants' perceptions, motivations, and behaviors in the context of sustainable fashion.

After data collection, the interviews were transcribed to preserve the integrity of the participants' responses. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring patterns and themes within the data, enabling a systematic examination of how Generation Z's values and expectations shape their consumption habits and attitudes toward sustainability in the fashion industry.

5.6. Data Collection Procedures

Before conducting the interviews, a comprehensive interview script was developed based on the conceptual framework established in the literature review. This script thoroughly covered all relevant topics concerning Generation Z’s perspectives on sustainability in the fashion industry.

Table 2 presents the conceptual framework expressing the concepts encountered in the literature review that led to questions in the interview script.

Table 2: Conceptual Framework.

Concept	Questions	Sources
Definition and Awareness of Sustainability	<p><i>“How do you define sustainability?”</i></p> <p><i>“What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is important in today’s society?”</i></p> <p><i>“Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, how? Can you give examples?”</i></p> <p><i>“How actively do you incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?”</i></p> <p><i>“Do you think you need to be more educated about sustainability?”</i></p>	Brundtland (1987), Elkington (1997), Grénman et al. (2023), Smith (2020), Carvalho (2019).
Sustainability in the Fashion Industry	<p><i>“How often do you purchase sustainable fashion products compared to non-sustainable ones?”</i></p> <p><i>“What are the main factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than a passing trend?”</i></p>	Cervellon & Carey (2011), Henninger et al. (2016), Djafarova & Foots (2022), Joy et al. (2012), Fletcher (2010).

Concept	Questions	Sources
	<p><i>“Which fashion brands do you consider to be leaders in sustainable practices?”</i></p> <p><i>“What makes these leading brands stand out, in your opinion?”</i></p>	
<p>Generation Z Characteristics and Fashion Choices</p>	<p><i>“What are the main characteristics of your generation, in your opinion?”</i></p> <p><i>“How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?”</i></p> <p><i>“What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?”</i></p> <p><i>“How can Generation Z’s fashion preferences lead to lasting changes in the fashion industry?”</i></p>	<p>Grénman et al. (2023), Henninger et al. (2016), Joy et al. (2012), Elkington (1997).</p>
<p>Digital Behavior and Communication Preferences of Generation Z in the Fashion Industry</p>	<p><i>“How often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?”</i></p> <p><i>“How do social networks influence your fashion choices?”</i></p> <p><i>“How do social media campaigns promoting sustainability influence your perception of fashion brands?”</i></p> <p><i>“Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how? Can you give examples?”</i></p> <p><i>“How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?”</i></p> <p><i>“Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?”</i></p>	<p>LADbible Group (2022), Siagian & Yuliana (2023), Djafarova & Bowes (2021), Henninger et al. (2016), Fazith & Nithya (2023).</p>

Concept	Questions	Sources
<p>Perceptions of sustainability in the fashion industry among Generation Z</p>	<p><i>“What are your thoughts on the current sustainability efforts in the fashion industry? Can you provide some examples?”</i></p> <p><i>“How can we balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?”</i></p> <p><i>“Which fashion brands do you think are aligned with your sustainability values? Justify.”</i></p> <p><i>“Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justify.”</i></p> <p><i>“What changes do you think are necessary in the fashion industry to better meet Generation Z's expectations of sustainability?”</i></p>	<p>Choudhary (2020), Fu & Ren (2023), Grénman et al. (2023), Liu et al. (2023), Gomes et al. (2023), Dragolea et al. (2023)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Once the interview guide was completed, a pre-test interview was conducted on July 4, 2024, with a 25-year-old female from Abrantes, currently living in Lisbon. She holds a master’s degree in Sociology from ISCTE and is actively engaged in incorporating sustainable practices into her daily life. The interview lasted 35 minutes.

The pre-test allowed the researcher to verify that the script was comprehensive, clear, and appropriately ordered. The only adjustment made was moving the question *“Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If yes, in what way? Can you give examples?”* to the first section to improve the conversation’s flow. Given the success and relevance of the pre-test, it was included as the first of the twenty planned interviews for the study.

The interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams between July 4 and July 19, 2024, each lasting between 35 and 45 minutes. The choice of Microsoft Teams facilitated the recording and storage of both video and audio, ensuring a comprehensive record of each session. Participants, all aged between twenty and twenty-seven, without dependents, living in

Portugal, were chosen based on their background in sustainability, either through their education, professional experience, or personal practices. While some participants are actively engaged in sustainable practices and projects, others are keen to improve their knowledge and practices related to sustainability.

Table 3 presents the characteristics of the participants.

Table 3: Characteristics of the participants.

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Occupation	Selection Criteria
Interviewee 1	25	F	Research fellow on a project at Universidade Lusófona.	Actively engaged in incorporating sustainable practices into her daily life.
Interviewee 2	23	F	Master's Student in Communication and Digital Transformation at Universidade Católica Portuguesa.	Sustainability is a central theme in her thesis.
Interviewee 3	22	F	Master's Student in Strategic Communication at Nova FCSH.	Has participated in various sustainability-focused events, enhancing her knowledge and commitment to the topic.
Interviewee 4	22	M	Management Intern at Emma - The Sleep Company.	Worked on consultancy projects where sustainability was a prominent aspect.

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Occupation	Selection Criteria
Interviewee 5	25	F	Business consultant at Deloitte in Lisbon.	Supports minimalism and conscious consumption, prioritizing necessary purchases and avoiding excess.
Interviewee 6	20	F	Bachelor's Student in Graphic Design at Escola Superior de Artes e Design.	Demonstrates a strong concern for the environment and actively integrates sustainable practices into her daily life.
Interviewee 7	24	M	Operational manager at a Portuguese hospitality firm.	Actively incorporates sustainable practices into his professional work and daily routine, demonstrating dedication to sustainability.
Interviewee 8	22	F	Master's Student in Management with a focus on Marketing at Nova School of Business and Economics.	Her interest in the environment, adventure, and sports has heightened her awareness of sustainability issues and inspired her to adopt more eco-conscious practices.
Interviewee 9	24	F	Solution Expert at VML MAP.	Demonstrates a conscious effort to be sustainable by making small changes to create less waste in her daily routine.

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Occupation	Selection Criteria
Interviewee 10	24	F	Account and Social Media Manager Trainee at Boca a Boca.	Consistently incorporates sustainable practices into her daily routine and is committed to inspiring others to embrace these habits.
Interviewee 11	22	F	Master's Student in Biomedical Engineering at the NOVA School of Science and Technology.	Integrates sustainable habits into her everyday routine and demonstrates enthusiasm for expanding her knowledge.
Interviewee 12	23	F	Marketing trainee at Bel.	Works for a sustainability-focused company and aims to deepen her understanding of sustainable practices.
Interviewee 13	27	M	Master's student in International Economics and European Studies at Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão, and working in the banking area.	Dedicated to sustainability and environmental responsibility, always seeking to learn more and improve sustainable practices.
Interviewee 14	25	F	Consultant at Deloitte in Lisbon.	Conscious of both environmental and social issues, making her an advocate for sustainable practices.

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Occupation	Selection Criteria
Interviewee 15	22	F	Master's Student in Communication Sciences at UCP Faculty of Human Sciences.	Values learning more about sustainability to better understand the impact of her actions and to find new, effective practices.
Interviewee 16	23	F	Strategic Consultant at Deloitte in Lisbon.	Incorporates sustainable practices into her daily life but is eager to learn more about sustainability.
Interviewee 17	23	F	Master's Student in Communication Sciences at UCP Faculty of Human Sciences.	Work as a marketing and communication manager for a company that supplies sustainable knitwear to the textile industry. This role has heightened her awareness of environmental issues related to the industry.
Interviewee 18	22	F	Bachelor's Student in Nutrition Sciences at Universidade Lusófona.	Concerned about the environment and is eager to learn more about sustainability.
Interviewee 19	23	F	Recently graduated with a master's degree in Finance from Nova School of Business and Economics.	Eager to learn more about sustainability and improve her sustainable actions.

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Occupation	Selection Criteria
Interviewee 20	24	M	Project manager at an advertising company.	Aware and supportive of sustainable practices in his personal life.

Source: Own elaboration.

Participants were carefully selected and contacted well in advance to ensure their availability and willingness to participate. During this initial communication, the study’s objectives, interview procedures, expected duration, and reasons for their selection were clearly explained. Each participant received an Informed Consent form via email, which they reviewed and agreed to before the interview. This early communication was vital in building trust, ensuring that participants felt informed and comfortable, and demonstrating professionalism, which contributed to the research’s overall success (Carmo & Ferreira, 1998; Ellis et al., 2011).

Please see appendix A for the Informed Consent.

The interview guide was organized into five sections to explore Generation Z’s views on sustainable fashion. The first section covered their understanding of sustainability. The second focused on their perceptions of sustainability in the fashion industry. The third examined how Generation Z’s characteristics influence their sustainable fashion choices and the challenges they face. The fourth section explored the role of digital platforms and social media in shaping their fashion decisions. Finally, the fifth section gathered their opinions on the fashion industry’s sustainability efforts and necessary changes to meet their values.

Please see appendix B for the full Interview Script.

This detailed approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the topics, leaving no aspect unexplored. The interview was designed to promote an organic and dynamic dialogue, allowing for a thorough exploration of the participant’s thoughts and beliefs, resulting in more nuanced and detailed insights. While prepared with questions, they remained flexible, allowing the interview to progress naturally.

During the interview, the researcher clearly explained the purpose of the study to the interviewees and urged them to be completely open. The interviewee was reassured that there would be no judgment regarding their ecological practices and that the goal was to better understand their purchasing habits and perceptions.

This diverse group ensures that the study captures a wide range of experiences and attitudes, reflecting the diversity within Generation Z regarding environmental consciousness. By selecting participants who are deeply concerned with sustainability, the research aims to gather comprehensive and relevant opinions on how Generation Z perceives and practices sustainable fashion.

All interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's explicit permission, as Yin (2018) recommended, to ensure accurate transcription of the discussions. To save time, the audio and video recording feature of Microsoft Teams was used. While this method allowed for more efficient use of time, subsequent data cleaning was necessary to correct transcription errors and ensure text accuracy.

Please see appendix C for the full-transcriptions of all interviews.

5.7. Data Analysis procedures

The researcher carefully recorded and transcribed each interview using established methods. The data analysis used a conceptual model theoretical approach to organize and interpret the findings. This approach was combined with thematic analysis, following the qualitative methods outlined by Scharp and Sanders (2019) to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data.

The first step in the analysis was data familiarization, which involved multiple readings of the interview transcripts to ensure a deep understanding of the content. This was followed by initial coding, where specific text sections were systematically coded and labelled according to the themes identified in the conceptual model. This manual coding process allowed for careful consideration of the data, facilitating the development of complex

thematic relationships and ensuring the rigorous application of the conceptual model throughout (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

After coding, the process of theme identification was carried out. Related codes were grouped into broader themes that aligned with the conceptual model. A meticulous review of the themes was conducted to ensure their accuracy and coherence, refining them as necessary. The next step involved defining and naming these themes, providing clear and concise definitions that encapsulated the essence of the patterns identified. In the final reporting phase, examples from the interviews were used to illustrate each theme, aligning the report with the conceptual model and discussing the themes' relevance to Generation Z's sustainable fashion purchase behavior (Scharp & Sanders, 2019).

Based on the qualitative techniques described by Scharp and Sanders (2019), the thematic analysis provided a strong foundation for identifying and comprehending the main patterns within the data. This approach facilitated a thorough examination of the psychological and social influences affecting Generation Z's attitudes and decisions related to sustainable fashion.

Consequently, the findings were both empirically grounded and theoretically informed, making significant contributions to the evolving discourse on sustainable fashion within the context of Generation Z. This research enhances the understanding of how Generation Z's values and behaviors are influencing the future of sustainable practices in the fashion industry, providing actionable insights for both academics and industry professionals.

5.8. Ethical considerations

Participants were given an informed consent form, allowing them to decide independently about participating in the interview. Given that the topics were non-sensitive, the questions were formulated to foster an informal and conversational setting, thereby ensuring that participants felt at ease and comfortable. To mitigate potential biases and prevent influencing responses, the questions were deliberately framed in a neutral and objective manner.

6. Results Presentation and Discussion

This chapter discusses the results obtained from interviews with Generation Z participants, focusing on their understanding, commitment, and engagement with sustainability and sustainable fashion. The aim is to present the findings and emerging subcategories resulting from the content analysis of the interviews conducted to understand Generation Z individuals regarding their perceptions of and engagement with sustainable fashion. The researcher thoroughly reviewed all interviews, categorized the content, and analyzed the behaviors exhibited by the interviewees. From this analysis, seven distinct themes emerged, corresponding to the seven categories:

1. Generation Z's Understanding and Commitment to Sustainability;
2. Generation Z's Engagement with Sustainable Fashion;
3. Social Influences in Shaping Sustainable Fashion Choices;
4. Generation Z's Priorities in Sustainable Fashion;
5. Generation Z's Sustainable Fashion Purchase Intentions;
6. Generation Z Sustainable Fashion Purchase Behavior;
7. Future Directions in Sustainable Fashion.

6.1. Generation Z's Understanding and Commitment to Sustainability

6.1.1. Conceptualization of Sustainability

Defining Sustainability and Its Importance

For Generation Z, sustainability is a fundamental principle that shapes their approach to environmental challenges. The interviewees provided insightful definitions and explanations of sustainability:

“I think sustainability is the ability to meet our current needs without compromising the needs of future generations” (Interviewee 16).

“Sustainability implies meeting the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Interviewee 2).

Sustainability is viewed as both an ethical and practical responsibility to ensure future generations have access to resources. It involves adopting sustainable practices to protect the environment and prevent resource depletion. There’s also an emphasis on avoiding overconsumption and promoting balanced use, ensuring that today’s actions do not negatively impact the future.

“It is an attitude that aims for the good of all – for us, for the planet – ensuring that our actions do not compromise future generations’ access to the resources we currently have” (Interviewee 6).

“Sustainability is crucial to ensure the longevity of the resources we have at our disposal and to minimize the negative impact on future generations. Without sustainable practices, we risk depleting the planet’s resources” (Interviewee 20).

“Sustainability is essential to ensure that future generations do not suffer the consequences of our current actions. It involves preventing overconsumption and promoting a more balanced use of resources” (Interviewee 11).

Moreover, sustainability is seen as a set of daily practices with long-term impact, integrated into various aspects of life:

“Sustainability is defined as a set of small actions with a long-term result. It is present in all fields of our lives; from the clothes we wear to the food we eat” (Interviewee 9).

Beyond personal practices, the importance of sustainability is reflected in various perspectives highlighting its role in environmental preservation, economic stability, and social equity. These dimensions demonstrate that Generation Z sees sustainability as a holistic concept encompassing multiple areas of life and society.

“Sustainability also addresses environmental quality and economic efficiency, encouraging innovative solutions that can bring long-term benefits to society” (Interviewee 11).

“Sustainability is important because it combats climate change, improves health and well-being, strengthens the economy, and promotes social justice, ensuring a balanced future for everyone” (Interviewee 9).

These excerpts demonstrate the wide-ranging importance of sustainability, from conserving finite resources to promoting social and economic equity. Its crucial role in combating climate change underscores its significance and captures the attention of an increasingly concerned audience. Moreover, sustainability is viewed as an urgent necessity due to the damage already caused by neglecting these principles. The growing awareness of environmental degradation reinforces the need for immediate action to prevent further ecological disasters.

“We are realizing that sustainability is not just an important topic but an urgent necessity due to the significant damage caused by its absence. Our appreciation for sustainability arises largely from the need to mitigate the damage already done and to avoid future environmental disasters” (Interviewee 7).

Adopting sustainable practices is urgent, as they are essential to mitigating the damage already caused by unsustainable behaviors and preventing future environmental crises. Ultimately, sustainability is viewed as the foundation for building a more balanced and resilient future for all.

Ethical Dimensions and Holistic Perspectives

Beyond environmental concerns, many interviewees framed sustainability within a broader ethical and systemic context, acknowledging its social and economic dimensions as equally vital.

Several interviewees expanded the concept of sustainability to include environmental concerns and social and economic dimensions. This holistic perspective acknowledges the interconnectedness of these areas and the necessity to address them collectively.

“Sustainability is the ability to meet our needs in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own, focusing on three areas: social, economic, and environmental” (Interviewee 12).

“Sustainability is a concept that encompasses environmental, social, and economic responsibility” (Interviewee 2).

“So, I think sustainability has various levels and encompasses various factors. We often associate sustainability with the environment, but in my opinion, sustainability also includes social and economic dimensions” (Interviewee 14).

“Sustainability, therefore, involves adopting practices that protect the environment and promote social and economic well-being, from daily consumer actions to business policies that improve our relationship with the planet” (Interviewee 3).

In essence, Generation Z’s perception of sustainability is fundamentally rooted in practical and moral considerations. This dynamic and multifaceted concept encompasses environmental, social, and economic dimensions. Rather than viewing sustainability as a final objective, this generation sees it as an ongoing process that requires continual effort and collective commitment to preserve the planet for future generations.

6.1.2. Education's Role in Shaping Sustainability Mindsets

Early Education and Continuous Learning

Education plays a crucial role in shaping Generation Z’s understanding of sustainability. More than raising awareness, it equips individuals with the practical skills necessary to make responsible choices in everyday life. Many interviewees emphasized the importance of

introducing sustainability early in the education system, through curricula that combine theoretical knowledge with actionable practices:

“Yes, I think the theme of sustainability is quite well-known among the youth of our generation. However, it is crucial to have more information on sustainable practices applicable to our daily lives. Sustainability should be more integrated into school curricula, with teachers and educators implementing daily practices” (Interviewee 3).

Additionally, the evolving nature of sustainability demands that education keeps pace with emerging technologies and best practices. One interviewee highlights the importance of staying informed:

“Sustainability is a constantly evolving field, with new technologies and practices emerging regularly. Having more education on these topics can help us adopt these innovations and continually improve our actions for the environment. Therefore, I believe more education and training on sustainability are always welcome, both to enhance the knowledge we already have and to discover new ways to be more sustainable in our daily lives” (Interviewee 5).

This viewpoint emphasizes that sustainability is a dynamic field where ongoing education is vital for staying informed about new technologies and best practices. Continuous learning is necessary to adapt to these changes and improve sustainable practices over time.

Many participants pointed out the need for a more profound and comprehensive understanding of what it means to be sustainable. While common practices such as recycling are widely recognized, sustainability goes far beyond these actions.

“I believe we need more education and clarity on what it means to be sustainable. Often, we hear about recycling and reducing plastic use, but sustainability goes far beyond that. It is necessary to rethink all our choices and understand the full impact of our actions. So, it's not just about me, but about us as a society” (Interviewee 6).

This highlights an education gap where there is a need for deeper insights into the long-term and broader implications of sustainability, touching on all aspects of daily life. Another

interviewee supports this view by emphasizing the importance of education from both formal and societal influences:

“I believe that both education from school and social pressure are important to promote sustainability. More education and training from an early age on sustainability are always welcome, both to improve the knowledge we already have and to discover new ways to be more sustainable in our daily lives” (Interviewee 2).

This shows that beyond formal education, external societal influences, such as social pressure and cultural norms, also play a significant role in shaping sustainable behaviors.

The importance of practical training in sustainability, shows that there is a need for more hands-on guidance on how individuals can make a tangible difference in their everyday lives.

“I believe that there should be more practical training on how we can contribute to a more sustainable world in our daily lives. I feel a lack of guidance on how I can make a difference in a concrete way” (Interviewee 16).

This highlights a key insight: despite high levels of awareness, Generation Z still seeks clearer, actionable steps to translate knowledge into impactful behavior.

Finally, continuous education was repeatedly emphasized as essential to maintaining motivation, staying updated, and fostering long-term engagement with sustainability:

“Continuous education helps us maintain awareness and motivation to act responsibly, as well as keep us updated on innovations and best practices in the field” (Interviewee 15).

“It is crucial that there is ongoing education on sustainability” (Interviewee 8).

These citations underscore the ongoing need for education that evolves with the sustainability field. Learning once is not enough; individuals must be provided with opportunities for continuous learning to stay engaged and informed.

6.1.3. The Influence of Climate Change on Environmental Awareness

Climate Change as a Primary Motivator for Sustainable Practices

The interview responses reveal that Generation Z is deeply motivated to adopt sustainable practices largely because of the growing awareness of climate change. For this generation, climate change is not a distant or abstract issue - it is a pressing concern that drives their commitment to sustainability. The interviewees consistently acknowledged the profound impacts climate change already has on the planet and future generations, making it a key reason for embracing environmentally responsible behaviors.

Several interviewees emphasized the urgent need for sustainability in response to the visible and tangible impacts of climate change. They noted that the increasing visibility of these effects—such as rising global temperatures, natural disasters, and deforestation—has made the need for sustainable actions more immediate and undeniable. This growing recognition of climate change’s consequences has fueled a more profound commitment to sustainability within Generation Z, motivating individuals to act before it is too late.

“So, of course, sustainability is extremely important. Firstly, due to climate change and the impacts it has on the planet” (Interviewee 6).

“We are increasingly witnessing a greater concern for sustainable practices due to climate change and its devastating effects” (Interviewee 3).

“Sustainability is very important, mainly due to the climate change that we are all already feeling. If we don't act while we have time, we will regret it” (Interviewee 15).

As environmental changes become more evident, they drive a greater sense of urgency and responsibility to adopt sustainable practices. For many, the direct experience of phenomena like extreme weather, wildfires, and ecosystem destruction has transformed climate change from a future threat to an immediate and personal challenge that demands action.

As these consequences become more apparent, they serve as powerful reminders of the need for sustainable actions, leading to a broader recognition of the importance of environmental responsibility within society. This heightened awareness is driving sustainability to become a more prominent and urgent topic of conversation, both in personal lives and in public discussions.

“We feel more of the negative effects of climate change, such as ice melt, global warming, fires, and deforestation” (Interviewee 7).

“We are starting to see the consequences, especially with climate change, which explains why sustainability has become a more talked-about topic” (Interviewee 5).

The growing awareness of climate change's impacts is also driving shifts in markets, as consumers increasingly seek out environmentally responsible options.

6.1.4. The COVID-19 Pandemic's Influence on Environmental Awareness

Environmental Reflection During the Pandemic

While climate change has emerged as a primary driver of environmental action, the COVID-19 pandemic also played a significant role in reshaping Generation Z's environmental awareness. The sudden decrease in global activities – such as travel, industrial production, and commuting – led to visible environmental improvements. Moreover, many have witnessed changes in their own behaviors and societal attitudes toward environmental conservation during this time.

“I noticed a significant reduction in pollution levels since there were no flights, fewer cars on the road, and industrial activity was greatly reduced. This forced pause made me realize how much our daily activities contribute to pollution. The pandemic was a moment of reflection that led many of us to value environmental protection more and to seek more eco-friendly alternatives in our consumer choices” (Interviewee 2).

“The pandemic helped me realize that we must produce and consume more consciously and responsibly. This period emphasized the need to rethink our

consumption model. We saw that the forced pause led to improved air quality and reduced pollution, which made us reflect on the environmental costs of continuing to live in the same culture of excessive consumption” (Interviewee 4).

These reflections demonstrate how the drastic reduction in pollution during the lockdown served as a powerful reminder of the environmental impact of modern lifestyles. For some, it offered proof that substantial environmental progress is possible when collective action is taken:

“I remember that right after the first lockdown, one of the first news reports I saw was about how carbon emissions drastically decreased due to the reduction in flights and other activities. It made me think that if everyone were committed, we could really achieve important environmental goals. The pandemic showed that significant changes are possible when there is a collective effort” (Interviewee 1).

Such observations strengthened the belief that environmental transformation is achievable, and that daily behaviours, when practiced collectively, can produce meaningful change.

Behavioral Changes Triggered by the Pandemic

For many interviewees, the pandemic also triggered a period of personal introspection, leading to long-lasting behavioural changes. The extended time at home encouraged individuals to re-evaluate their consumption habits and embrace more mindful lifestyles:

“During the lockdown, I spent a lot of time at home and started organizing. I realized that I didn't use half of the things I had and that I was a consumerist. This made me rethink my consumption habits” (Interviewee 10).

This moment of self-reflection triggered a shift toward more minimalistic and thoughtful consumption habits, prioritizing necessity over excess. The pandemic provided a space for people to recognize how much they had accumulated and encouraged a move towards reducing unnecessary consumption.

“During the lockdown, I spent more time online and on social media, which deepened my interest in sustainability. I learned various tips to be more sustainable at home,

many of which I still practice today. For example, I implemented a more efficient recycling system at home, and this period of reflection was crucial for consolidating my commitment to sustainability, also influencing my family” (Interviewee 15).

For others, the increased time spent online led to a greater engagement with sustainability. Social media and online communities offer abundant information and resources on how to live more sustainably. The ability to share and learn through digital platforms was an important factor in reinforcing sustainability values during the lockdown.

“During the lockdown, there was a reduction in pollution and consumption, which showed that if we want to, we can adopt more sustainable practices. It also increased my awareness of the importance of reusing and recycling” (Interviewee 20).

The lockdown highlighted the importance of reusing and recycling, offering a glimpse of what could be achieved with the widespread adoption of sustainable practices. It reinforced the idea that sustainable living is not only possible but essential for reducing environmental impact.

“For me personally, the pandemic reinforced the importance of adopting more sustainable practices. I saw the need to reduce excessive consumption and focus on more conscious choices. For example, I became even stricter about avoiding products with unnecessary packaging and choosing reusable alternatives. Additionally, the lockdown period made me value smaller brands more, leading me to choose local businesses and markets where the products tend to have less environmental impact and where my support could make a greater difference” (Interviewee 6).

These excerpts illustrate how the pandemic served as a period of reflection and realization for many individuals, leading to a greater emphasis on sustainability and the adoption of more environmentally conscious behaviors.

6.2. Generation Z's Engagement with Sustainable Fashion

6.2.1. Daily Sustainable Practices

Commitment to Recycling, Reusing and Reducing Consumption

Generation Z's approach to sustainable fashion extends beyond the clothes they wear - it encompasses their broader commitment to daily sustainable practices. This generation demonstrates strong engagement with recycling, reusing, and reducing consumption as part of their ethical approach to fashion and environmental responsibility. These practices are seen as essential for minimizing waste, reducing environmental impact, and fostering a more conscious consumer culture.

Many interviewees expressed their dedication to recycling and reusing materials as key components of their sustainable lifestyles. They highlighted their efforts to separate waste, repurpose items, and avoid unnecessary purchases, reflecting a consistent commitment to sustainability in everyday life. These behaviors underline their sense of responsibility towards the environment and emphasize the role of individual actions in protecting the planet.

"I try to recycle and reuse whenever possible. I also avoid consumerist behaviors, focusing on buying only what is necessary" (Interviewee 13).

"I recycle daily at home and seek to repurpose items until they are truly unusable. Additionally, I am a conscious buyer, avoiding impulsive and unnecessary purchases" (Interviewee 20).

"I also recycle at home, separating recyclable waste and ensuring it is properly directed for recycling" (Interviewee 2).

"I practice recycling, reusing objects, and avoiding waste" (Interviewee 17).

"I practice recycling at home, separating plastics, papers, glass, and metals. I use reusable bags for shopping and choose products with eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging" (Interviewee 11).

These statements reflect Generation Z's dedication to sustainability through daily actions such as recycling, reusing, and reducing consumption, which are grounded in strong ethical values and a sense of environmental responsibility.

Minimizing Reliance on Single-Use Products

In line with their commitment to reducing waste, Generation Z is also actively seeking ways to minimize their reliance on single-use products. As a result, many are adopting reusable and eco-friendly alternatives, integrating sustainable solutions into their daily lives:

“Instead of using disposable cotton pads for removing makeup, I created reusable cloth pads that I wash in the machine, thus reducing waste” (Interviewee 2).

“Recently, I started using solid shampoo and look for creams and products that offer refill options, instead of new packaging” (Interviewee 1).

“I switched from paper napkins to cloth napkins and from liquid shampoos to solid ones. I also use a menstrual cup instead of disposable sanitary pads” (Interviewee 6).

These examples illustrate the proactive steps Generation Z takes to reduce its environmental impact. Opting for reusable alternatives such as cloth napkins, solid shampoos, and menstrual cups contribute to a more significant movement toward sustainability.

This generation understands that reducing the use of disposable materials can lead to significant environmental benefits by decreasing waste and lessening the demand for single-use products.

Optimizing Resource Utilization

Generation Z is adopting different strategies to reduce waste and increase efficiency, especially regarding water and energy consumption. These efforts show a deliberate and thoughtful approach to preserving limited resources, highlighting Generation Z's dedication to responsible resource management. During interviews, participants discussed various strategies to minimize resource usage:

“I try to save water as much as possible, for example, by taking shorter showers and turning off the tap when not in use. I also wash dishes by hand and recycle all recyclable materials” (Interviewee 9).

“I use rainwater or bath water to flush the toilet, wash dishes with the tap closed, and try to run the dishwasher during off-peak energy hours” (Interviewee 6).

“I aim to optimize water consumption, such as taking showers in succession to avoid wasting water heating. Recently, my family installed solar panels at home for water heating, reducing the consumption of non-renewable electricity. Additionally, my father has a garden and avoids using pesticides, opting for natural methods to control pests” (Interviewee 1).

“I try to save water as much as possible, for example, by turning off the tap while brushing my teeth and taking efficient showers. In washing dishes, I avoid wasting water, especially since I don’t have a dishwasher at the moment. Regarding energy, I strive to be conscious of usage by turning off devices that are not in use and opting for energy-efficient light bulbs” (Interviewee 4).

“I try to save water whenever I can, such as using the water while you are heating up for the bath to water the plants” (Interviewee 14).

These citations highlight efforts to improve resource management, reduce waste, and enhance environmental sustainability.

Choosing Sustainable Food Options

In addition to managing water and energy, many members of Generation Z are also mindful of their environmental impact when it comes to food consumption. Interviewees emphasized the importance of reducing waste, supporting local economies, and minimizing the ecological footprint of their diets by choosing sustainably sourced food. This focus on sustainability in food consumption reflects a growing trend toward mindful eating and eco-conscious decision-making.

“I make conscious choices in my diet, opting for local and sustainably sourced products, and avoiding food waste” (Interviewee 4).

“I also try to reduce plastic consumption and prefer to buy fruits and vegetables at local markets, which have a smaller ecological footprint compared to imported products from large commercial areas” (Interviewee 15).

“When I go to the supermarket, I avoid products with plastic packaging and prefer to buy food at markets where the products are not visually selected and usually come without unnecessary packaging” (Interviewee 6).

These mindful choices effectively reduce the environmental impact of food production and consumption. It reflects their commitment to supporting environmental sustainability and local economies.

Adopting Sustainable Transportation Options

Interviewees also emphasized the importance of making thoughtful transportation choices for a sustainable lifestyle. Opting for sustainable transportation methods is a valuable way for individuals to reduce their carbon footprint. These actions show a dedicated effort to reduce the environmental impact of daily travel and contribute significantly to broader sustainability initiatives.

“I often use public transportation, such as buses and the metro, to reduce my carbon footprint and minimize car use. I have also reduced my meat consumption, opting for a more plant-based diet, which has a positive impact on the environment. Additionally, I try to buy second-hand clothes or from sustainable brands, supporting circular fashion and reducing waste” (Interviewee 3).

“Additionally, I use public transportation whenever possible. If I need to go to Lisbon or meet a client, I prefer to use public transport to avoid driving into the city” (Interviewee 10).

“In my own life, I try to use public transportation as much as possible and avoid using the car for very short trips” (Interviewee 1).

"In terms of transportation, I consider myself one of the greenest people I know. I ride my bike every day to almost all destinations. Living in Amsterdam, I stopped using a car because I don't own one, and public transportation is more expensive" (Interviewee 4).

Many interviewees prioritize public transportation, cycling, and other sustainable travel methods to reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to a healthier environment. Their mindful transportation choices serve as a model for others who seek to make a positive environmental impact through their daily activities.

6.2.2. Shopping Habits and Preferences

Preference for In-Store Shopping

Many Generation Z consumers have a strong inclination to shop in physical stores rather than online. This preference arises from their desire to inspect, touch, and try on clothes before purchasing. The hands-on experience of in-store shopping is crucial to them as it ensures that the items fit well and meet their expectations.

The main reason given for favoring physical stores is the ability to try on clothes to ensure they fit correctly and meet expectations:

"Yes, I prefer to buy clothes in physical stores. The main reason is that, online, we cannot try on the clothes. Trying on the item is essential to know if we are making a good purchase because we need to see if the clothes fit well" (Interviewee 6).

"I prefer to buy in physical stores and research online. I like to see and try on clothes before buying because what looks nice online often doesn't fit well on my body. To avoid this disappointment, I research online and then go to the store to decide" (Interviewee 12).

"I prefer to shop in physical stores to try on clothes. I don't shop for clothes frequently, so I take some time to see and try on items calmly. I start shopping online more when I already have an affinity with the brand and know the sizes and pieces, which makes shopping easier" (Interviewee 13).

Moreover, customer service and practical aspects also contribute to this preference. Personalized assistance in physical stores helps consumers make more informed choices, and avoiding returns and exchanges adds convenience. Several interviewees emphasize these aspects:

“Customer service in physical stores can help make a more informed decision about what to buy. So, I prefer physical stores” (Interviewee 3).

“I prefer to buy in physical stores because I can try on the pieces and ensure they fit well. Additionally, it avoids the need for returns and exchanges, which is more practical and sustainable” (Interviewee 20).

These citations highlight the importance of avoiding online shopping disappointments by trying clothes on in-store after conducting online research. Additionally, they emphasize the role of customer service in physical stores in aiding informed purchasing decisions.

The Sensory Experience and Immediate Satisfaction

Many respondents value the tactile experience and immediate gratification that physical stores offer, which online shopping cannot provide.

Consumers appreciate the opportunity to try on clothes, feel the fabrics, and assess the quality firsthand. This direct interaction helps them make more confident purchasing decisions and avoids the delays associated with online shopping.

“I like to be able to try on clothes, feel the fabrics, and see the quality firsthand. Additionally, I can take the item home immediately, without having to wait for shipping, which can take several days. Therefore, despite the advantages of online shopping, the experience of shopping in physical stores is something I value more” (Interviewee 15).

Similarly, the immediate gratification of taking a purchase home right away enhances the appeal of physical stores. Consumers can leave the store with their items immediately rather than waiting for a delivery.

“Yes, I prefer to shop in physical stores over online. I only buy online as a last resort. I enjoy going to physical stores because I can try on clothes and feel the fabrics. I prefer to know exactly how the clothes fit me before purchasing, and I can do that instantly in the stores” (Interviewee 2).

The ability to assess the quality of products directly in-store is another significant advantage. Consumers can see the fabric quality, check the details of the product, and benefit from personalized customer service, which helps them make better-informed decisions. This on-the-spot evaluation reduces the risk of disappointment and returns.

“In physical stores, I can see the quality of the fabric and the details of the product. Additionally, the customer service in physical stores can help me make a more informed decision about what to buy. The fact that I can take the item home immediately is also a plus” (Interviewee 3).

“When I shop in person, I can try the product, verify its quality, and evaluate how it feels. This helps me make a more accurate purchasing decision. Therefore, I prefer shopping in physical stores for the assurance it provides regarding product quality, which is important to me” (Interviewee 7).

Overall, the tactile experience of trying on clothes and assessing their texture and quality reinforces the value of physical shopping. This experience is essential for ensuring a good fit and making informed decisions, highlighting why many consumers still prefer shopping in physical stores.

6.2.3. Barriers to Adopting Sustainable Fashion

Overcoming The Fast Fashion Temptation

Despite Generation Z’s increasing awareness and concern for sustainability, fast fashion significantly influences their purchasing decisions. Its convenience, variety, and affordability remain vital factors that make it an appealing option, even for those mindful of its adverse environmental and ethical impacts.

Many young consumers need help to balance their desire for sustainability and their financial constraints, often leading them to prioritize fast fashion over more sustainable alternatives. Although many express their intention to make environmentally friendly choices, the allure of trendy yet affordable clothing frequently undermines their sustainability objectives.

“I choose sustainable fashion products when I can, but I often resort to fast fashion due to the more affordable price and convenience. Moreover, fast fashion brands usually have a greater availability of products and quicker access. However, I am becoming increasingly aware of the importance of making sustainable choices and hope to continue improving my purchasing decisions in the future, opting more and more for brands that have a strong commitment to sustainability” (Interviewee 14).

This quote highlights the internal conflict that many Generation Z consumers face. While they recognize the importance of sustainability, they still rely on fast fashion for its affordability and ease of access. This balance between intention and practicality is a recurring theme, as many struggle to reconcile their ethical values with the realities of their shopping habits.

“Although I still buy clothes from fast fashion stores, I have made a conscious effort to reduce this practice. I try to limit purchases in these stores because I know that the production of these pieces is harmful to the environment and often involves unethical working conditions. However, sustainable brands usually have higher prices, which can be an obstacle, especially for young people who are starting their career. To get around this, I use platforms like Vinted to buy and sell second-hand clothes, extending the life of the pieces and contributing to sustainability” (Interviewee 15).

Despite their awareness of fast fashion’s harmful impacts, its affordability remains a more practical option, especially for those early in their careers and with limited financial flexibility.

“I still buy fast fashion, but I am paying more attention to the labels to check if the products are produced sustainably and in Portugal. I try to balance my fashion purchases by choosing higher quality and more durable pieces” (Interviewee 19).

While many still engage with fast fashion, they are increasingly seeking out locally produced, higher-quality, and more durable products to strike a balance between cost and sustainability.

“However, I still buy a lot of things from fast fashion. The price of sustainable clothing is a significant barrier for me. I like the design and support the cause, but with 100 euros, I can buy several pieces of fast fashion. Moreover, many sustainable brands only sell online, and I prefer to shop in physical stores” (Interviewee 2).

The appeal of fast fashion, driven by its affordability and availability in physical stores, remains a significant barrier for those who wish to adopt more sustainable shopping habits.

Cost Barriers in Sustainable Fashion

Multiple interviewees highlighted the challenge of cost as a significant barrier to adopting sustainable fashion among Generation Z. The most frequently cited issue is the higher price point of sustainable clothing, which makes it difficult for many consumers to choose these options consistently.

“I would say that the biggest challenge is, without a doubt, the price. Sustainable fashion tends to be more expensive, which makes it difficult to opt for these options consistently” (Interviewee 3).

“I think the first point is the price. This is still a major obstacle” (Interviewee 5).

“The high price of sustainable clothes is also an impactful factor. I like sustainable products, but I'm not always willing to pay the higher price” (Interviewee 10).

“Another major difficulty is finding sustainable pieces at affordable prices. That's why I often opt to buy second-hand. This not only helps to find cheaper options, but it's also a way to be even more sustainable” (Interviewee 8).

“Another big challenge is economic. With the rising cost of living, opting for sustainable products, which are generally more expensive, becomes difficult, creating a financial barrier for many consumers” (Interviewee 13).

While there is a strong desire to support sustainable fashion, the higher costs associated with these choices often make them inaccessible to many. This financial barrier contributes to the continued dominance of fast fashion as consumers seek more affordable and convenient options that fit within their budgets.

Dealing with Greenwashing and Misinformation

It can be challenging for Generation Z to navigate the landscape of sustainable fashion due to the widespread prevalence of greenwashing. This is a significant barrier for consumers who wish to support sustainable brands. The lack of transparency from larger corporations further complicates this issue, leading to skepticism and mistrust. Consequently, many consumers need help identifying which companies prioritize sustainability and which ones take advantage of the trend.

It's crucial to understand that products labeled as sustainable may not always have a positive impact on the environment, highlighting the necessity for consumers to conduct thorough research beyond labels. As one interviewee explained:

“It is important to understand that the sustainability label has its limitations, and some industries use it misleadingly, which is called greenwashing. People need to realize that just because something is labeled as sustainable, it doesn't mean it is really good for the environment” (Interviewee 20).

Recognizing the dedication of small, independent Portuguese brands in integrating sustainable practices while urging larger corporations to uphold transparency and integrity in their sustainability communications to prevent greenwashing. This highlights the importance of honoring the initiatives of smaller brands and the necessity of honesty and openness in sustainable business practices.

“It's necessary to give more value to small and Portuguese brands, which are often already implementing sustainable practices. The big chains need to be more transparent and truthful in their communications about sustainability, avoiding greenwashing” (Interviewee 18).

Consumers frequently feel burdened by the responsibility of verifying the credibility of sustainability claims, a task that is often overwhelming and time-consuming:

“One of the biggest challenges is greenwashing, where brands promote themselves as sustainable without actually being so. You need to do a lot of research before trusting any brand” (Interviewee 6).

“It is difficult to discern what is truly sustainable and what is just greenwashing. Many brands claim to be sustainable without actually making significant changes to their practices” (Interviewee 12).

These statements illustrate the widespread uncertainty and mistrust caused by greenwashing, which often prevents consumers from making informed fashion choices that truly reflect their ethical and environmental values.

Limited Availability of Sustainable Options

A significant challenge faced by Generation Z when opting for sustainable fashion is the limited variety and availability of such products. Unlike fast fashion brands that offer a wide array of styles and options, sustainable fashion brands often have smaller, less diverse collections. This disparity can be frustrating for consumers who want to make environmentally conscious choices but are restricted by the limited selection available.

The smaller scale of many sustainable brands contributes to this issue, as they often lack the resources to produce a wide range of products, which makes it difficult for consumers to find items that match their personal style or specific needs. One interviewee expressed this challenge by saying:

“I face challenges such as the lack of variety and availability of sustainable pieces. Many sustainable stores are small and don't have the same diversity of products as the large fast fashion brands” (Interviewee 15).

This comment highlights the direct comparison consumers often make between the extensive options provided by fast fashion retailers and the more limited choices from sustainable brands. Another interviewee pointed out:

“The lack of variety and availability of sustainable products compared to fast fashion options is also an obstacle” (Interviewee 17).

This statement underscores the frustration felt by consumers committed to making sustainable choices but find their efforts hampered by the limited range of products available in the sustainable fashion market.

Furthermore, the restricted availability of sustainable options is a recurring theme among consumers who want to support eco-friendly brands. As one interviewee noted:

“Another challenge is the limited availability of sustainable options, especially compared to the abundance of fast fashion options” (Interviewee 12).

This quote illustrates the ongoing struggle for consumers who are willing to support sustainable brands but find themselves constrained by the limited selection, making it difficult to find products that align with both their style preferences and ethical standards. Additionally, another participant highlighted the accessibility issue by stating:

“There is less variety available, and I have less access to these brands compared to the big fast fashion chains” (Interviewee 16).

This emphasizes the accessibility problem where sustainable brands not only offer fewer choices but are also harder to find, making it more challenging for consumers to support them consistently. This limitation can prevent consumers from fully embracing sustainable fashion, leading them back to fast fashion alternatives.

6.3 Social Influences in Shaping Sustainable Fashion Choices

6.3.1. Digital Awareness among Generation Z

Digitally Connected and Informed Consumers

This generation’s familiarity with technology and environmental issues enables them to make informed choices and engage critically with fashion brands. Additionally, social media

platforms play a crucial role in shaping their perceptions and behaviors toward sustainable fashion.

“Generation Z is extremely digitally connected and socially conscious. We grew up with access to the internet and social media, which makes us well-informed and active in social and environmental causes” (Interviewee 15).

This citation emphasizes Generation Z's digital connectivity and their active involvement in social and environmental causes due to this connectivity.

“With greater access to the internet, we also have more information and can be more conscious about certain issues that were not as discussed before. This generation is already much more aware or at least could be because they have all the tools to acquire this knowledge. This influences my fashion decisions as I can research and choose brands that follow sustainable practices” (Interviewee 11).

This citation highlights the generational shift towards greater awareness and the ability to make informed decisions about sustainable fashion due to access to information.

“Our generation has easy access to information, which makes it easier to research the durability and quality of products before buying” (Interviewee 20).

Here, the emphasis is on how the ease of accessing information helps Generation Z evaluate the quality and sustainability of fashion products.

“Our generation is extremely demanding and well-informed, thanks to easy access to information. We have the ability to compare prices and products quickly and effectively, making us more conscious and discerning consumers” (Interviewee 17).

This highlights the discerning nature of Generation Z as consumers, who use their access to information to make better purchasing decisions.

“I believe that because we are so connected, we end up being influenced by what we see online, whether it's the trends that emerge or the opinions others share about certain products” (Interviewee 12).

This citation adds an important dimension to the discussion, emphasizing how Generation Z's constant connectivity makes them more informed and more susceptible to the influences and opinions shared online.

“This constant exposure to the information and opinion of others makes us quicker to adopt new trends, but also more critical and demanding of the practices of the brands we choose to support” (Interviewee 5).

This point underlines how Generation Z's constant exposure to information shapes their critical stance towards brand practices and influences their trend adoption.

This generation's ability to research and compare products quickly underscores their discerning nature as consumers, committed to supporting authentic and sustainable fashion practices.

6.3.2. The Influence of Social Media and Digital Influencers

Social Media's Impact on Fashion and Sustainability Trends

Social media platforms significantly influence Generation Z's fashion choices, largely due to their visual appeal and the role of influencers. The desire to stay trendy, combined with the fear of missing out (FOMO), drives them to adopt popular styles quickly.

“Humans are very visual, and seeing new and different things on social media appeals to our aesthetic sense and personal tastes. Social media and influencers create that “fear of missing out” (FOMO), making us want to buy new things to stay within the trends” (Interviewee 6).

While social media does not overwhelm everyone, it still significantly influences fashion choices by shaping perceptions of what is stylish and desirable.

“So, although it is not an overwhelming influence, social media definitely impacts what I choose to wear” (Interviewee 2).

Social media serves a dual purpose by both introducing new trends and promoting conscious fashion choices, even as users are influenced by online content.

“If I see a piece of clothing I like on Instagram, I am likely to look for something similar the next time I shop for clothes. Social media also exposes me to new trends and styles that I might not discover otherwise. However, I try to maintain a balance and make conscious choices even though I am influenced by what I see online” (Interviewee 4).

“Social media has a great influence on my fashion choices. Through them, I am exposed to new trends, brands, and sustainable practices. I enjoy watching hauls, reviews, and style tips from the influencers I follow, which often inspires me to make more conscious and sustainable purchases” (Interviewee 15).

This underscores social media's dual role in trend discovery and encouraging sustainability among Generation Z.

The impact of social media is particularly evident on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where users are inspired by showcased clothing items and peer reviews, which significantly influence their purchasing decisions.

“Social media has a big impact on my fashion choices. When I see clothing items I like on Instagram or TikTok, I often feel inspired to look for and buy those items. Seeing how clothes look on other people and hearing their opinions greatly influence my decisions” (Interviewee 11).

Many individuals use platforms like TikTok and Pinterest for different purposes. TikTok is valuable for discovering short, dynamic videos where users share their finds and recommendations for sustainable brands. Pinterest provides visual inspiration and style ideas, helping users discover new brands and trends that align with their sustainability values.

“I primarily use TikTok and Pinterest. TikTok is excellent for watching short, dynamic videos where users share their discoveries and recommendations for sustainable brands. On Pinterest, I find a lot of visual inspiration and style ideas, which helps me discover new brands and trends that align with my sustainability values” (Interviewee 18).

Instagram is also frequently used to find new brands, with users encountering them both through their feeds and advertisements.

“I often use Instagram to discover these brands, where they appear both on my For You Page (FYP) and in advertisements” (Interviewee 3).

Social media platforms’ algorithms, especially Instagram and TikTok’s, often feature ads and posts from brands known for their sustainability. This means users frequently discover new sustainable brands through these digital platforms without actively searching for them.

“The algorithms on social media, especially on Instagram and TikTok, make me see ads and posts from brands that stand out for their sustainability. So even without directly searching, I end up discovering new sustainable brands through digital platforms every day” (Interviewee 5).

“I primarily use Instagram and often discover new brands through influencers I follow who focus on sustainability. Additionally, the ads that appear also help me find new options” (Interviewee 8).

While social media offers some guidance for some individuals, real-life interactions and peer influence play a more significant role in shaping their fashion choices.

“It gives me some guidance, whether it’s things I see that catch my interest and I’m able to change my consumption profile. But not much, it typically happens more in real life, let’s say, when I’m with a certain group of friends or people and see things that catch interest and model more from there” (Interviewee 13).

This citation points out that while social media does provide some guidance, real-life interactions and peer influence play a more significant role in shaping some people's fashion choices.

The Role of Influencers in Shaping Sustainable Fashion Choices

Digital influencers have a considerable influence on Generation Z's fashion choices, particularly in the realm of sustainable fashion. These influencers often guide their followers to make more ethical and sustainable fashion choices.

Influencers who align with the values of sustainability are particularly impactful. For example, one interviewee highlights how following micro-influencers who share sustainability values has a direct influence on their purchasing decisions:

“Digital influencers have a great influence on my fashion choices. I follow several micro-influencers who share my values of sustainability and give tips on where to buy or find sustainable clothes” (Interviewee 15).

“When I see an influencer speak well of a piece or a sustainable brand, I am more inclined to try it. Their opinion, especially when they give detailed recommendations and honest reviews, carries significant weight in my purchasing decisions” (Interviewee 18).

These statements emphasize the strong influence that sustainability-focused influencers have on purchasing decisions, particularly when they offer actionable tips and detailed, honest reviews.

Specific influencers can profoundly impact the lifestyle choices of their followers, particularly those who promote a minimalist and sustainable way of life. For instance, Rob Greenfield's influence extends beyond fashion to a broader philosophy of simplicity and sustainability:

“I discovered a man named Rob Greenfield who lives in the middle of nowhere in a small house. He is the definition of sustainable, with everything he needs fitting into a single backpack. He sends the message that we don't need to have almost anything to be happy. This message helped me realize that the few things I have are enough and that happiness doesn't come from the products we own, but from ourselves” (Interviewee 6).

This example underscores how influencers like Greenfield inspire a shift in mindset towards valuing experiences and simplicity over material possessions, which in turn influences more conscious and sustainable consumption habits.

Another influential figure in the Portuguese fashion scene is Maria Guedes, known as Stylista. Her impact is felt not only through her style recommendations but also through events she organizes that promote sustainable brands:

“An example is Maria Guedes, known as Stylista. She is one of the biggest fashion influencers in Portugal and founder of Market Stylista. I really like the personal style tips she shares. In addition, she promotes events like Market Stylista, which brings together several brands she recommends. These events are a great opportunity to discover new and sustainable brands. She has a significant impact on my choices, especially when I’m looking for pieces that combine style and sustainability” (Interviewee 11).

These examples show how specific influencers, like Maria Guedes and Rob Greenfield, inspire their followers to adopt more sustainable lifestyles and fashion choices.

Micro-influencers, despite their smaller following, can have a profound impact due to the personal connection they foster with their audience. One interviewee describes how the authenticity of micro-influencers makes their recommendations particularly powerful:

“I believe that influencers with many followers have a wider reach, but micro-influencers have a deeper impact. Those who choose to follow micro-influencers are usually more interested in their content, becoming more influenced by them. It’s like a friend recommending something, which is closer and more authentic. This closeness makes the recommendations of these micro-influencers more relevant and reliable for me” (Interviewee 3).

This statement emphasizes the depth of influence that micro-influencers have, as their recommendations are perceived as more authentic and personal, akin to receiving advice from a friend.

Influencers also play a significant role in setting and spreading new fashion trends, which are quickly adopted by their followers. This trend-setting ability is highlighted by an interviewee who acknowledges the role of influencers in shaping their fashion choices:

“Yes, digital influencers have a strong influence on my fashion choices. They present updated styles and current trends, recommend specific products through commercial partnerships, and associate a desirable lifestyle with their clothing choices. This creates new trends and inspires followers to adopt these personal preferences” (Interviewee 9).

“Yes. I guess digital influencers have a role in influencing some of my choices, more in the direction of the things I like to wear than the brands themselves” (Interviewee 14).

“Yes, I think digital influencers have a role in influencing some choices, not so much by the brand, but more by the style and direction of the things I like to wear” (Interviewee 13).

These examples illustrate the significant role that influencers play in shaping specific brand selections and broader style preferences. By guiding their followers toward emerging trends, influencers effectively affect their overall fashion direction.

6.3.3. Importance of User-Generated Content (UGC)

Trust in Consumer Reviews and Feedback

User-generated content (UGC) plays a critical role in Generation Z’s decision-making process, especially when it comes to purchasing sustainable fashion. This generation places a high value on the authenticity and credibility of reviews and testimonials from other consumers, viewing them as more trustworthy than traditional brand advertising.

One interviewee highlights the overwhelming presence of options in the market and emphasizes how reviews often play a decisive role in the purchasing decision:

“We have so many options available that reviews often decide whether we buy a product or not. Reviews, for me, are the second most important factor after price”
(Interviewee 7).

This statement sets the stage by establishing UGC’s crucial role in navigating a market flooded with choices. It suggests that reviews are often the determining factor in making a purchase decision.

The preference for authentic feedback over brand-generated content is a recurring theme. Another interviewee underscores the importance of UGC, noting that reviews and testimonials from other consumers build trust in the quality and sustainability of products:

“User-generated content is extremely important in my purchasing decision. Reviews and testimonials from other consumers help me trust the quality and sustainability of products. I prefer to rely on the genuine opinions of regular users rather than direct advertising from brands because I believe they are more authentic and less biased”
(Interviewee 15).

This reflects the broader sentiment that authentic, user-driven content is more trustworthy and influential than traditional advertising.

For many in Generation Z, UGC is particularly important when they are unfamiliar with a brand. One interviewee highlights how reviews serve as a crucial tool for verifying product quality:

“It’s very important, especially when I’m not familiar with the brand. I always look for comments, reviews, and photos from other users to verify the quality of products”
(Interviewee 16).

This citation emphasizes the role of UGC in providing reassurance and validating the credibility of lesser-known brands.

Additionally, UGC offers consumers a sense of security and assurance about the quality and credibility of a brand or product before making a purchase:

“It’s a way to feel more secure about the quality and credibility of the brand or product before making my choice” (Interviewee 1).

This further illustrates how UGC helps consumers feel confident in their purchasing decisions.

Finally, the impact of positive and negative reviews on decision-making is highlighted by another interviewee:

“Seeing positive reviews gives me confidence in my purchase, while negative feedback can make me reconsider. These opinions greatly influence my decision, as they provide an honest view of other consumers’ experiences with the product, ensuring that I’m making an informed choice” (Interviewee 3).

This statement reinforces the critical role that reviews play in shaping purchasing decisions, as they offer a balanced perspective that can either affirm or deter a purchase.

6.4. Generation Z's Priorities in Sustainable Fashion

6.4.1. Transparency and Ethical Practices

Demanding Honest Brand Communication

Generation Z places significant importance on transparency within the fashion industry, especially regarding sustainable and ethical practices. This transparency is not only a demand but also a driver for change. As one interviewee pointed out:

“Brands are making an effort to show that they are interested in sustainability and to clearly communicate their practices to consumers. This is visible not only in advertising campaigns but also on the brands’ websites, where they often highlight their commitments and sustainable actions. This transparency is crucial as sustainability is becoming increasingly important to consumers” (Interviewee 11).

Building on this idea, another interviewee emphasized the necessity of transparency in building consumer trust and loyalty. They pointed out that brands need to be clear about their production practices and the materials they use:

“Transparency is vital. Brands must be clear about their production practices and the materials they use so that consumers can make informed choices. Transparent communication helps build trust and consumer loyalty” (Interviewee 5).

Further supporting this perspective, another interviewee noted the positive trend of increasing transparency among brands, particularly through obtaining certifications and clear communication about their processes:

“I see the increase in brand transparency, with the acquisition of certifications and clear communication about their processes, as a positive development. Brands are becoming more transparent, and the effort to be more sustainable is visible and growing, which is very good” (Interviewee 8).

These insights highlight how transparency is increasingly becoming a key element in brand communications, driven by the rising consumer demand for ethical practices.

Influence on Consumer Loyalty and Industry Standards

The growing focus on transparency does not merely shape communication, it actively influences consumer behavior, particularly among Generation Z. As another interviewee pointed out:

“We seek transparency in brand practices and want to know how and where products are made. This strongly influences our fashion choices, leading us to support brands that demonstrate a genuine commitment to ethical and sustainable practices” (Interviewee 15).

This collective expectation for ethical standards is pressuring the fashion industry to adopt more responsible practices. Generation Z's purchasing power is influencing the improvement of production methods and the increased use of sustainable materials:

“When Generation Z demands ethical and sustainable practices, it creates significant pressure for change in the industry. This can lead brands to improve their production processes, use more eco-friendly materials, and be more transparent about their practices, thereby promoting a lasting and positive change in the fashion industry” (Interviewee 17).

As Generation Z continues to prioritize sustainability in their consumption habits, the fashion industry is being compelled to adapt:

“Our generation is influencing the fashion industry by demanding more transparency and sustainable practices. As we continue to value and consume sustainable products, the industry will have to adapt to these demands” (Interviewee 20).

Furthermore, the influence of Generation Z on the fashion industry is not just limited to the present but extends into the future. As they, along with future generations, persist in demanding transparency and sustainability, they drive the industry towards more responsible practices. By making conscious purchasing decisions and supporting brands that align with their values, they play a crucial role in promoting a more environmentally responsible fashion industry:

“Future generations, including Generation Z, will play a crucial role in continuing this trend and demanding more transparency and sustainable practices from brands. By making conscious choices and supporting truly sustainable brands, we can promote a more responsible and eco-friendly fashion industry” (Interviewee 6).

This highlights how Generation Z's ongoing demand for transparency and ethical practices will continue to shape the fashion industry, driving it toward more sustainable and responsible practices.

6.4.2. Supporting Small and Local Sustainable Brands

Authentic Sustainability in Small Brands

Small brands that focus on sustainability demonstrate innovation and environmental responsibility. While large brands have started to adopt sustainable practices, many remain superficial in their efforts. One interviewee noted:

“Small brands focused on sustainability demonstrate innovation and environmental responsibility. Although large brands have initiated sustainable practices, many are still superficial” (Interviewee 4).

For many in Generation Z, smaller brands represent a more authentic commitment to sustainability, as they often integrate ethical and ecological considerations throughout their entire production process. Their values tend to align more closely with the expectations of environmentally conscious consumers:

“As digital natives, we have access to a large amount of information about brands and their processes. I prefer brands that are transparent in their practices and demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability and social responsibility” (Interviewee 12).

This preference is also linked to a perception that small brands pay greater attention to details and long-term impact:

“In my opinion, what makes these smaller brands stand out is their genuine commitment to sustainability in every aspect of their business. Unlike large brands, which often seem to focus their sustainable concerns only on marketing, smaller brands demonstrate a holistic approach from the beginning to the final product. These brands are concerned with not producing fast fashion items that last only a season. They consider every step of the process, from how they sell to the materials they use, conveying a clear message of ecological concern” (Interviewee 1).

This highlights the thorough and genuine approach to sustainability that smaller brands often take, earning them more trust and loyalty from consumers who prioritize these values.

Additionally, small and local brands tend to be more authentic in their sustainability efforts, particularly in areas such as using recycled materials and promoting ethical labor practices:

“Smaller and local brands tend to be more genuine in their sustainability efforts, such as making clothing from recycled materials and promoting ethical labor practices” (Interviewee 14).

This statement underscores the belief that smaller brands are more aligned with the comprehensive values of sustainability, which resonates strongly with Generation Z.

Valuing Local Production and Ethical Transparency

Generation Z highly values transparency and local production in the fashion industry, often associating these qualities with smaller, local brands that are seen as more trustworthy and ethical. This preference is driven by a desire to support practices that are both sustainable and socially responsible.

One interviewee emphasizes the importance of local production, particularly within Portuguese brands, as a key factor in sustainable fashion:

“When I think of sustainable brands, I think a lot about Portuguese brands and everything made in Portugal. I believe that local production is an important step towards sustainability” (Interviewee 3).

There is also a growing recognition of the need to value small Portuguese brands, as they are often at the forefront of implementing sustainable practices.

“I deeply appreciate Portuguese brands that produce locally. They demonstrate a genuine concern for sustainability and apply responsible production practices, while also contributing to the local economy” (Interviewee 19)

“It is important to give more value to small Portuguese brands, as they are often already implementing sustainable practices” (Interviewee 18).

Another interviewee reinforces this view, emphasizing the importance of transparency in building trust with consumers:

“I greatly value brands that place sustainability at the center of their operations. An example of this is the Portuguese brand ISTO., which I mentioned earlier. ISTO. stands out for its commitment to transparency, publishing detailed production costs and choosing only factories that maintain high standards of social responsibility” (Interviewee 16).

This statement underscores how transparency in operations, such as openly sharing production costs and ensuring ethical working conditions, is crucial for gaining the trust and loyalty of Generation Z consumers. The brand ISTO. exemplifies this commitment to transparency, making it a preferred choice among those who prioritize ethical and sustainable fashion.

Additionally, the importance of local production is further emphasized by another interviewee who values the careful consideration these brands give to their production processes:

“One of the brands that I consider aligned with my sustainability values is Ispari, which is 100% Portuguese and produces pieces consciously and sustainably. The brand's philosophy, “handmade with heart” reflects its commitment to quality, individuality, and environmental responsibility” (Interviewee 2).

This citation highlights the deep connection between sustainability values and brand loyalty. The interviewee's appreciation for Ispari's commitment to quality, local production, and waste reduction reflects the broader preference for brands that not only align with personal values but also actively contribute to a sustainable future.

6.4.3. Recognizing Sustainable Fashion Progress

Acknowledging Achievements and Areas for Improvement

As the fashion industry evolves, there is a growing recognition of the importance of sustainability. Generation Z, in particular, is playing a crucial role in driving this change by demanding more sustainable practices from brands. However, while there is evident progress, many believe that the journey toward fully sustainable practices is just beginning. As an interviewee mentioned:

“Fortunately, there is an increasing concern for sustainability, mainly due to the factors I mentioned earlier. The end consumer is increasingly worried about these issues, and brands want to sell, right? So, it’s positive that brands are responding to this concern” (Interviewee 8).

However, there is still much to be done:

“My opinion is that there is positive progress, but there is still much to be done to achieve truly sustainable practices throughout the production chain” (Interviewee 9).

Another interviewee echoed this sentiment:

“More and more brands are adopting more sustainable practices, such as the use of recycled materials, including plastic, and the implementation of recycling and reuse programs for clothing items. However, there is still a long way to go for these practices to become the norm and be adopted by the majority of companies” (Interviewee 15).

While there is recognition of progress, there is also an acknowledgment that these efforts are still in the early stages and that much more needs to be done to achieve comprehensive sustainability.

6.4.4. Integrating Fashion Trends with Sustainability

The Rise of Second-Hand Fashion as a Sustainable Option

As Generation Z increasingly prioritizes sustainability, they seek to align their fashion choices with environmental values. This shift reflects a broader movement toward ethical consumption, where personal style and sustainability are seen as complementary rather than conflicting.

One of the key platforms supporting this movement is Vinted, which has become instrumental in promoting sustainable fashion by facilitating the purchase and sale of

second-hand clothing. This approach directly supports the circular economy, reducing waste and diminishing the demand for new garment production.

“Vinted is an excellent solution because it allows people to follow fashion trends sustainably by buying second-hand pieces. This keeps the consumption cycle going without creating waste. It's complicated for large fast fashion brands to implement 100% sustainable practices, but platforms like Vinted offer a good alternative” (Interviewee 19).

“Buying second-hand, like on Vinted, also helps in finding trends in a more sustainable way” (Interviewee 18).

“Although Vinted is not a fashion brand in the conventional way, it promotes the circular economy by facilitating the buying and selling of second-hand clothes. This practice extends the life of garments and reduces the need for the production of new clothing, thus contributing to environmental sustainability. I think it's fantastic how Vinted encourages people to rethink their consumption habits and make more conscious choices” (Interviewee 16).

“Additionally, Vinted and other resale platforms are extremely important for sustainability in fashion, as they allow people to buy and sell second-hand items, reducing the need to produce new ones. This practice not only decreases waste but also makes sustainable fashion more accessible to everyone. Buying second-hand gives clothing a “second life” which is a crucial step toward sustainability. Moreover, these platforms help combat excessive consumerism by promoting a more conscious mindset toward fashion” (Interviewee 11).

Vinted has also played a crucial role in making second-hand fashion more accessible and popular, especially among younger consumers. This shift has contributed to a broader cultural movement where sustainability and originality are increasingly valued:

“Vinted, for example, has represented a major revolution by facilitating the buying and selling of second-hand clothes, making these practices more accessible and popular among young people. The preference for vintage fashion and second-hand

items is promoting a change in mentality, where sustainability and originality are valued” (Interviewee 5).

Another interviewee expanded on the concept by discussing the importance of accessible pricing in balancing trend consumption with sustainability. They also advocated for transforming old clothes into new items and holding more markets and fairs for sustainable brands:

“Applications like Vinted help a lot in this balance by allowing people to buy trendy pieces at an affordable price. Additionally, more fairs and markets with sustainable brands can reach a larger audience. Another example is transforming old clothes into new pieces, offering discounts to encourage this practice” (Interviewee 10).

These interviewees highlight the effectiveness of second-hand platforms like Vinted in balancing the desire for trendy fashion with sustainability. By enabling consumers to purchase pre-owned items, these platforms help reduce waste, promote a circular economy, and make sustainable fashion more accessible. Additionally, Vinted’s role in encouraging more conscious consumption habits and promoting a shift toward valuing sustainability and originality is highlighted, demonstrating how the platform supports a broader change in consumer behavior.

Thrift Shopping and Recycling as Ethical Fashion Practices

Another interviewee noted the cyclical nature of fashion, where old styles often come back into trend. They suggested that thrift shopping and the use of recycled materials are sustainable ways to stay fashionable:

“I think fashion is cyclical. Many old styles become trendy again. Products like cardigans, bell-bottom pants, and vintage jackets are back in style. Some people buy these items in thrift shops, which is a sustainable practice because they reuse products that are still of good quality. Brands should understand that they can use recycled materials or promote the resale of products” (Interviewee 7).

“Additionally, reusing and recycling clothes, whether through swaps with friends or buying from second-hand stores, also help balance the attraction to new trends with the need for sustainability” (Interviewee 14).

This highlights the cyclical nature of fashion and suggests that thrift shopping is an effective way to engage with trends sustainably. The interviewee emphasized that reusing high-quality products from thrift shops not only allows consumers to stay in style but also supports sustainability by reducing the demand for new production. Additionally, they suggested that brands could contribute to sustainability by using recycled materials or promoting the resale of their products, aligning with the growing consumer demand for sustainable fashion options.

Embracing Mindful Fashion Choices

Another interviewee suggested that balancing trend consumption with sustainability is achievable through mindful purchasing. They emphasized the importance of quality over quantity and advocated for adopting a “*capsule wardrobe*” approach:

“I believe it is possible to balance fashion trend consumption with sustainability by opting for practices like buying quality pieces that last longer instead of choosing fast fashion. Additionally, social media plays an important role in promoting sustainable brands and influencing consumers to make more conscious choices. While pieces made 100% in Portugal and sustainably can be more expensive, it's essential to develop the mindset that we don't need thirty sweaters, but rather a few good quality items that we can wear repeatedly. Adopting a “capsule wardrobe” is an excellent way to maintain style without compromising sustainability” (Interviewee 11).

Another interviewee reflected on how the “*capsule wardrobe*” trend had positively influenced their fashion choices. They highlighted how this concept, which promotes owning a limited number of timeless pieces that mix and match well, aligns closely with sustainable fashion principles:

“I remember a trend called the “capsule wardrobe” which had a positive impact on my choices. The premise was to have a limited number of timeless pieces that worked well together, promoting more conscious and sustainable consumption. The idea was to own only key, high-quality pieces, avoiding excessive consumerism. This trend is very much aligned with sustainable fashion principles, as it encourages the purchase of durable and versatile items instead of blindly following new trends” (Interviewee 5).

The “capsule wardrobe” approach is presented as a practical strategy that encourages consumers to invest in fewer, high-quality, and versatile pieces, reducing the overall environmental impact of their wardrobe. This method aligns with the broader goals of sustainable fashion, promoting durability and thoughtful purchasing decisions over impulsive buying and trend-chasing. By adopting such practices, consumers can maintain their personal style while contributing to a more sustainable fashion industry.

6.4.5. Trust in Brands’ Commitment to Sustainability

The Role of Brand Trust

Generation Z’s intention to purchase sustainable fashion is strongly influenced by a brand’s reputation and its demonstrated commitment to sustainability. For many in this generation, a brand's ethical and environmental practices are critical in determining whether or not they will support it.

Among the most frequently mentioned brands during the interviews was *Patagonia*, widely admired and trusted for its long-standing dedication to sustainability. Interviewees praised the brand’s efforts in using recycled and organic materials, implementing product repair programs, and allocating a portion of its revenue to environmental causes.

“Patagonia, for instance, is widely recognized for its commitment to environmental responsibility and ethical practices. They are pioneers in using recycled and organic materials, and they encourage the repair and reuse of clothes through the “Worn Wear program” (Interviewee 10).

“Patagonia is a brand I greatly admire because, in addition to producing sustainably, it has repair policies that extend the useful life of products” (Interviewee 8).

“At the international level, I would highlight Patagonia. They are pioneers in the use of recycled and organic materials, and they have a strong commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. The brand implements various initiatives to reduce environmental impact, such as clothing repair programs” (Interviewee 2).

“Patagonia not only uses recycled materials but also encourages consumers to repair and reuse their clothes, promoting a longer life cycle for products” (Interviewee 11).

“Patagonia is known for its commitment to environmental conservation and ethical production practices, using recycled and organic materials” (Interviewee 15).

Patagonia’s ability to remain true to its principles over the years has earned it a place of trust and admiration among Generation Z:

“Patagonia stands out globally for staying true to its principles for so many years” (Interviewee 19).

“The essence of the brand is reflected in the product. Patagonia stands out for its genuine commitment to sustainability It's not just marketing. They truly invest in practices and initiatives that have a positive impact on the environment” (Interviewee 4).

By combining transparency, consistency, and meaningful environmental action, Patagonia has become a benchmark for sustainable fashion, serving as a model for other brands aiming to connect with conscious consumers.

Beyond Patagonia, other brands also resonate strongly with Generation Z due to their ethical values and transparent business models. For example, ISTO., a Portuguese brand, is appreciated for its commitment to transparency and responsible manufacturing.

“I highly value brands that place sustainability at the center of their operations. A prime example is the Portuguese brand ISTO, which I have mentioned before. The brand stands out for its commitment to transparency, publishing detailed production costs and selecting only factories that maintain high standards of social responsibility” (Interviewee 16).

Zouri’s commitment to sustainability is further highlighted by its focus on ocean conservation and the reuse of plastic waste. By transforming marine plastic into durable footwear, Zouri not only addresses environmental concerns but also reinforces the brand's alignment with the values of environmentally conscious consumers.

“As a Portuguese brand that stands out for collecting plastic from Portuguese beaches and transforming it into footwear, Zouri demonstrates that it is possible to create stylish and durable fashion products while promoting sustainability and environmental protection. This commitment to ocean cleanliness and the reuse of plastic waste perfectly reflects my environmental values” (Interviewee 9).

Similarly, the brand ASPORTUGUESAS is recognized for its innovative approach to sustainable footwear production. The brand uses recycled and natural materials, such as cork, to create shoes that are not only sustainable but also durable. This demonstrates that high-quality, sustainable products can be produced without compromising style or comfort, aligning perfectly with Generation Z's values.

“I would like to highlight a Portuguese brand that deserves recognition: ASPORTUGUESAS. This brand is known for its innovative approach to sustainable footwear production. They use recycled and natural materials, like cork, to create shoes that are not only sustainable but also durable. The brand promotes the idea that it's possible to produce high-quality and sustainable products without compromising style or comfort” (Interviewee 6).

Additionally, Ivory stands out for its comprehensive commitment to sustainability across all stages of production. The brand uses eco-friendly dyes, sustainable materials, and even opts for bicycle deliveries when possible. Ivory's dedication to sustainability in every aspect of its production process impresses Generation Z consumers and differentiates the brand in the market.

“In the case of Ivory, I know they implement sustainable practices from production, like using eco-friendly dyes and sustainable materials to make their pieces. For transportation, for example, if it's close by, they opt to deliver orders by bicycle. They try to be sustainable in every aspect of production, including packaging. Their commitment to sustainability at every stage is impressive and sets them apart”
(Interviewee 10).

These examples illustrate how Generation Z's purchase intentions are significantly influenced by brands that demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability. Brands like Patagonia, ISTO, Zouri, ASPORTUGUESAS, and Ivory, which integrate ethical practices and transparency into their business models, resonate deeply with this generation, driving their purchasing decisions and fostering brand loyalty.

6.5. Generation Z's Sustainable Fashion Purchase Intentions

6.5.1. Self-Reflection as a Driver of Conscious Purchase Intentions

Questioning Motivations and Evaluating Needs

For Generation Z, reflecting on the reasons behind their purchasing decisions plays a crucial role in adopting more sustainable fashion habits. One of the key aspects of this reflective process is analysing the motivation behind a purchase. Many individuals in this generation recognize the importance of distinguishing between genuine needs and external influences, such as trends or social pressure. This self-awareness helps them make more thoughtful choices and resist impulsive purchases that may not align with their long-term values or needs.

“I think it's important to question why we're buying something. Is it because we saw someone wearing it and want to follow the trend? Is it because everyone around us is wearing it and we feel that pressure? Or is it because we really need that piece? I think it's crucial to think about this at the moment of purchase” (Interviewee 1).

Moreover, this self-questioning often extends beyond the moment of purchase. For many, the decision-making process begins well before they enter a store or add an item to their online cart. Researching products, comparing options, and assessing the long-term value of an item are all part of this reflective approach.

“I think it's crucial to understand not just at the moment of purchase, but beforehand, why we want to acquire something. This helps me make more conscious choices and avoid impulsive purchases” (Interviewee 1).

This reflective approach often results in a more measured and thoughtful purchasing process, where decisions are made based on necessity rather than impulse.

“Before buying, I think about whether I really need that piece in my wardrobe. If it's not necessary, I prefer not to buy it. When sustainable options are too expensive, I opt not to buy anything. I try to balance need with sustainability, making more thoughtful and conscious choices” (Interviewee 3).

By focusing on necessity and sustainability, Generation Z is making a conscious effort to avoid consumerist behaviors, favoring durable, high-quality items that will stand the test of time.

“I tend to focus on buying only what is necessary, avoiding consumerist behaviors. I prefer investing in basic, durable pieces that will last” (Interviewee 13).

“Now, I only buy what I really need, and that happens only when a piece wears out and needs to be replaced. The frequency of my purchases is very low because I feel like I already have everything I need, and I don't see the necessity to acquire more. This concept of 'need' is something I question a lot nowadays” (Interviewee 6).

“Above all, I think more before buying and try to make fewer impulsive purchases”
(Interviewee 8).

This reflective approach extends to brand selection, where transparency and eco-friendly practices are key considerations.

“Before making a purchase, I try to ensure that I am making an informed and responsible choice, opting for brands that are transparent about their production processes and use eco-friendly materials” (Interviewee 17).

In conclusion, self-questioning is a critical component of Generation Z’s approach to sustainable fashion purchases. By engaging in thoughtful reflection and research, they are better equipped to make decisions that align with their values, prioritize sustainability, and resist the pressures of consumer culture. This reflective approach not only enhances their purchasing experience but also contributes to their broader goal of making a positive impact on the world through their consumer choices.

6.5.2. Commitment to Global Change Through Sustainable Fashion

Sustainable Fashion Choices as a Driver of Positive Change

For Generation Z, the intention behind engaging with sustainable fashion goes beyond personal satisfaction; it is seen as a crucial contribution to global betterment. This generation is keenly aware that their consumer choices have significant implications for both the environment and society. Consequently, their decision to purchase sustainable products is driven by a deliberate intention to support practices that positively impact the planet and future generations.

“I know I will be contributing to a better world, making a more conscious choice, and opting for better quality materials” (Interviewee 17).

“I recognize that environmental practices are essential to the health of our planet and society, and as such, I am committed to making more sustainable choices as my financial situation improves” (Interviewee 15).

These quotes illustrate how the intention to contribute to a better world is a key motivator for choosing sustainable fashion. The emphasis on making conscious choices and selecting high-quality materials underscores the generation's desire to align their values with their purchasing habits.

Additionally, Generation Z recognizes the long-term benefits of sustainable products, in their potential to reduce environmental impact over time. This long-term perspective drives their commitment to sustainability.

“My choice is based on the expectation that these products will be more durable, thus helping me to reduce my environmental footprint in the long term” (Interviewee 5).

This statement highlights the importance of durability and environmental impact in purchasing decisions. The intention to reduce one's environmental footprint through sustainable choices clearly indicates the generation's forward-thinking approach.

Furthermore, many in this generation are willing to pay a premium for sustainable products because they see it as an essential investment in the future. This willingness to invest in sustainability, even at a higher cost, reflects their deep commitment to the planet's well-being.

“Yes, I am willing to pay more for sustainable products because I believe it is an investment in the future of our planet” (Interviewee 14).

This shows that for Generation Z, paying more for sustainable fashion is not just a transactional decision - it is an expression of responsibility and a commitment to the long-term well-being of the planet.

6.5.3. Conscious Decision Intentions

The Importance of Ethical Alignment

For Generation Z, aligning their fashion choices with ethical and environmental values is paramount. This generation actively seeks brands that reflect their commitment to these principles, making ethics a cornerstone of their purchasing decisions.

“I prefer brands that align with my ethical and environmental values” (Interviewee 17).

“Knowing that I am supporting ethical and responsible practices makes me feel better about my consumption choices” (Interviewee 14).

“Supporting sustainable brands is also a way to encourage responsible practices in the fashion industry, contributing to a more sustainable future” (Interviewee 11).

These citations illustrate how ethical alignment also influences their choices and enhances their sense of fulfilment in their consumption habits. Supporting brands that adhere to responsible practices provides a deeper sense of satisfaction and moral integrity.

Durability as an Ethical Choice

Generation Z is increasingly making more deliberate and thoughtful decisions, with a strong emphasis on the durability of the products they buy. They view durability as intrinsically linked to ethical production, recognizing that long-lasting items are a key aspect of sustainable consumption.

“Today, I prefer to make more thoughtful and conscious choices, focusing on durability and ethics” (Interviewee 6).

“For me, it's worth investing in something that has a longer life cycle and has been produced ethically and responsibly” (Interviewee 4).

These statements reflect a growing preference for products that not only last but are also produced in a manner that respects ethical standards. For them, investing in durable items is not just about practicality but also about supporting responsible production methods.

Ultimately, Generation Z is willing to pay a premium for products that meet both these criteria—durability and ethical production. The quality and longevity of a product, combined with its ethical manufacturing, are crucial factors in their purchasing decisions:

“What I consider most important is the durability and quality of the products. If a piece is of quality and has been made ethically, I am willing to pay more” (Interviewee 8).

“I realize the importance of durability and quality of products. Sometimes it's worth more to invest a little more money in pieces that will last longer, which is in line with our environmental concern” (Interviewee 14).

This approach highlights Generation Z’s commitment to making informed, ethical, and sustainable choices. By prioritizing products that are both durable and ethically produced, they are contributing to a more responsible and sustainable fashion industry.

6.5.4. The Role of Social Norms in Sustainable Fashion Intentions

Social Influence as a Driver for Sustainable Behavior

Social norms play a significant role in shaping Generation Z’s intentions to purchase sustainable fashion. Many individuals in this generation are inspired by observing others who lead sustainable lifestyles, which in turn motivates them to adopt similar behaviors. The collective influence of peers and social circles is a powerful driver for sustainable consumption choices.

“Seeing other people adopt a more sustainable lifestyle inspires me to do the same” (Interviewee 5).

“Observing others embrace sustainable fashion choices, especially within the social context I'm in, influences me to do the same” (Interviewee 13).

“If some people start adopting more sustainable practices, they can influence their networks of friends and family. It's like in sports: if one or two people in a group start being more active, they can inspire others to do the same. This can work both positively and negatively” (Interviewee 7).

These citations underscore the impact of social influence on decision-making. When individuals witness sustainable behaviors among their peers, they are more likely to emulate those actions, which can lead to a ripple effect within their social circles, further promoting sustainable fashion choices.

Adopting sustainable practices by a few can create a ripple effect, influencing broader groups of friends and family. This phenomenon is similar to how participation in sports or physical activities can spread within social groups, suggesting that sustainable behaviors can be contagious within communities.

They are aware of the influence of trends and peer behavior but aim to make conscious decisions that align with their values.

“Of course, sometimes I'm influenced by what I see in others, after all, I'm part of Generation Z, but I try to be aware of that. Above all, I think more before buying and try to make fewer impulsive purchases” (Interviewee 8).

Beyond individual actions, Generation Z strongly believes that sustainability should not be solely a personal practice but also a collective effort. Educating and sharing sustainable practices with others is seen as crucial in spreading these values across communities, highlighting the importance of collective responsibility in achieving significant environmental impact.

6.5.5. Financial Considerations in Sustainable Fashion Intentions

The Impact of Financial Stability on Sustainable Intentions

Financial stability plays a crucial role in determining Generation Z's ability to invest in sustainable fashion. While many individuals from this generation currently face financial

limitations, particularly during their studies or early career stages, there is a clear intention to prioritize sustainability once they achieve greater financial security.

“As I am still studying and don't have a stable source of income, I'm not fully willing to pay more for sustainable products. However, I hope that in the near future, when I start working, I can choose products based on their quality and environmental practices, and not just for the price” (Interviewee 15).

“Currently, no, due to financial limitations as I'm at the beginning of my career. However, in the future, when I have a stable salary, I will be willing to pay more for sustainable products” (Interviewee 19).

“I like sustainable products, but I am not always willing to pay the higher price. Since I am still doing an internship and do not have a high income, it ends up being impossible for me, but I hope that when I earn more, I can primarily buy sustainable pieces only” (Interviewee 10).

“Also, since I am still studying and do not have a fixed income, I end up opting for more economical options, but I hope this will change when I start earning my own money and have the financial availability to make sustainable fashion choices” (Interviewee 11).

These citations highlight the common theme that financial constraints are a significant barrier to sustainable purchasing decisions among Generation Z. However, as these individuals anticipate greater financial stability in the future, there is a strong likelihood that their purchasing behavior will shift to reflect their underlying values. The intention to prioritize sustainability in their fashion choices as their income grows underscores the deep commitment that Generation Z has towards aligning their spending habits with their ethical and environmental values. This shift in behavior is likely to lead to a greater overall commitment to sustainable fashion, driven by the alignment of financial capability and personal values.

6.5.6. Balancing Cost and Long-Term Value

Sustainability as a Long-Term Investment

Generation Z views the higher cost of sustainable products as a necessary investment in the planet's future. Their commitment to sustainability is strong, and many individuals within this generation are willing to allocate more of their financial resources to ensure that their purchases align with their environmental values. This shift in mindset reflects a broader understanding of the long-term benefits associated with sustainable consumption, as opposed to short-term savings that might come from cheaper, less sustainable alternatives.

“I am willing to pay more for sustainable products because I believe it is an investment in the future of our planet. Sustainable products generally have superior quality and greater durability, which ultimately offsets the higher initial cost” (Interviewee 14).

“I am willing to pay more for sustainable products as long as these products have significantly greater durability than conventional products. In fact, I don’t see this as an expense, but rather as an investment. If a product is more expensive but lasts much longer, it ends up compensating for the extra amount paid initially” (Interviewee 6).

For many in Generation Z, purchasing durable items that last longer supports ethical manufacturing and aligns with their desire to reduce overall consumption. They recognize that spending more on quality products now can lead to fewer purchases over time, ultimately saving money and reducing waste. The emphasis on ethical production highlights a strong alignment between personal values and purchasing decisions. Generation Z is not just looking for products that last; they also want assurance that these products are made in ways that respect both people and the planet.

“Yes, I am willing to pay more for sustainable products, as long as they are of quality. I prefer to invest in pieces that I know will last longer and that are ethically produced” (Interviewee 20).

“If I believe that a piece will be durable and that I can use it for years, the additional cost is justified. I prefer to invest in quality and sustainability, knowing that it will bring long-term benefits” (Interviewee 13).

“I am willing to pay more for sustainable products because I am concerned about the environmental impact of excessive clothing consumption. I know that sustainable products are more durable and of better quality, which reduces the need to buy clothes frequently” (Interviewee 3).

This approach addresses their environmental concerns and supports a more sustainable fashion industry by driving demand for responsibly made products. By choosing products that last longer, Generation Z is deliberately shifting towards more sustainable and ethical consumption patterns.

“I am willing to pay more for sustainable products because I know they tend to be of better quality, last longer, and don't need to be replaced as quickly” (Interviewee 4).

“I pay more for three factors: durability, sustainability, and product quality. If a brand guarantees that the product is durable and of high quality, I am willing to pay more. I buy little clothing, but when I do, I want it to last a long time” (Interviewee 7).

Clear communication from brands about the durability and quality of their products is crucial for these consumers. They seek reassurance that their investment in sustainable fashion will deliver both in terms of product performance and ethical integrity, ensuring that their purchases align with their values.

“I believe that investing in higher-quality, sustainably made products is worth it in the long run. These products generally have greater durability, meaning I won't need to replace them as often” (Interviewee 11).

This perspective encapsulates the broader shift towards sustainability that characterizes Generation Z's purchasing behavior. By prioritizing products that offer long-term value, they are supporting a more responsible fashion industry and making a personal commitment to reducing waste and promoting environmental sustainability.

6.6. Generation Z Sustainable Fashion Purchase Behavior

6.6.1. Second-Hand Shopping as a First Choice

Second-Hand Shopping as a Conscious and Ethical Choice

Generation Z's fashion choices are increasingly shaped by their dedication to sustainability and ethical consumption. A key part of this commitment is their preference for second-hand shopping over buying new sustainable fashion items. This not only shows their efforts to minimize environmental impact but also reflects a deliberate choice to support a more circular and ethical economy, a decision that deserves respect and acknowledgment.

For Generation Z, second-hand shopping is an essential first step in their purchasing process. By prioritizing the reuse of existing items, they help reduce the demand for new production, which often exhausts resources and harms the environment.

“Whenever possible, I try to avoid buying new clothes, opting to reuse what I already have or buy second-hand” (Interviewee 3).

“Whenever I need a new piece of clothing, I try to look at second-hand options first. If I find second-hand options, I don't even look for new options” (Interviewee 8).

It is crucial to recognize the significance of conscious consumerism in realizing sustainability objectives. By prioritizing second-hand alternatives over new purchases, we can decrease the demand for new production, limit waste, and maximize the utilization of existing resources. Furthermore, platforms such as Vinted enable individuals to adhere to current fashion trends sustainably.

“In terms of clothing, I choose to buy second-hand, like on Vinted” (Interviewee 10).

“Buying second-hand, like on Vinted, also helps find trends in a more sustainable way” (Interviewee 18).

“Vinted is an excellent solution because it allows people to follow fashion trends sustainably by buying second-hand pieces. This keeps the consumption cycle going without creating waste” (Interviewee 19).

The insights underscore the perception of second-hand platforms as practical solutions for maintaining style without compromising ethical standards. Through second-hand shopping, Generation Z can participate in fashion trends while sidestepping the environmental repercussions of new purchases.

By prioritizing second-hand purchases, Generation Z significantly lessens their environmental impact and reaffirms sustainability principles. This deliberate practice showcases their dedication to making ethical and informed choices in fashion consumption, reflecting a conscious effort to bolster a circular economy.

Thrift Shopping as a Cultural Shift Towards Sustainability

Thrift shopping has become an essential aspect of sustainable fashion, especially among Generation Z. Unlike their parents, who might immediately go to shopping malls, this generation often explores second-hand stores or sustainable brands first when they need new clothing. This shift demonstrates a broader awareness and commitment to sustainability.

“If I have an event and need a dress, I first go to second-hand stores or sustainable brands. Our parents might go straight to the mall, but we have many options and know how to search. Sometimes, people choose the easiest option, but we have information on our side, so we can find more sustainable alternatives” (Interviewee 10).

The revival of vintage fashion trends has further fueled the popularity of thrift shopping. Many styles from past decades, such as cardigans, bell-bottom pants, and vintage jackets, have made a comeback, making thrift shops an attractive option for those who want to stay fashionable while being eco-conscious.

“Many old styles become trendy again. Products like cardigans, bell-bottom pants, and vintage jackets are back in style. Some people buy these items in thrift shops,

which is a sustainable practice because they reuse products that are still of good quality” (Interviewee 7).

Thrift shopping also addresses the challenge of balancing sustainability with affordability. By opting for second-hand fashion, individuals can find more affordable options while supporting sustainable practices, allowing them to stay committed to their values without compromising their budget.

“Second-hand fashion helps overcome this challenge because it allows finding more affordable options from sustainable brands. This way, I can be sustainable twice: by buying second-hand and by choosing sustainable brands” (Interviewee 8).

“However, sustainable brands usually have higher prices, which can be an obstacle, especially for young people who are starting their career. To get around this, I use platforms like Vinted to buy and sell second-hand clothes, extending the life of the pieces and contributing to sustainability” (Interviewee 15).

The growing popularity of second-hand platforms like Vinted underscores the societal shift towards more sustainable consumption patterns. These platforms facilitate the reuse of clothing, significantly reducing waste and promoting a circular economy in fashion.

“Besides these brands, the increasing popularity of second-hand clothing stores shows that more people are opting for more sustainable alternatives. This move towards reusing existing clothes is an important step in reducing waste and excessive consumption” (Interviewee 6).

This practice allows them to stay fashionable and contributes to reducing waste and promoting responsible consumption.

Vinted Influence in Circular Fashion

Circular fashion is rapidly gaining momentum, with Vinted playing a pivotal role in this emerging trend. The platform facilitates the reuse, recycling, and purchase of second-hand clothing, which aligns closely with the growing vintage movement. This shift is having a tangible impact on the fashion industry, promoting more sustainable consumption patterns.

“One of the main trends I see gaining traction is circularity in fashion, which involves the reuse, recycling, and purchase of second-hand clothes. This trend is strongly linked to the vintage movement and platforms for exchanging and selling used clothing, like Vinted. The growing adoption of these practices is already having a noticeable impact on the industry” (Interviewee 5).

Vinted is instrumental in advancing sustainable fashion by making it easy for users to buy and sell second-hand clothing. This process extends the life of garments, reduces waste, and diminishes the demand for new clothing production, thus contributing significantly to environmental sustainability.

“I believe that platforms like Vinted play a crucial role in sustainability. Although Vinted is not a fashion brand in the conventional way, it promotes the circular economy by facilitating the buying and selling of second-hand clothes. This practice extends the life of garments and reduces the need for the production of new clothing, thus contributing to environmental sustainability” (Interviewee 16).

In addition to its environmental benefits, Vinted also makes sustainable fashion more accessible to a broader audience. By providing a marketplace for pre-owned clothing, the platform allows consumers to participate in sustainable fashion without the higher costs typically associated with new eco-friendly products.

“Vinted and other resale platforms are extremely important for sustainability in fashion, as they allow people to buy and sell second-hand items, reducing the need to produce new ones. This practice not only decreases waste but also makes sustainable fashion more accessible to everyone. Buying second-hand gives clothing a “second life” which is a crucial step toward sustainability” (Interviewee 11).

“I use platforms like Vinted to buy and sell second-hand clothes, extending the life of the pieces and contributing to sustainability” (Interviewee 15).

By extending the life cycle of clothing, reducing environmental impact, and making sustainable fashion more accessible, Vinted is helping to drive a significant shift in the

fashion industry towards more sustainable practices. As circular fashion continues to grow, Vinted's influence in promoting environmental sustainability will likely increase.

6.6.2. Conscious Choices and Reduced Consumption

Prioritizing Reuse and Avoiding New Purchases

Generation Z is highly focused on making conscious fashion choices, emphasizing the importance of reducing consumption by reusing what they already have or opting for second-hand alternatives. This behavior reflects a growing commitment to sustainability, where buying new clothing is seen as a last resort. As one interviewee explained:

“Whenever possible, I try to avoid buying new clothes, opting to reuse what I already have or buy second-hand” (Interviewee 3).

This thoughtful approach extends to only purchasing clothing when absolutely necessary. Many from this generation are not interested in constant consumption but rather make replacements only when essential. As one participant noted:

“I only buy what I really need, and that happens only when a piece is damaged and needs replacement” (Interviewee 6).

This reduction in unnecessary purchasing aligns with a broader minimalistic mindset. For Generation Z, sustainability isn't just about the types of products they buy but also the quantity. Many members of this generation recognize that by limiting consumption and avoiding excessive purchases, they can further reduce their environmental impact. One participant explained:

“My sustainable attitude towards clothing was a little more about buying less quantity and not overbuying” (Interviewee 7).

Investing in Quality and Longevity

Alongside reducing the number of purchases, Generation Z prioritizes investing in high-quality, durable clothing. This strategy reflects their belief in making mindful fashion

decisions, where they choose items that last longer, thus reducing the frequency of replacements and supporting more responsible consumption. One interviewee noted the importance of durability in their fashion choices:

“I prefer to invest in quality pieces that will last longer, contributing to a more conscious consumption and reducing the need to buy frequently” (Interviewee 18).

“I try to balance my fashion purchases by choosing pieces of higher quality and durability” (Interviewee 19).

“I always try to buy durable and good quality pieces, I believe that by choosing clothes that last longer I am contributing to sustainability” (Interviewee 20)

“I give preference to products that offer quality and durability. I choose clothes that can last longer” (Interviewee 4)

This focus on durability demonstrates a shift away from fast fashion, with a clear preference for quality over quantity. By selecting long-lasting garments, Generation Z ensures that their fashion choices align with their sustainability values.

6.6.3. Reusing Clothes from Family and Friends

Extending the life cycle of clothing through reuse

Generation Z is increasingly embracing the practice of reusing clothes from family and friends as a core component of their sustainable fashion choices. By opting for hand-me-downs from family members, they not only extend the life of quality garments but also significantly reduce the need for purchasing new clothes. This practice reflects their commitment to minimizing waste and supporting a circular fashion economy, where clothing is valued for its longevity rather than being replaced frequently.

“I wear a lot of clothes that used to belong to my family. I have good-quality pieces that last a long time” (Interviewee 6).

The concept of clothing reuse is not confined to immediate family members. Many in Generation Z actively participate in clothing exchanges with friends, neighbors, and other

social circles. This alternative method of acquiring clothes allows them to access fashion sustainably while cutting down on waste and unnecessary production. Clothing exchanges create a sense of community around sustainability, allowing garments to be reused across multiple people.

“When my sister no longer wears a pair of pants, they come to me. The same happens with clothes that people around me no longer use. I usually get clothes in an alternative way, whether from friends, siblings, neighbors, or even my mother” (Interviewee 1).

By relying on second-hand clothing and hand-me-downs, Generation Z can stay in touch with fashion trends while balancing the environmental responsibility that comes with making more sustainable choices. Reusing clothing allows them to align with new trends without contributing to the fast fashion cycle, making it possible to enjoy style while adhering to eco-conscious values.

“The reuse and recycling of clothes, whether through exchanges with friends or buying in second-hand stores, are practices that help balance the attraction to new trends with the need for sustainability” (Interviewee 14).

Reusing clothes from others plays a crucial role in extending the life cycle of garments. This eco-friendly alternative to buying newly produced items not only reduces waste but also supports Generation Z's broader commitment to fostering a circular economy in fashion. By making sustainable choices like reusing clothes, they help reduce the demand for new production, which is often resource-intensive and environmentally damaging.

“This continuous exchange of clothes between people reduces the need to buy new products. Instead of going to a store and buying something produced from scratch, we can reuse something from someone else. This significantly extends the life cycle of each item” (Interviewee 4).

This statement highlights the key idea that reusing clothing not only provides an eco-friendly solution but also disrupts the typical fashion production-consumption-waste cycle.

6.7. Future Directions in Sustainable Fashion

6.7.1. The Importance of Transparency for Future Consumer Trust

Transparency as a Pillar of Consumer Trust

As the fashion industry moves towards a more sustainable future, transparency's role in fostering consumer trust cannot be overstated. For Generation Z, who are increasingly conscious of the environmental and ethical implications of their purchases, clear and honest brand communication is essential.

Brands must be transparent about their production practices and the materials they use. This level of openness allows consumers to make informed choices, thereby building trust and loyalty.

“Brands should be clear about their production practices and the materials they use, so consumers can make informed choices” (Interviewee 5).

“The fashion industry needs to be more transparent throughout the production chain, prioritizing sustainable materials such as organic and recycled” (Interviewee 12).

“I think the fashion industry needs to be more transparent about its production practices and environmental impact” (Interviewee 14).

Other interviewees emphasized the importance of actively promoting these practices to earn consumer trust:

“Brands should advertise their practices more to gain consumer trust” (Interviewee 10).

“Transparent communication of brands' sustainable practices is essential to gain consumer trust” (Interviewee 13).

“Transparent communication will help build consumer trust and loyalty” (Interviewee 5).

By openly communicating their practices, brands can build stronger relationships with consumers who value ethical and environmentally responsible behavior.

6.7.2. Governmental Involvement in Promoting Sustainable Fashion

Governmental Influence on Sustainable Fashion

Government intervention is instrumental in driving the fashion industry toward ethical and sustainable standards. By implementing regulatory frameworks and promoting awareness, governments can normalize sustainable practices and reduce the stigma associated with second-hand clothing.

“Governments need to promote sustainable fashion and reduce the stigma associated with buying second-hand clothes. Ethical production should be the norm, with fair prices reflecting decent wages and sustainable materials” (Interviewee 4).

These regulations are expected to push the fashion industry toward adopting practices such as circularity, recycling, and responsible consumption—trends that align with the values of Generation Z:

“We have goals for 2030, like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which cover various areas including fashion. Although I’m not fully aware of all the specific guidelines for the fashion industry, I believe regulation will be crucial. Brands will need to embrace practices of circularity, recycling, and responsible consumption. These are critical trends for Generation Z, which is no longer as interested in rampant consumerism as in the past” (Interviewee 5).

As these regulations become more stringent, they are driving the industry to align with higher ethical and environmental standards:

“Governmental regulations are also becoming more stringent, compelling the industry to adopt more sustainable practices” (Interviewee 15).

Governments can ensure that sustainability becomes an integral part of the fashion landscape through the promotion of ethical standards and the implementation of rigorous regulations, resonating with the values of the emerging generations.

6.7.3. Promoting Reuse and Circular Fashion Models

Importance of Circular Fashion Practices

Promoting the reuse and recycling of clothing is crucial to a more sustainable fashion industry. Brands have a significant role to play in facilitating these practices, helping to reduce waste and lessen the environmental impact of fashion.

One approach that brands can take is to provide collection containers in stores where customers can drop off their used clothing for recycling or reuse:

“Brands should promote the reuse of garments, for example, by providing collection containers in stores so that used clothes can be recycled or reused” (Interviewee 15).

Another effective strategy is to introduce return and buy-back programs for used clothing, encouraging consumers to recycle their garments instead of discarding them:

“It would also be beneficial to encourage the recycling and reuse of clothes, perhaps through return and buy-back programs for used clothing” (Interviewee 14).

Promoting the purchase of second-hand clothing and advocating for circular fashion practices - where clothes are reused, recycled, and renewed—can significantly contribute to reducing waste and the environmental footprint of the fashion industry:

“We should promote the purchase of used clothes and encourage circular fashion, where garments are reused, recycled, and renewed. This would help reduce waste and the environmental impact of the fashion industry” (Interviewee 6).

Furthermore, fostering a culture of conscious consumption by making it easier to reuse clothing and accessories is essential in minimizing waste and promoting sustainability:

“It is crucial to promote and facilitate the reuse of clothes and accessories, encouraging conscious consumption and reducing waste” (Interviewee 13).

By adopting these strategies, brands can actively contribute to a circular fashion economy, where the lifecycle of clothing is extended, and sustainability becomes a core principle of the industry.

6.7.4. Educating Consumers for a Sustainable Future

Role of Consumer Education in Fostering Sustainability

Looking ahead, the future of sustainable fashion will heavily rely on educating consumers and shifting mindsets towards more responsible consumption. As the industry evolves, it is crucial to equip consumers with the knowledge and understanding of sustainability, helping to drive a broader cultural shift.

Educating consumers about the importance of sustainability will be key in fostering long-term behavioral change. This education will encourage a more conscious approach to consumption, as noted by one interviewee:

“It is important to educate consumers about the importance of sustainability, which can help foster a broader behavioral shift” (Interviewee 15).

Marketing campaigns will play a critical role in this educational process. By focusing on the significance of sustainable practices, these campaigns can influence the collective mindset, promoting more thoughtful and informed consumer choices:

“Marketing campaigns should focus on educating consumers about the importance of sustainability, helping to shift the collective mindset towards more conscious consumption” (Interviewee 14).

In the future, it will be essential to expand these educational efforts to reach an even broader audience. This could be achieved by integrating sustainability education into online shopping platforms, making it more accessible and understandable for all consumers:

“It would be useful to see more educational campaigns that reach everyone, including on online shopping apps, so that information about sustainability is more accessible and understood by a wider audience” (Interviewee 18).

The power of these educational campaigns lies in their ability to reshape consumer behavior, steering it towards more responsible and sustainable practices:

“Educational campaigns can help change consumer mindsets and encourage more conscious consumption” (Interviewee 4).

By making sustainability education a core component of marketing and outreach, the fashion industry can foster a new generation of consumers who are well-informed, environmentally conscious, and committed to responsible consumption.

Part III:

Final Considerations

Part III – Final Considerations

7. Conclusion

7.1. Answers to the research objectives

7.1.1. Investigate how Generation Z understands and engages with the concept of sustainability in the fashion industry.

Generation Z associates sustainability in fashion with a combination of environmental responsibility, ethical practices, and transparency. Through the interviews, it became clear that this generation prioritizes brands' authenticity and commitment to sustainability throughout the entire production chain. One of the most frequently mentioned practices is the use of recycled and organic materials to reduce environmental impact. Additionally, many participants highlighted the importance of local production and supporting smaller brands, which are often perceived as more genuine and dedicated to sustainable practices.

Transparency is another core value, with participants demanding that brands clearly communicate their practices and environmental commitments. This includes providing information about working conditions, fair trade practices, and the environmental impacts throughout the manufacturing process. Participants also emphasized the importance of recycling and embracing the circular economy. Platforms like Vinted, which facilitate the buying and selling of second-hand clothes, were frequently mentioned as a way to extend the life cycle of garments and contribute to a more sustainable, less wasteful fashion system.

Moreover, quality and durability were key values. Many Generation Z members preferred clothing that lasts longer and can be worn repeatedly, rather than fast fashion that encourages rapid turnover. This demonstrates a clear commitment to more mindful consumption. In essence, Generation Z associates sustainable fashion with practices that minimize environmental harm, support social justice, and promote product longevity.

7.1.2. Identify and analyse the key factors that Generation Z prioritizes when selecting sustainable fashion products.

When selecting fashion products, Generation Z prioritizes sustainability factors that revolve around transparency, material quality, and ethical production. The interviews highlighted the importance of brands providing detailed, accessible information about their sustainable practices, including the environmental impact of their production processes, materials used, and factory working conditions. Trust and loyalty are built when transparent brands hold certifications validating their sustainable efforts.

Generation Z highly values the use of sustainable materials such as organic cotton, recycled fabrics, and eco-friendly dyes. These materials are crucial for reducing waste and conserving natural resources. Many participants expressed a desire for clothing that is not only sustainable but also of high quality, emphasizing durability as a key factor in their purchasing decisions. This reflects a shift from fast fashion, where frequent replacements are necessary, to more mindful consumption, where garments are intended to last longer.

Ethical labor practices are also a significant priority for Generation Z. Many interviewees expressed concern for workers' rights, fair wages, and safe working conditions, indicating that social justice is just as important to them as environmental responsibility. Brands that actively promote fair trade and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the welfare of their workers tend to resonate more with this generation.

In summary, members of Generation Z demonstrate a preference for fashion products consistent with their ethical and environmental principles. They are inclined to support brands that prioritize sustainability, not only through their choice of materials and production processes but also through their commitment to socially responsible practices.

7.1.3. Examine the challenges and barriers that prevent Generation Z from purchasing sustainable fashion, despite their positive intentions.

Many challenges make it difficult for Generation Z to align their intention to purchase sustainable fashion with their actual behavior. The first significant barrier is the high cost of sustainable fashion products. Survey participants often noted that sustainable clothing, while

environmentally and ethically superior, is often much more expensive than fast fashion alternatives. This cost difference can limit Generation Z's ability to make sustainable purchases as frequently as they would like, mainly if they have limited financial resources.

In addition to cost, the limited availability of sustainable options poses another challenge. Many interviewees expressed frustration about finding widely available sustainable brands or products online or in physical stores. While platforms like Vinted offer second-hand solutions, finding products that balance style, affordability, and sustainability can still be challenging, leading many consumers to opt for fast fashion despite conflicting with their values.

Another obstacle is the issue of greenwashing, where brands promote themselves as "*sustainable*" without genuinely implementing sustainable practices. However, the growing awareness and skepticism among consumers are pushing for change. Interviewees expressed skepticism about brands making vague or misleading claims about sustainability. This lack of clarity in marketing messages makes consumers hesitant to trust brands that may not be as environmentally conscious as they claim.

Finally, the clash between trends and sustainability was also highlighted. Many young people feel pressured by social media to keep up with the latest fashion trends, which are often aligned with fast fashion. This creates tension between adhering to trends and the desire to consume more sustainably. This internal conflict often leads to purchasing decisions that do not always reflect their values, as the urge to express oneself through fashion and follow trends sometimes outweighs environmental consciousness.

7.2. Theoretical Contributions

This study adds to the expanding knowledge about Generation Z's consumption habits in the sphere of sustainable fashion. It offers a more profound comprehension of the factors affecting their buying decisions and the challenges they encounter. Additionally, it fills in gaps in the existing literature by investigating the impact of social media, financial limitations, and the attitude-behavior disparity on Generation Z's choices regarding sustainable fashion.

Firstly, this study reinforces and validates existing literature on Generation Z's heightened awareness of environmental and social issues, aligning with findings from previous studies (Niinimäki et al., 2020; Cervellon & Carey, 2011). The participants' strong environmental consciousness and desire for ethical consumption are consistent with prior research emphasizing this generation's moral commitment to sustainability. This confirms that Generation Z values environmental and social justice in their consumer choices.

However, this research adds nuance to the concept of the attitude-behavior gap (McNeill & Moore, 2015) by demonstrating that although Generation Z expresses a clear commitment to sustainable fashion, practical challenges - such as cost, convenience, and style - frequently prevent them from acting on these values. While the attitude-behavior gap has been studied in general consumer behavior, this research highlights its specific manifestation within Generation Z, who are particularly susceptible to these barriers despite their solid ethical stance.

The research also makes a significant theoretical contribution by examining the role of social media and influencers in shaping Generation Z's fashion consumption. It extends the work of Djafarova and Foots (2022) by emphasizing influencers' pivotal role in promoting sustainable fashion and bridging the trust gap between brands and consumers. This study suggests that influencers are key intermediaries, building trust through authentic engagement with brands that align with Generation Z's values. This underscores the importance of authenticity and transparency in influencer marketing, offering a framework for how influencers can effectively promote sustainable fashion.

Moreover, this research enriches the theory of value-driven consumption (Liang et al., 2022) by illustrating that Generation Z seeks brands that reflect their values, especially around environmental and social issues. The findings suggest that social media provides a critical platform for brands to engage with Generation Z on these values, but also highlight the challenge posed by greenwashing, where brands make misleading claims about sustainability. This study contributes to our understanding of how brands can more effectively engage with value-driven consumers by being transparent and genuine in their sustainability efforts.

Another significant contribution is the identification of economic constraints as a key barrier to sustainable consumption. While previous research (Mandarić et al., 2022; Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023) has explored the economic challenges of sustainable fashion, this study offers a focused examination of how financial limitations specifically impact Generation Z. It provides a clearer understanding of the paradox faced by this generation, who aspire to support sustainable practices but are often restricted by the high costs associated with eco-friendly fashion. This insight can inform future studies on bridging the affordability gap in a sustainable fashion for younger consumers.

The study also contributes to circular economy theories by highlighting Generation Z's growing interest in second-hand fashion and resale platforms like Vinted. While prior studies (Mazanec & Harantová, 2024) have explored the rise of second-hand markets, this research provides a detailed look at how Generation Z views second-hand fashion as both a practical and ethical solution to the challenges posed by traditional fast fashion. It also identifies psychological barriers, such as concerns over hygiene and stigma, that may limit the growth of second-hand markets, offering a nuanced perspective on the opportunities and challenges for sustainable fashion within the circular economy.

Lastly, this study underscores the importance of social influence and peer behavior in shaping sustainable consumption. The findings align with Noor et al. (2017) and Van den Bergh and Pallini (2018), who argue that social norms and peer validation are powerful drivers of behavior within Generation Z. This research adds to the theoretical understanding of how social influence can either reinforce or hinder sustainable fashion choices. It suggests that promoting sustainability as a social norm could be an effective strategy for encouraging eco-friendly behaviors within this demographic, offering hope for the future of sustainable fashion.

In conclusion, this study makes significant theoretical contributions by advancing our understanding of Generation Z's relationship with sustainable fashion. It not only deepens the discourse on the attitude-behavior gap, social influence, and value-driven consumption but also offers actionable insights for both academics and practitioners seeking to engage Generation Z in sustainable fashion practices. This research provides a nuanced framework

for understanding the barriers and motivations that influence sustainable consumption, empowering the audience with practical knowledge.

7.3. Practical Contributions

The results of this study offer valuable insights for fashion brands and marketers looking to engage Generation Z, especially in the area of sustainability. One significant finding is the importance of making sustainable fashion more affordable. To attract this generation, brands should offer products at more accessible price points, provide rental or second-hand options, and collaborate with influencers who promote affordability and ethical consumption. Transparency is also crucial for gaining the trust of Generation Z, so brands need to communicate their sourcing practices, ethical labor conditions, and environmental impact. With this level of openness, brands might be able to convince this generation of their commitment to sustainability.

In addition, brands should use social media and influencers to genuinely connect with Generation Z, ensuring that sustainability is integrated into more than just marketing campaigns. This generation values authentic engagement, so brands need to do more than surface-level messaging and demonstrate genuine efforts toward sustainability. Convenience also plays a crucial role in Generation Z's purchasing behavior. Therefore, brands need to ensure that sustainable fashion is easily accessible through online platforms or physical stores to encourage more eco-friendly shopping habits. By addressing these factors, brands can resonate with Generation Z's values and encourage more sustainable consumer choices.

7.4. Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

While this study offers valuable insights into Generation Z's perceptions of sustainable fashion, several limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size was relatively small and geographically constrained, which may not fully capture the broader Generation Z population's perspectives. Future research should include more significant, diverse participants to account for potential variations in attitudes across different cultural and geographical contexts. Moreover, this study primarily relied on qualitative data, limiting its

capacity to measure the direct influence of factors such as price, convenience, and social media. Future research could benefit from adopting a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these factors' impact on sustainable purchasing behavior. Additionally, the study focused exclusively on respondents from one country and one generational group, which restricts its generalizability.

Another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of this study, which restrains the ability to track how Generation Z's beliefs, social norms, attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and purchase intentions evolve. Future research could explore the long-term shifts in Generation Z's purchasing habits as they move through different life stages, gain financial independence, and their environmental values continue to develop. Expanding the research to include comparative studies with other generations would also provide a deeper understanding of intergenerational differences in sustainable consumption patterns. Lastly, future studies could adopt a more quantitative approach, allowing for the inclusion of a larger and more diverse sample, potentially yielding findings that are more generalizable to the broader population.

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Appendix

Appendix A – Informed Consent

TITLE OF STUDY

Understanding Generation Z's Perceptions of Sustainable Fashion

RESEARCHER

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PURPOSE OF STUDY

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if anything is unclear or if you need further information. The purpose of this study is understanding how Generation Z perceives the concept of sustainability in the fashion industry.

STUDY PROCEDURES

The procedure of this study is an interview. You will be asked questions about your views on sustainability within the fashion industry, specifically how you perceive and engage with sustainable practices. We aim for you to respond as honestly and naturally as possible. The interview is expected to last between 35 and 45 minutes. It will be audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed into a text version for detailed analysis by the researcher.

RISKS

You may decline to answer any or all questions and terminate your involvement at any time if you choose. There are no risks associated with your participation.

BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study. However, we hope you would have enjoyed sharing your thoughts on this topic and that the information obtained from this study may help this research.

CONFIDENTIALITY

For the purposes of this research study, your comments will be anonymous. The data collected will be handled by the researcher only.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to participate in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect your relationship with the researcher, if any. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read, understood the provided information, and had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B – Interview Script

Introduction

Hello,

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your responses are extremely important to my research on Generation Z's perceptions of sustainable fashion.

The aim of this study is to understand how individuals of your generation view sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

To begin, could you please tell me a little about yourself?

First Section: Concepts and Evolution of Sustainability

Let's start by talking about sustainability.

- How do you define sustainability?
- In your opinion, what are the main reasons why sustainability is important in today's society?
- Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If yes, in what way? Can you give examples?
- How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?
- Do you think you need more education on sustainability? Can you explain why?

Second Section: Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

Now let's focus on sustainability in the fashion industry.

- How often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products over non-sustainable ones? Please justify your answer.
- What are the main factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than just a passing trend?
- Which fashion brands do you consider to be leaders in sustainable practices?
- What makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Third Section: Generation Z Characteristics and Fashion Choices

Let's discuss the characteristics of your generation and how they affect your fashion preferences.

- In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of your generation?
- How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?
- What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?
- How can Generation Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting changes in the fashion industry?

Fourth Section: Digital Behavior and Communication Preferences of Generation Z in the Fashion Industry

Now let's talk about how digital platforms and social media influence Generation Z's sustainable fashion choices.

- How often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?
- How do social networks influence your fashion choices?
- How do social media campaigns promoting sustainability influence your perception of fashion brands?
- Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how? Can you give examples?
- How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?
- Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Fifth Section: Perceptions of Sustainability in the Fashion Industry Among Generation Z

- Finally, let's discuss Generation Z's perceptions of sustainability in the fashion industry.
- What are your thoughts on the current sustainability efforts in the fashion industry? Can you provide some examples?
- How can the attraction to consume new fashion trends be balanced with the need to adopt sustainable practices?
- Which fashion brands do you believe are aligned with your sustainability values? Please justify.
- Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Please justify.
- What changes do you think are necessary in the fashion industry to better meet Generation Z's expectations of sustainability?

Conclusion

Thank you very much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your contribution is crucial to understanding how Generation Z perceives sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix C – Re-transcription of the 1st interview: Interviewee 1

Female, 25 years old, originally from Abrantes, currently living in Lisbon. She is a research fellow on a project at Universidade Lusófona and holds a master's degree in Sociology from ISCTE. She is actively engaged in incorporating sustainable practices into her daily life.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: In my view, sustainability involves using the planet's resources responsibly, ensuring that their use does not compromise their ability to regenerate. Thus, we do not exhaust resources, allowing them time to renew themselves. Additionally, it is essential to respect other forms of life on the planet, including other animals and species.

Interviewer: Right. So, in line with what you said, what are, in your opinion, the main reasons why sustainability is important in today's society?

Interviewee: I think one of the main reasons is that for a long time, we didn't consider it. With the industrial revolutions and the gigantic advancement of technology in recent years, it seems that we have forgotten that the planet has finite resources. This imbalance can affect ecosystems, putting at risk not only our life on the planet, but also that of other species. It is therefore clear that our way of life is calling into question the decisions we have made so far.

Interviewer: Okay, so, and do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? How did this happen? Can you give an example?

Interviewee: I think so, actually. I remember that right after the first lockdown, one of the first news I saw was about how carbon emissions decreased drastically due to the reduction of flights and other activities. That made me think that if everyone was committed, we could actually achieve important environmental goals. The pandemic has shown that significant changes are possible when there is a collective effort. I'm not suggesting that everyone stay home forever, but it was a clear example of how we can make a difference if we're willing.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: I feel like I could do even more to actively incorporate sustainable practices into my routine, but in general I try to integrate them into my day-to-day life in various ways. Since I was little, my parents have always been very conscious about sustainability, which has greatly influenced our family's habits. For example, we have been recycling for many years and are very careful about the use of plastic. In addition, I aim to optimize water consumption, such as taking showers in succession to avoid wasting water heating. Recently, my family installed solar panels at home for water heating, reducing the consumption of non-renewable electricity. Additionally, my father has a garden and avoids using pesticides, opting for natural methods to control pests. This was a struggle I had with him, but now he only uses natural products. We do not waste food scraps, which are used for composting or animal feed. These are small gestures we make to minimize our impact on the environment and promote a more sustainable lifestyle.

In my own life, I try to use public transportation as much as possible and avoid using the car for very short trips. As for food, I try to reduce meat consumption, although sometimes I fail in this area. I avoid using single-use plastics as much as possible and opt for products that have less environmental impact, such as recyclable or reusable packaging. Recently, I started using solid shampoo and look for creams and products that offer refill options, instead of new packaging. These are some of the changes I am implementing to reduce my environmental impact and adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. For as long as I can remember, I have been used to adopting these behaviors and I continue to practice them to this day.

Interviewer: So, taking into account this, which you said and which are already incorporated into your daily life, do you think you need more education about sustainability? And can you explain why?

Interviewee: I believe so, we can always learn more. I am sure that there are practices that I could adopt, but I have not yet done so simply because I am unaware. I remember a conversation with a friend who is very active in environmental defense, where she shared with me small gestures that make perfect sense. For example, when baking pasta, she explained to me that after putting the pasta in the boiling water, if we close the lid, we can turn off the stove, as the pasta will continue to cook with the residual heat. Not only does this save gas or electricity, but it also reduces our environmental impact. This simple habit not only allows us to save resources, but also contributes to a more sustainable lifestyle. It is crucial to be open to learning and implementing practices that promote the preservation of the environment, even if they are small changes in our daily lives. This was an important lesson for me, as I realized that there are many things I can learn and apply to make a difference in caring for the planet.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section that talks about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: I consider myself someone who buys very little. For example, when my sister no longer wears a pair of pants, they come to me. The same happens with clothes that people around me no longer use. I usually get clothes in an alternative way, whether from friends, siblings, neighbors, or even my mother. So when I buy new pieces, it's usually because I couldn't find them any other way.

Interviewer: And for you, what are the factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry can be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: The main factors that indicate that sustainable practices in the fashion industry can be more than just passing trends involve a significant shift in consumers' mindsets and practical considerations regarding product quality and sustainability.

Firstly, there is a growing awareness of the negative environmental and social impacts associated with fast-fashion and disposable fashion. Consumers are increasingly inclined to adopt conscious consumption, preferring products that have a lower environmental impact and are more durable.

In addition, dissatisfaction with the often-inferior quality of conventional fashion pieces plays a crucial role in this change in behavior. Many consumers are realizing that by opting for second-hand products or brands committed to sustainability, they are not only extending the life of the pieces, but also investing in items that maintain a higher quality over time. This contrasts with the constant need to replace low-quality fashion pieces that deteriorate quickly.

Therefore, sustainability in fashion is becoming not only an ethical but also a practical and economical choice for many consumers. This suggests that the shifts towards more sustainable practices in the fashion industry are solidifying and may endure, not just a fad dictated by market trends.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I believe that some big brands are trying to adopt more sustainable discourses, often highlighting the use of recycled materials or similar initiatives. However, in practice, these statements are not always reflected in effective sustainable actions. Often, they seem to be more marketing strategies than real commitments to make fashion more sustainable.

On the other hand, I consider that the most sustainable brands are usually the smallest and least known. I remember a specific brand that uses animal symbols in its products, allocating part of its profits to the preservation of endangered species. Their sweaters, for example, highlight animals at risk, not only raising awareness of conservation issues, but also promoting sustainable practices. While I don't remember the exact name of the brand, they supposedly utilize materials like organic cotton.

These initiatives demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability and show how small brands can have a significant positive impact on the fashion industry, going beyond the

simple product to embrace a broader vision of environmental protection and social responsibility.

Interviewer: And just to complement what do you think concretely makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: In my opinion, what makes these smaller brands stand out is their genuine commitment to sustainability in every aspect of their business. Unlike large brands, which often seem to focus their sustainable concerns only on marketing, smaller brands demonstrate a holistic approach from the beginning to the final product. These brands are concerned with not producing fast fashion items that last only a season. They consider every step of the process, from how they sell to the materials they use, conveying a clear message of ecological concern. For example, they choose sustainable materials like organic cotton and ensure that their pieces are durable and of high quality.

Thus, the genuine and consistent commitment to sustainable practices in all aspects of the business is what differentiates these smaller brands, allowing them to stand out for their authenticity and positive impact on the environment.

Interviewer: All right, so now moving on to the third section that talks about the characteristics of Gen Z, the fashion choices, what do you think are the main characteristics of Gen Z?

Interviewee: Gen Z is often characterized by several distinct characteristics that set it apart from previous generations. One of the key characteristics is their growth in a very young digital age. This generation was introduced to devices such as mobile phones and computers at a very early age, which significantly shaped their social behaviors and interactions. Contrary to common perception, not all young people use these devices constantly for entertainment, as many use them for emergencies or essential communications.

In addition, Gen Z is notable for its strong interest and concern for environmental issues and sustainability. This generation is clearly aware of global environmental challenges, and many individuals are actively involved in initiatives and practices that promote a more

sustainable lifestyle. From consumer choices to participation in environmental movements, sustainability is a central concern for many young people in Gen Z.

Another striking feature is the significant involvement with social and justice issues. This generation demonstrates a greater sensitivity and awareness towards issues such as human rights, gender equality, inclusion and diversity. Movements such as feminism, LGBTQ+ rights, and racial justice are important agendas for many young people from Generation Z, who are active in campaigns and protests to promote positive social change.

In addition, Generation Z is also contributing to greater dialogue and awareness about mental health by trying to promote discussions about problems such as anxiety, depression, and emotional well-being. This openness is helping to deconstruct prejudices and increase accessibility to mental health care. And I think that's it.

Interviewer: So, and how do you think those characteristics, which you said relate to your fashion decisions about what you buy in fashion

Interviewee: I think so. Really. On the one hand, environmental and sustainability issues have a significant impact on my fashion purchasing decisions. On the one hand, there is a clear influence when it comes to opting for brands and products that adopt sustainable practices. This includes everything from choosing organic or recycled materials to brands that demonstrate a genuine commitment to reducing environmental impact throughout their production chain.

However, I recognize that for some people these concerns are not a priority when deciding on fashion. I understand that many consumers can separate sustainable behaviors into different areas of their lives, prioritizing aspects such as style, price, or convenience when buying clothes. For these consumers, fashion can be seen as a form of personal expression or an aesthetic choice, where sustainability criteria may not be so determinant.

On the other hand, there is also the opposite scenario, where people are aware of and engaged in sustainable practices in fashion, but perhaps less committed in other areas of life. This shows how multifaceted consumption decisions are and can vary depending on individual priorities and personal contexts.

Therefore, the influence of environmental and social issues on my fashion decisions is clear and varied. My approach is to consider the environmental impact of my choices whenever

possible, but also to respect the different perspectives and motivations that each consumer may have when deciding what to buy.

Interviewer: Right, and what challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: Most of the time, I inherit clothes from my mother or my sister, which immediately presents challenges, such as adjusting pieces that have different measurements from mine. It's common to need to adapt them to my body or sometimes recognize that they won't work for me. This situation is an opportunity to find creative solutions to ensure that clothes fit well. In addition, I try to resist the pressure to follow passing trends or the temptation to buy new pieces unnecessarily. I think it's important to value what I already have and find ways to use it sustainably, both financially and environmentally.

Interviewer: And tell me something, how do you think your generation's fashion preferences can lead to lasting changes in the fashion industry, also taking into account a little bit what we've already talked about.

Interviewee: In my opinion, the fashion choices of my generation are messing with the industry in a serious way. Increasingly, young people are connected to environmental issues and are looking for brands that follow sustainable practices. This is causing companies to rethink how they produce their clothes, opting for more environmentally friendly materials and manufacturing methods that respect the planet.

Brands like Fjällräven, which makes those durable and quality backpacks, are an example. They make products to last, whether to pass from generation to generation or to be sold second-hand. I've had one of these backpacks for about six years and it's still as good as new. This shows that it is worth paying a little more for something that lasts so long.

So, by preferring brands that care about durability and the environment, we are sending a clear message to the fashion industry. We are showing that we want a more conscious and sustainable consumption. And that's forcing other brands to follow suit, which is great for our planet.

Interviewer: So, I think we can move forward? Ready in the fourth section. What I'm going to try to understand is whether the digital behavior and communication preferences of your generation in the fashion industry. And so, the first question is, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: So, I don't use social media much to discover new sustainable fashion brands. In fact, I don't even have Instagram installed on my phone. When I need to search for something, I usually go directly to Google and search through the browser. I avoid spending too much time on Instagram because I know I can stay involved there for a long time. This more direct and focused approach helps me find what I'm looking for efficiently, without being distracted by other things on social media.

So, in addition, when I use Instagram, it is for very specific purposes, such as following cultural programming that I cannot find elsewhere. The information that appears first in my feed is usually about those specific interests. I go in, see this information and leave, without exploring much to discover new brands or sustainable fashion. It doesn't seem to be something I actively pursue on Instagram, since I don't use the platform for many other things besides those specific interests.

Interviewer: So, Filipa, in short, you use social media more to see cultural things or specific events. As for the next question, it seems that social media doesn't have much influence on your fashion choices, right?

Interviewee: Yes. I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay, then, and how do you think sustainability campaigns are? I don't know if you're ready, just the social networks, very punctually, how do you think that sustainability campaigns on social networks influence the image you see of certain fashion brands?

Interviewee: To be honest, I haven't been following sustainability campaigns on social media much lately, so I can't say for sure how they affect my perception of fashion brands.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: No, not really, not much. I don't follow many influencers, but if I have to mention someone, maybe Salomé Santos, who I follow for her sustainable initiatives and commitment to ethical fashion. But in general, I'm not very influenced by them in my fashion choices.

Interviewer: How important do you think user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, is when you're considering buying sustainable fashion? How can these reviews and testimonials from other users influence your purchase decision?

Interviewee: I think it's very important, you know? When those reviews and testimonials are available, they end up having a big weight in my decision. Especially if I don't know anyone personally who uses a specific brand or buys sustainable products. If I can see that two or three people have left their opinions, I end up trusting those experiences a little and that can influence whether I choose to buy or not. It's a way to feel more secure about the quality and credibility of the brand or product before making my choice.

Interviewer: And do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? And it can explain the reasons for your preference for one or the other.

Interviewee: Yes, I usually choose to buy in physical stores. First, I take a look online, especially for things like shoes, which have to fit perfectly, like my mom's or my sister's. Then, I go to physical stores already with an idea of what I want and what can work for me. It saves time and I can see right away if the pieces are cool or not.

Interviewer: Very well. So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, I wanted to know what your opinion is about the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability. Based on what you have said before, what are the efforts you are currently seeing in the industry?

Interviewee: I think the efforts are a little limited yet. As I mentioned before, there is an attempt to use more sustainable products, such as organic cotton and other initiatives of this type. But I think there is still a lot to improve. It can't just be a matter of using different materials; The way things are produced also matters a lot. For example, if the pieces are made in countries like Bangladesh and then are sent to Portugal, this has significant costs, not only economic, but also social and environmental. It is a complex issue that requires radical changes in the global economy.

I think the most visible efforts are really focused on the materials. There are brands, such as Timberland, that have shown concern about the materials they use and transparency about the origin of these materials. But overall, there is still a long way to go for the fashion industry to be truly sustainable.

Interviewer: Done. And then, how can you balance the desire to consume new fashion trends, as we have talked about before, with the need to adopt sustainable practices? It can be a little more general. How can there be this balance, which is often not respected?

Interviewee: I think it's important to question why we're buying something. Is it because we saw someone wearing it and want to follow the trend? Is it because everyone around us is wearing it and we feel that pressure? Or is it because we really need that piece? I think it's crucial to think about this at the moment of purchase. For example, as I mentioned before, I can spend some time researching online before I decide to buy something. This helps to prolong the decision process and avoid impulsive purchases. By doing so, we can break the cycle of overconsumption and focus on what we really need.

Interviewer: I understand.

Interviewee: I think it's crucial to understand not just at the moment of purchase, but beforehand, why we want to acquire something. This helps me make more conscious choices and avoid impulsive purchases.

It has been proven that there is a specific dynamic when shopping. We are happy with the immediate purchase, but scientists recommend prolonging this process as long as possible.

For example, if we walk into the mall and buy something in about an hour, it can be impulsive. However, if we wait at home for a day, thinking about whether we really need it, looking at other brands and considering various options, this process can extend and this avoids unnecessary and impulsive purchases.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: I'll mention again the brand I know well, like Fjällräven. This brand is in line with the principles that I consider important. The products are of high quality, manufactured by a team that respects strict ethical standards. They are not produced under dubious conditions, where transparency about the manufacturing process is often uncertain. The durability of the products is remarkable and they are timeless, which is rare to find these days. Therefore, I believe they are an excellent choice and will remain in fashion for a long time.

Recently in Lisbon, I observed a foreign family. I saw the father with a backpack from Fjällräven that seemed to have gone through several battles and was still there impeccable. While watching them, I also noticed that the children wore new small backpacks of the same brand. I was delighted and at the same time, I felt as if the backpack was a message: "Look at these Fjällräven backpacks you have now. It is important to treat them with care, because they are durable and must be well cared for".

Interviewer: Very interesting. And are you willing to pay more for sustainable products?

Interviewee: Yes, I'm willing to pay more for sustainable products. I think many brands are still not fully transparent, but in general, that's the direction I try to go in my choices.

Interviewer: To conclude, what changes do you consider necessary to be made in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of our generation.

Interviewee: To better meet our generation's sustainability expectations, I believe that the fashion industry needs to implement several significant changes.

I think brands should follow the example of Fjällräven, which has long-lasting products, with timeless, simple, functional designs and that we know all the details involved in its production.

Another fundamental aspect is to combat the culture of "use and throw away" or buying something new every season. This mentality contributes to waste and unsustainability. By realizing that we don't need to follow this consumption cycle, we can start doing things differently, promoting the reuse and appreciation of the pieces we already have.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix D – Re-transcription of the 2nd interview: Interviewee 2

Female, 23 years old, Pursuing a master's degree in Communication and Digital Transformation at Universidade Católica Portuguesa. Holds a bachelor's degree in Marketing and Advertising from IADE. Portuguese, living in Lisbon. Sustainability is a central theme in her thesis and daily practices.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: Sustainability is a concept that encompasses environmental, social and economic responsibility. It involves adopting practices that are environmentally friendly, ensuring ethical and responsible production. Furthermore, sustainability implies meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This balance is essential to ensure the continuous and harmonious development of society and the planet.

Interviewer: And following that, what do you think in your opinion are the main reasons why sustainability is important in today's society?

Interviewee: Sustainability is crucial because of global warming and the climate change we are facing. We need to change the way we live, because continuing to follow the same patterns of the past is not feasible. If we don't make significant changes, the future of our planet will be at risk. Therefore, it is essential to adopt more sustainable habits to ensure a healthy and livable environment for future generations.

Interviewer: Okay, so, and do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? How did this happen? Can you give an example?

Interviewee: Yes, the pandemic has greatly impacted my views on sustainability and environmental protection. The time we spent locked up at home, unable to go out, gave us more time to reflect on the impact of our actions on the environment.

I noticed a significant reduction in pollution levels since there were no flights, fewer cars on the road, and industrial activity was greatly reduced. This forced pause made me realize how much our daily activities contribute to pollution. The pandemic was a moment of reflection that led many of us to value environmental protection more and to seek more eco-friendly alternatives in our consumer choices.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: In my daily routine, I adopt several sustainable practices to minimize environmental impact. Instead of using disposable cotton pads for removing makeup, I created reusable cloth pads that I wash in the machine, thus reducing waste. In addition, I started selling clothes on the Vinted platform, encouraging reuse and extending the life cycle of the pieces. I also recycle at home, separating recyclable waste and ensuring it is properly directed for recycling. Although I still don't buy a lot of second-hand clothes, I'm exploring that possibility, recognizing the importance of prioritizing reusable and sustainable products.

Interviewer: Very well. And do you think you need more education about sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: I believe that both education from school and social pressure are important to promote sustainability. More education and training from an early age on sustainability are always welcome, both to improve the knowledge we already have and to discover new ways to be more sustainable in our daily lives.

Interviewer: Regarding the second section, let's talk about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products. Justify your answer.

Interviewee: Sometimes I choose to buy sustainable fashion products, but not as many as I would like. The main reasons are the high cost and the lack of affordable options. Sustainable fashion pieces are generally more expensive and many of the stores are only available online. I prefer to buy clothes physically, which makes it harder to opt for sustainable fashion. Despite knowing that the quality and production ethics are better, the price and convenience of non-sustainable options often influence my decision. Occasionally, I buy sustainable pieces in Portuguese brand markets, but this happens sporadically.

Interviewer: And for you, what are the factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry can be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: I would say that one of the main factors is the growing awareness that our generation has about environmental issues, something that our parents' generation didn't have as much. Today's young people are more willing to adopt sustainable practices, such as buying and selling vintage clothing, which is becoming very popular. This increase in environmental awareness and the incorporation of sustainable habits by our generation suggest that these practices are here to stay.

Many new brands are born with a focus on sustainability because they know it's important to young consumers. Currently, it is difficult to imagine the launch of a new brand that does

not position itself as sustainable. Therefore, I believe that the combination of greater environmental awareness among young people and the adaptation of brands to their demands are factors that indicate that sustainable practices in fashion are not just a passing trend, but something that will endure.

Interviewer: Okay, and which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Well, I'll mention two Portuguese brands and one international brand.

First, Zouri, which is a footwear brand that focuses on sustainability. They use plastic collected from the beaches of Esposende and combine it with organic materials. All production is done ethically, and the brand has already managed to remove more than a ton of plastic from the beaches.

Then we have +351, which is a totally Portuguese brand that uses exclusively organic cotton in its pieces. The clothes are designed in Lisbon and produced in the north of Portugal. The brand offers unisex pieces with a relaxed and modern style.

At the international level, I would highlight Patagonia. They are pioneers in the use of recycled and organic materials, and they have a strong commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. The brand implements various initiatives to reduce environmental impact, such as clothing repair programs.

These brands demonstrate that it is possible to combine style and environmental responsibility, leading the way towards more sustainable fashion.

Interviewer: And just to complement what do you think concretely makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: Overall, these brands stand out for their commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. They use eco-friendly materials such as organic cotton and recycled plastics. They produce locally, ensuring fair working conditions and supporting the national economy. In addition, they are transparent in their production processes and participate in community and environmental initiatives, which reinforces consumer trust and loyalty.

Interviewer: All right, so now moving on to the third section that talks about the characteristics of Gen Z, the fashion choices, what do you think are the main characteristics of Gen Z?

Interviewee: I think Gen Z stands out for being much more open and authentic. We are known for valuing diversity and inclusion, and for being very comfortable expressing our individuality.

In addition, Gen Z is known to be quite anxious, partly due to the economic and environmental crises we face from a young age. However, this anxiety is often channeled into activism and the search for positive change in the world.

Interviewer: Okay, so and of all these characteristics, so what do you think they relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: I agree that we are more demanding. It's no longer so easy for a brand to say it's sustainable without actually being sustainable, because we check and investigate everything on social media. If a brand lies, we quickly report it online, as happened recently with Nike.

Ethical production is also crucial. We want to know that brands have fair and responsible practices. There were cases of brands that claimed to have ethical production, but then we found out that they used child labor.

Personally, I'm a bit impulsive when shopping. Sometimes, I buy something because I really like it at the moment, but I try to look online first, see reviews and only then go to the store to try it.

However, I still buy a lot of things from fast fashion. The price of sustainable clothing is a significant barrier for me. I like the design and support the cause, but with 100 euros, I can buy several pieces of fast fashion. Moreover, many sustainable brands only sell online, and I prefer to shop in physical stores.

Interviewer: And how do you think these preferences of Gen Z in fashion can lead to lasting changes in the industry?

Interviewee: I believe that Gen Z's preferences can really influence lasting change in the fashion industry. First, brands need to realize that our generation values sustainability and transparency a lot. We are willing to pay a little more for products that are truly sustainable, but the prices still need to be more affordable.

Interviewer: So now in the fourth section, let's look a little at the digital behavior of generation z addressing digital platforms, social networks and how these influence the sustainable fashion of our generation. So, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new brands in a sustainable way, even if you don't buy any kind?

Interviewee: Always. Basically, it's on social media that I discover new sustainable fashion brands. Instagram and TikTok are the main channels where I find these brands. For example, when I search for sustainable fashion on Instagram, the algorithm starts suggesting related content to me. Later, these suggestions also appear on TikTok.

Interviewer: And how does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media has a certain influence on my fashion choices. On TikTok, for example, I watch a lot of videos of influencers talking about sustainable fashion, which inspires me to explore new brands and styles. While I don't buy everything I see, recommendations help me discover options I might not have known about otherwise. I like to see other people's opinions and experiences before making a purchase decision. So, although it is not an overwhelming influence, social media definitely impacts what I choose to wear.

Interviewer: Okay, then, and how do you think the sustainability campaigns you see on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Sustainability campaigns on social media greatly influence my perception of fashion brands.

When I see a brand promoting sustainable practices in a transparent and authentic way, I'm more inclined to trust it.

Especially with smaller Portuguese brands, which often manage to convey that trust due to their size and proximity. I like to see the initiatives they promote and I feel that they really make a difference.

Interviewer: Very well and you feel that digital influencers influence your fashion choices. If so, how? And can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, digital influencers have a significant impact on my fashion choices. For example, I follow Catarina Barreiros, who is a great advocate of sustainability and founder of "Loja do Zero".

Through her Instagram posts, she shares sustainable tips and products, which inspires me to make more conscious choices.

Their educational approach helps me to better understand the importance of opting for sustainable fashion and to discover new brands and products that align with my values.

Interviewer: How important do you think user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, is important to you when you're considering buying sustainable fashion? How can these reviews and testimonials from other users influence your purchase decision?

Interviewee: I would say that user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, is of great importance.

If I see good reviews and satisfied customers, I feel more confident in buying.

It makes me think that if it worked well for others, it will probably work for me as well.

Positive reviews help me see the brand in a more positive light and trust their products more.

Interviewer: And do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? And you can explain the reasons for your preference for one or the other.

Interviewee: Yes, I prefer to shop in physical stores over online. I only buy online as a last resort. I enjoy going to physical stores because I can try on clothes and feel the fabrics. I prefer to know exactly how the clothes fit me before purchasing, and I can do that instantly in the stores.

Interviewer: Very well. So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, I wanted to know what your opinion is about the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability. Based on what you have said before, what are the efforts you are currently seeing in the industry?

Interviewee: I think the big brands still have a lot to improve. Some have started to create sustainable lines, but this represents only a small part of their collections. It is still an initial effort and insufficient for the necessary impact. On the other hand, the new brands that emerge already have sustainability as a fundamental pillar. These brands are born with sustainable practices from the beginning, which is very positive. Overall, there is a positive movement, but there is still a long way to go for sustainability to become the norm in the fashion industry.

Interviewer: Done. And then, how can you balance the desire to consume new fashion trends, as we have talked about before, with the need to adopt sustainable practices? It can be a little more general. How can there be this balance, which is often not respected?

Interviewee: Well, balancing the desire to follow new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices can be challenging, but it is possible. An important point is to focus on timeless and quality pieces. Sustainable fashion tends to create pieces that do not follow passing trends, but can be worn for several years.

Another approach is to incorporate some pieces that are fashionable but sustainable. If sustainable fashion brands start creating pieces that also reflect the latest trends, it will be easier for people to choose eco-friendly options without feeling like they're missing out on something.

Influencers also play an important role. When they start wearing and promoting sustainable fashion, it encourages followers to do the same. Seeing them wear a piece from a sustainable brand can make that piece desirable and help popularize sustainable practices.

Therefore, balance can be achieved by combining timeless pieces with some sustainable trends and supporting influencers to promote these choices. In this way, we can continue to enjoy fashion, but in a more conscious and responsible way.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: One of the brands that I consider aligned with my sustainability values is Ispari, which is 100% Portuguese and produces pieces consciously and sustainably. The brand's philosophy, "handmade with heart" reflects its commitment to quality, individuality, and environmental responsibility. I like the care they put into each piece, promoting a more conscious and sustainable future.

Ispari uses materials such as dead stock and ensures local production, which reduces waste and supports the local economy.

Interviewer: Very interesting. And are you willing to pay more for sustainable products?

Interviewee: Yes, I'm willing to pay more for sustainable products, but within a reasonable limit.

I value the quality and ethics behind the production of these pieces. However, the price cannot be excessively high. Also, it depends a lot on the parts in question; If I find a piece that I really like and consider essential, I'm willing to invest a little more in it.

Interviewer: To conclude, what changes do you consider necessary to be made in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of our generation.

Interviewee: I think it's essential that the fashion industry starts to focus on long-lasting, quality products, rather than launching new pieces on a weekly basis. Measures such as the additional tax on fast fashion that is already in force in France help to combat overconsumption.

Appendix E – Re-transcription of the 3rd interview: Interviewee 3

Female, 22 years old, holds a bachelor's degree in International Relations. Recently completed a postgraduate degree in Political Communication and will start a master's

degree in Strategic Communication at Nova FCSH in September. She has professional experience in the diplomatic field, working in embassies in political communication and consular functions. She has participated in various sustainability-focused events, enhancing her knowledge and commitment to the topic.

Interviewer: Hello, I appreciate your participation in this interview. Your answers are extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion.

The aim of this study is to understand how individuals of your generation view sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

OK, all right, so now, to get started, let's go to the first section of the study, which is basically about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: For me, sustainability involves practices that are beneficial to the planet. These practices must be considered both by large industries and companies and by consumers.

Sustainability, therefore, involves adopting practices that protect the environment and promote social and economic well-being, from daily consumer actions to business policies that improve our relationship with the planet.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what are the main reasons why sustainability is important in today's society?

Interviewee: We are increasingly witnessing a greater concern for sustainable practices due to climate change and its devastating effects. These concerns are essential for us to initiate a change in the practices of large industries and people. Sustainability is crucial to mitigate the impacts of climate change and ensure a livable future for generations to come.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, how did this happen? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, the pandemic has greatly impacted my views on sustainability. The total shutdown of cities has made us realize the environmental impacts of our daily activities. However, I realized that this stop is temporary and that the economy cannot stop completely. The pandemic has shown that, with more sustainable practices, the negative effects of large industries can be mitigated. This reinforced my opinion about the need for permanent change, but it also made me realize that real change depends a lot on large companies.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily life?

Interviewee: In my daily life, I adopt several sustainable practices. I do recycle at home, separating recyclable waste and ensuring that it is properly sent for recycling. I often use public transportation, such as buses and the metro, to reduce my carbon footprint and minimize car use. I have also reduced my meat consumption, opting for a more plant-based diet, which has a positive impact on the environment. Additionally, I try to buy second-hand clothes or from sustainable brands, supporting circular fashion and reducing waste.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability, do you think there is a concern about it or do you think that it should still be explored more?

Interviewee: Yes, I think the theme of sustainability is quite well-known among the youth of our generation. However, it is crucial to have more information on sustainable practices applicable to our daily lives. Sustainability should be more integrated into school curricula, with teachers and educators implementing daily practices. In addition, young influencers can use social media to spread the word about these practices, reaching a wider audience and promoting sustainable behavior change.

Interviewer: So now moving on to the second section which will then bring together sustainability and the fashion industry. First, I wanted to ask you how often the options for buying sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable products? Can

Interviewee: Sustainable fashion is generally more expensive, which makes it difficult for many people, including me, to sustain these choices consistently. While I understand the

importance of supporting sustainable brands, the price difference means that I often end up opting for cheaper and less sustainable options.

Whenever possible, I try to avoid buying new clothes, opting to reuse what I already have or buy second-hand. However, I would like to see more sustainable options at affordable prices so that this choice becomes more viable for everyone.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main factors that indicate that sustainable practices in the fashion industry can be more than just a passing trend, that is, they can even be an effective change in our society?

Interviewee: I think sustainability in fashion is no longer a passing trend and is becoming an effective change.

We see this in the growing adoption of sustainable practices by various industries and brands. Criticism of big brands, which are often wrapped up in a lack of transparency and questionable labor practices, has also driven this change.

Consumer pressure for more responsibility and the evident climate changes we face globally are forcing the industry to adopt more sustainable practices.

The new brands that emerge with a focus on sustainability show that this trend is here to stay, reflecting a necessary response to environmental challenges.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: When I think of sustainable brands, I think a lot about Portuguese brands and everything made in Portugal. I believe that local production is an important step towards sustainability. Brands such as Jacarandá and ISTO. are examples of Portuguese companies that implement sustainable practices in their collections. These brands stand out for their transparency, the use of quality materials and their concern for working conditions in production.

Interviewer: And just to complement what do you think concretely makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: Transparency is essential for these brands to stand out. They clearly communicate their sustainable practices and ensure that consumers know exactly how and where their clothes are made.

Sustainability certifications and good working conditions for employees are equally important. In addition, the use of high-quality materials that do not harm the environment are essential to gain the trust of consumers.

Interviewer: All right, so now moving on to the third section that talks about the characteristics of Gen Z, the fashion choices, what do you think are the main characteristics of Gen Z?

Interviewee: I would say that, above all, Gen Z has a strong fighting spirit. We grow up in a time of great change worldwide, which requires perseverance and the need to make our voice heard. In Portugal, we see many young people taking on important roles in political and sustainability issues. This generation places a high value on transparency and authenticity, fighting for the values they believe in.

Interviewer: And how do you think those characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: There is a paradox in the fashion decisions of our generation. On the one hand, there is a growing desire to opt for vintage and second-hand clothing, which is more sustainable and affordable. On the other hand, social networks, such as TikTok and Instagram, promote unbridled consumerism of fast fashion brands, such as Zara. Although many young people try to make conscious choices, there is still a significant part that does not consider sustainability in their purchasing decisions.

I try to be very conscious in my fashion choices, always considering the issues of labor and sustainability, which are intrinsically linked. Before buying, I think about whether I really need that piece in my wardrobe. If it's not necessary, I prefer not to buy it. When sustainable options are too expensive, I opt not to buy anything. I try to balance need with sustainability, making more thoughtful and conscious choices. However, I admit that occasionally I end up buying from fast fashion brands because of the ease and price.

Interviewer: Right, and what challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: I would say that the biggest challenge is, without a doubt, the price. Sustainable fashion tends to be more expensive, which makes it difficult to opt for these options consistently. If prices were more affordable, you would face virtually no challenge, as nowadays we have many options for brands that offer different styles of sustainable clothing. If it weren't for the price, sustainable fashion would always be my first choice.

Interviewer: How can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry? How do you think there can be this change?

Interviewee: I believe that if the majority of our generation adopts sustainable consumption practices on an ongoing basis, and not just as a passing trend, it could lead to a significant shift in the fashion industry. If sustainable practices become normal in everyday life, large fashion industries that are not sustainable will have to adapt or end up being left behind. This can result in a market that is less focused on unbridled consumerism and sales, and more focused on quality and sustainability.

Therefore, it is crucial that there is a constant attempt to consume second-hand clothes, even if you do not always opt for the new sustainable brands, which are often more expensive. The consumption of second-hand clothes helps reduce the accumulation of garbage and avoids sending large quantities of clothes to countries such as those in Africa, where parallel markets for the sale of used clothes are created. Our generation, with its perseverance and willingness to make a difference, must take an active role in changing the fashion industry, promoting more sustainable and responsible practices.

Interviewer: Ready in the fourth section. What I'm going to try to understand is whether the digital behavior and communication preferences of your generation in the fashion industry. And so, the first question is, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: I feel that new sustainable fashion brands emerge mainly on digital platforms. We don't have many new brands with a physical presence, so most appear digitally and organically on social media. I often use Instagram to discover these brands, where they appear both on my For You Page (FYP) and in advertisements. While TikTok also has some presence, it's on Instagram that I find more influencers promoting sustainable brands, which is a common way to discover and be influenced to buy those brands.

Interviewer: Apart from this, would you say that social media then influences your fashion choices and how does that happen?

Interviewee: Yes, social media influences my fashion choices, but in a limited way, and I try to be very conscious in my decisions and I'm not easily influenced. Although there is some influence, my decision-making is based more on my own research and values.

Interviewer: How do ready-made sustainability campaigns on social media, on various platforms influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Sustainability campaigns on social media have a big impact on my perception of fashion brands. They help form a positive opinion of brands that promote sustainable practices. While they don't directly influence my purchase decision, these campaigns increase my trust in sustainable brands.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: As I said, I don't make purchasing decisions based solely on influencers, but they do have some influence on my fashion choices. For example, I follow Constança de Lima Mayer (@conchadelimamayer), who uses many Portuguese brands. Another example is Alice Trewinnard (@alicetrewinnard), which often promotes Portuguese brands and conscious consumption practices. In addition, it has its own brand called Tarwi, which ends up promoting a fairer value chain and more sustainable agriculture.

I believe that influencers with many followers have a wider reach, but micro-influencers have a deeper impact. Those who choose to follow micro-influencers are usually more interested in their content, becoming more influenced by them. It's like a friend recommending something, which is closer and more authentic. This closeness makes the recommendations of these micro-influencers more relevant and reliable for me.

Interviewer: How important do you think user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, is when you're considering buying sustainable fashion? How can these reviews and testimonials from other users influence your purchase decision?

Interviewee: I think reviews and testimonials from other users are essential, whether for sustainable brands or not. Reviews help me understand if the product is really of quality and if it corresponds to the image presented. Seeing positive reviews gives me confidence in my purchase, while negative feedback can make me reconsider. These opinions greatly influence my decision, as they provide an honest view of other consumers' experiences with the product, ensuring that I'm making an informed choice.

Interviewer: And do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? And it can explain the reasons for your preference for one or the other.

Interviewee: I prefer to buy clothes in physical stores because there is direct contact with clothes that we don't have online. All bodies are different and often clothes don't fit well without being tried on. Although it is more convenient to buy online and avoid queues or crowds, in physical stores I can see the quality of the fabric and the details of the product. Additionally, the customer service in physical stores can help me make a more informed decision about what to buy. The fact that I can take the item home immediately is also a plus. That's why I prefer physical stores.

Interviewer: Very well. So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, I wanted to know what your opinion is about the fashion industry's

current efforts towards sustainability. Based on what you have said before, what are the efforts you are currently seeing in the industry?

Interviewee: Globally speaking, I feel that efforts are still very scarce. There is still a very big promotion of clothing stores that are not at all sustainable. Until recently there was a pop-up store of a fast fashion store in Terreiro do Paço, which is absurd when the City Council allows this type of brands to have a physical presence. However, at the national level, I feel that there has been a growing effort with the emergence of many new sustainable stores and micro businesses. But globally, there is still a long way to go.

Interviewer: How can you balance the desire to consume new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I think it is essential to support sustainable micro-enterprises more so that prices are more affordable. The biggest impediment to buying sustainable fashion is the high price. These sustainable brands have everything in their favor in terms of quality and fashion, but they lose out to fast fashion stores due to the latter's low prices. Financially supporting micro-enterprises would help reduce the negative impact on consumers' wallets, making sustainable options more viable.

Interviewer: Which fashion brand do you think aligns with your sustainability values? And he justifies it.

Interviewee:

I consider that ISTO. aligns well with my sustainability values. It is a Portuguese brand that promotes a comprehensive transparency policy, providing the list of factories with which it works and the actual costs of production. TO THIS. It combines online and physical presence, which makes it easy to access your products. The practices developed by ISTO. can serve as a model for other micro-enterprises.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I am willing to pay more for sustainable products because I am concerned about the environmental impact of excessive clothing consumption. I know that sustainable products are more durable and of better quality, which reduces the need to buy clothes frequently. Although price is an impediment, I prefer to invest in pieces that I know will have a lower environmental impact and will last longer.

Interviewer: What changes do you consider necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of our generation?

Interviewee: I believe that communication and transparency are essential. Brands need to clearly communicate how products are developed and ensure that consumers can make informed decisions.

In addition, people often justify their unsustainable choices by a lack of information, but there is also a tendency to intentionally ignore the environmental impacts of unsustainable clothing due to the lower price.

Appendix F – Re-transcription of the 4th interview: Interviewee 4

Male, 22 years old, currently living in Amsterdam, where he is pursuing a master's degree in Business Management at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He holds a bachelor's degree in Management from ISCTE and has participated in several consultancy projects with a strong focus on sustainability. He is actively engaged in incorporating sustainable practices into his daily life and has also worked on consultancy projects where sustainability was a prominent aspect.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: Sustainability, for me, is the ability to maintain activities and processes continuously over time, without compromising natural resources and the well-being of future generations.

Interviewer: What are, in your opinion, the main reasons why sustainability is so important in today's society?

Interviewee: Sustainability is crucial because we are at a point where our technological and industrial development is consuming natural resources at an alarming rate. If we do not change our practices, we risk depleting these resources within a few generations, which will have disastrous consequences for the environment and humanity. Implementing sustainable practices helps preserve the planet, reduce pollution, and combat climate change.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, in what way? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, I feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on my views on sustainability and environmental protection. When we all went home, especially at the beginning of the quarantine, there was a clear perception that when the industry stopped, the environment improved considerably in a short time. For me, this has had a lasting effect in showing the positive impact that reduced industrial activity can have on the environment. The pandemic helped me realize that we must produce and consume more consciously and responsibly. This period emphasized the need to rethink our consumption model. We saw that the forced pause led to improved air quality and reduced pollution, which made us reflect on the environmental costs of continuing to live in the same culture of excessive consumption.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily life?

Interviewee: In my daily life, I try to adopt several sustainable practices. I start with the small things, like recycling, which I've been doing for a long time. I try to save water as much as possible, for example, by turning off the tap while brushing my teeth and taking

efficient showers. In washing dishes, I avoid wasting water, especially since I don't have a dishwasher at the moment. Regarding energy, I strive to be conscious of usage by turning off devices that are not in use and opting for energy-efficient light bulbs.

In addition, I make conscious choices in my diet, opting for local and sustainably sourced products, and avoiding food waste. In clothing, I prefer clothes made from sustainable materials and buy from brands that adopt eco-friendly practices. I try to minimize the unnecessary consumption of technologies and other material products, recognizing the impact that each consumption choice has on the environment. Therefore, I believe that all our purchasing and resource use decisions can have a major impact on global sustainability. In terms of transportation, I consider myself one of the greenest people I know. I ride my bike every day to almost all destinations. Living in Amsterdam, I stopped using a car because I don't own one, and public transportation is more expensive.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Why?

Interviewee: I've had a lot of academic and practical training on sustainability, but information is never too much. I believe that there is always room to learn more and improve sustainable practices on a daily basis.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section that talks about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: The frequency is lower than I would like, but I try to avoid fast fashion. I give preference to products that offer quality and durability. I choose clothes that can last longer and that are made with sustainable materials.

Interviewer: And for you, what are the factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry can be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: The growing awareness of consumers, especially Gen Z, who demand more ethical and sustainable practices, is a crucial factor. Small brands focused on sustainability

demonstrate innovation and environmental responsibility. Although large brands have initiated sustainable practices, many are still superficial. Stricter regulation and legislative pressure force companies to be more transparent and accountable. In addition, digitalization facilitates access to information and promotes sustainable brands, contributing to lasting change in the industry.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Patagonia is widely recognized for its sustainable practices. This brand takes a holistic approach to sustainability, ensuring that all stages of production, from material choice to manufacturing and distribution, minimize environmental impact. Patagonia also invests in environmental conservation initiatives and actively promotes the repair and reuse of products, encouraging consumers to reduce unnecessary consumption.

Interviewer: And just to complement what do you think concretely makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: The essence of the brand is reflected in the product. Patagonia stands out for its genuine commitment to sustainability. It's not just marketing. They truly invest in practices and initiatives that have a positive impact on the environment. This creates a strong connection with consumers, who value and trust the brand.

Interviewer: All right, so now moving on to the third section that talks about the characteristics of Gen Z, the fashion choices, what do you think are the main characteristics of Gen Z?

Interviewee: I would say that we were the transition generation, for example, I had my first mobile phone around the fourth or fifth grade. So, during our school life, we experienced a significant change: we started without much technology, but in the end, we already had it in the palm of our hand.

With digital access, we have access to a huge diversity of information and cultures. This makes us more open and less prejudiced when we find something different in our daily lives,

as we have already had some previous contact through the internet. In addition, we also have a greater tolerance and general understanding because we also have more contact and knowledge of other realities.

Interviewer: So, how do you think those characteristics you mentioned relate to your fashion decisions and what you buy?

Interviewee: Digital characteristics greatly influence my purchasing decisions. Because I am more exposed to ads and other online content, I end up being influenced. Our taste is shaped by what we constantly see, so it is inevitable that this will have some impact on my choices, even if not always in a positive way.

However, I always try to make my choices consciously and not be too influenced by the media. When I go to buy something, I decide on the spot and choose a specific place to buy it. I'm not much of an impulsive clothing buyer, which I think contributes to a better quality of the items I buy.

In addition, exposure to a greater diversity of styles and cultures through digital makes me more open to trying new and different things. But even with this influence, I try to maintain a balance and choose pieces that really match my personal taste and style.

Interviewer: Right, and what challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: I think the biggest issue by far is price. The problem with fast fashion is that it is actually cheap. When we want a better-quality product, which lasts longer, it ends up being more expensive. This limits the amount of people who can effectively buy these products.

The problem with sustainable products is that they cannot be mass-produced in the same way as other products. In terms of distribution, it is more difficult to reach so many people with the same product. To change this, it would be necessary to alter many value chains associated with the production of these articles. Without these changes, the production and distribution of sustainable products is more complicated and, consequently, more expensive. This difficulty is reflected in the customer's access to these products, since the higher cost of production and distribution ends up translating into higher prices for the final consumer.

Therefore, even though there is a growing awareness and desire to consume more sustainably, price remains a major obstacle.

Interviewer: And tell me something, how do you think your generation's fashion preferences can lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: Our generation is much more comfortable with practices that extend the life cycle of products. We have become big fans of vintage items and buying and selling second-hand. This is part of our lifestyle and we find these practices fun and innovative.

For example, apps like Vinted, which I've used, make perfect sense to us. With trends changing so quickly, it's common to have several items in our closet that we no longer use. Instead of letting them gather dust or dispose of them, we can trade them or sell them to others.

This continuous exchange of clothes between people reduces the need to buy new products. Instead of going to a store and buying something produced from scratch, we can reuse something from someone else. This significantly extends the life cycle of each item.

I believe that our generation can really contribute to this type of practice becoming more widespread in all communities. If more people adopt these sustainable practices, we could see lasting change in the fashion industry.

Interviewer: So, I think we can move on to the fourth section. What I'm going to try to understand is the digital behavior and communication preferences of your generation in the fashion industry. The first question is: how often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: I would say that about 80% of the sustainable brands I know have been discovered through some digital medium, whether on the computer or on the mobile phone. The platform I use the most for this is Instagram.

Although I don't use these platforms very often, when I discover new brands, most of the time it is through digital means. So even if I'm not constantly looking, digital has been the main source of discovery for me.

Interviewer: And how does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media influences my fashion choices. There are times when I see something interesting and it ends up influencing my future clothing purchases. For example, If I see a piece of clothing I like on Instagram, I am likely to look for something similar the next time I shop for clothes. Social media also exposes me to new trends and styles that I might not discover otherwise. However, I try to maintain a balance and make conscious choices even though I am influenced by what I see online.

Interviewer: And now regarding sustainability campaigns on social networks that are appearing. Do you feel that these campaigns influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Sustainability campaigns on social media definitely have some impact, but not always in the way that brands intend. When I see a big brand promoting sustainable action, I am usually suspicious. Often, these campaigns seem to be more of a marketing strategy than a genuine commitment to sustainability.

On the other hand, when a brand is born with a sustainable mission and all its operations reflect this commitment, the perception is completely different. It's easier to trust brands that demonstrate a holistic approach to sustainability, from production to distribution. Transparency and consistency in their practices are key. Small campaigns, such as those appearing on Instagram, can be effective if they are part of a larger, ongoing effort. However, isolated actions, especially by large companies known for less sustainable practices, tend to be viewed with skepticism. For these campaigns to be truly impactful, they need to be accompanied by structural changes and responsible business practices.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Although I don't have a specific digital influencer that I follow regularly, I end up being influenced by several who appear to me mainly on Instagram. The platform often suggests new content from fashion influencers. Even without following anyone in particular, I am exposed to several trends, and new brands that they share. For example, seeing an

interesting outfit combination or a piece that is trendy, it can influence my fashion choices, inspiring me in how I dress or what I decide to buy.

Interviewer: How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: User-generated content plays an important role in my decision to buy sustainable fashion. The opinions and reviews of other users greatly influence my choices. When I look for feedback, I attach great importance to independent reviews, from specialized websites that evaluate products objectively. However, I also highly value the comments and testimonials of ordinary users. They provide a real, practical perspective on the quality and sustainability of products, helping me to make a more informed decision.

Interviewer: And do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? And can you explain the reasons for your preference for one or the other?

Interviewee: I prefer to buy clothes in physical stores. The possibility of trying on the clothes is essential to ensure that they fit me and look good on me. In addition, I appreciate the in-store shopping experience and the convenience of taking the product on time, without waiting for shipping or dealing with returns, is also a great advantage.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, I wanted to know what is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability?

Interviewee: I think there's still a lot to do in the fashion industry in terms of sustainability. Many important aspects are still not being addressed effectively. Although there have been some efforts, I believe that the overall level of commitment has been low.

I recognize that there has been some progress, especially in value chains, production, working conditions and transparency. Initiatives such as the Global Reporting Standards are examples of conscious and comprehensive efforts to improve sustainability. However,

brands themselves are not, by nature, ethically good. The significant changes we see often result from social and legislative pressures, rather than from companies' own initiative. When they are required, companies make changes, but rarely voluntarily or proactively. Large companies are focused on maximizing profits and often see sustainability as an additional cost. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect them to make major changes voluntarily. The necessary changes require a profound readjustment of processes, something that often only happens due to regulations and external pressures.

On the other hand, new brands that come up with a sustainable mission from the start tend to be different. These brands are often founded by people who are motivated by ethical values, with the aim of creating something that not only minimizes negative impact, but also has a positive impact. This is a marked contrast to big brands, whose primary goal is often just to reduce negative impact, without necessarily creating a positive impact.

Interviewer: And how can you balance the desire to consume new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices? It can be a little more general. How can there be this balance, which is often not respected?

Interviewee: The constant search for being fashionable can be dangerous and is, in a way, incompatible with sustainability goals. The desire to follow trends evokes a consumerism that contrasts with the need to use products for as long as possible.

Reuse and digitalization play crucial roles in this balance. Platforms like Vinted make it easy to share and reuse clothes, connecting consumers who want to sell and buy used items. This digital ecosystem, which involves various companies and services such as postal services and payment systems, helps to extend the life cycle of products and reduces the need to constantly buy new items.

For a comprehensive solution, it is necessary to interconnect systems and simplify processes, facilitating access to sustainable solutions. Our generation values individual responsibility and decentralization, using technology to exchange and share resources efficiently. This interconnection and transparency not only reduce environmental impact, but also promote a more sustainable model of consumption.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: I consider Heineken to be a brand aligned with my sustainability values. I discovered this during research for a consulting project. Heineken has initiatives such as reducing CO2 emissions, using barley and hops from sustainable sources, and investing in renewable energy. In addition, they recycle materials in their packaging, such as cans made with more than 95% recycled aluminum in Brazil. These practices show a real commitment to sustainability, which impressed me a lot during my research.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Generally, I am willing to pay more for sustainable products because I know they tend to be of better quality, last longer, and don't need to be replaced as quickly. For me, it's worth investing in something that has a longer life cycle and has been produced ethically and responsibly.

Interviewer: To conclude, what changes do you consider necessary to be made in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of our generation?

Interviewee: To meet the sustainability expectations of our generation, the fashion industry needs to be more transparent about its production chains, from the origin of materials to working conditions.

Fair and safe working conditions are essential, ensuring fair wages and respect for workers' rights. I think it's essential that the fashion industry starts to focus on long-lasting and quality products, instead of launching new pieces weekly. Measures such as the additional tax on fast fashion that is already in force in France help to combat overconsumption.

Governments need to promote sustainable fashion and reduce the stigma associated with buying second-hand clothes. Ethical production should be the norm, with fair prices reflecting decent wages and sustainable materials. Additionally, collaboration with influencers and educational campaigns can help change consumer mindsets and encourage more conscious consumption.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix G – Re-transcription of the 5th interview: Interviewee 5

Female, 25 years old, from Abrantes, currently working as a business consultant at Deloitte in Lisbon. She holds a Master's in Management with a major in Strategy and International Business Administration from Nova School of Business and Economics, and a Bachelor of Business Administration from the same institution. She is particularly interested in sustainability and its impact on the fashion industry.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: For me, sustainability means using resources responsibly so as not to harm the planet. However, what you do with this definition varies from person to person. I believe that the concept of sustainability is closely linked to your economic power – what you consistently do and your ability to make a difference.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is important in today's society?

Interviewee: I think sustainability has become a more discussed topic because it addresses the way our society is currently structured. We live in a highly consumerist society, where governments, without wanting to blame politics, are mainly focused on achieving high economic growth. This is not always sustainable, considering that resources are limited and

our population continues to grow every year. We are maintaining the same levels of resources, so we are not achieving a sustainable balance.

We are starting to see the consequences, especially with climate change, which explains why sustainability has become a more talked-about topic. But now it seems that we have reached a point where reversing some of these effects may no longer be possible. So, we are discussing what sensitivity we need to have to be sustainable. We are already feeling some effects, especially with climate change, so I think that has made sustainability a much more important and mentioned topic these days.

Interviewer: Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, in what way? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted my views on sustainability and environmental protection. I remember clearly that during the lockdown periods, there was a significant decrease in pollution levels. This has shown us that it is possible to improve air quality and, consequently, public health, if we change our habits and ways of life.

A big change was the adaptation to teleworking. The pandemic has shown that many people can work effectively from home, which reduces the need for daily commuting and, by extension, the emission of polluting gases.

However, new challenges have also emerged. For example, the massive use of disposable masks has led to a considerable increase in plastic waste. Fortunately, the advantages of reusable fabric masks were quickly realized, which not only helped to reduce environmental impact but also became an effective and sustainable alternative.

As far as fashion is concerned, I noticed that online shopping increased significantly during the pandemic, as many people were at home without much to do. This increase in online consumption may have had a negative environmental impact due to increased production and waste generated by shipping and packaging.

The pandemic has also exposed the vulnerability of global value chains, highlighting the need to rethink and make these supply chains more resilient and sustainable. Globalization has brought additional challenges, but also opportunities to innovate and adopt more sustainable practices.

Unfortunately, despite the lessons learned, we do not seem to have fully seized the opportunity to make lasting changes. With the end of lockdowns, many have returned to their old habits, such as the intensive use of private cars instead of public transport. This shows that while we have the ability to change, we often lack incentives or political will to implement long-term sustainable change.

The pandemic could have been a turning point for greater use of public transport and more significant investment in sustainable infrastructure, but unfortunately, we have not seen these changes happen in a comprehensive way. Therefore, the main lesson I take away is that we have the ability to make a difference, but we often do not do so due to a lack of will or strategic vision.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: Okay then, I always try to recycle and be conscious in the use of resources, especially water. For example, I usually wash and reuse plastic bags. It may seem like something basic, but I believe that many people still don't do it.

In addition, when it comes to transport, I often use public transport, although sometimes I have to travel by car between Abrantes and Lisbon. But for all other journeys, I always prefer to use public transport.

Another habit I've adopted is to repair my clothes. Sewing and giving a new life to the pieces instead of throwing them away is a practice that I consider sustainable and that is not always common. Many people prefer to buy new clothes instead of repairing the one they already have.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: Yes, I think it never hurts to have more training on these topics. Although there is a lot of awareness about the most talked about issues, I feel that there is always room to learn more. For example, it was only recently that I discovered that pizza boxes cannot be recycled in the cardboard container if they are dirty with grease. These kinds of nuances are often not taught clearly and can make a big difference in our daily recycling practices.

In addition, Sustainability is a constantly evolving field, with new technologies and practices emerging regularly. Having more education on these topics can help us adopt these innovations and continually improve our actions for the environment. Therefore, I believe more education and training on sustainability are always welcome, both to enhance the knowledge we already have and to discover new ways to be more sustainable in our daily lives.

Interviewer: So, and now, moving on to the second section, let's talk about sustainability, but this time in the fashion industry. So, to begin with, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products over non-sustainable fashion products? Please justify your answer.

Interviewee: Well, I don't have exact numbers, but I hope my answer helps. For example, in bikinis and shoes, I know that at least my last purchases were always from more sustainable brands. I pay much more attention to choosing sustainable brands in these two types of products in particular.

When it comes to clothes, I have more difficulty buying sustainable products, mainly due to the price. In my perception, I would say that one in three purchases I make are for sustainable pieces. I try to balance my concern for sustainability with my economic possibilities, but I recognize that there is room for improvement.

Interviewer: What are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: I believe that the main factor that can ensure that sustainability in the fashion industry is more than a passing trend is regulation. At the moment, laws and guidelines are already being created, especially at the level of the European Union, which force the fashion industry to change. The implementation of regulations such as the European Green Deal forces companies to adopt more sustainable practices in the production of their products.

These regulations require transparency and accountability from brands regarding the environmental impact of their operations. With stricter laws and penalties for non-compliance, the fashion industry will have to adapt to stay compliant with these

requirements. Therefore, I believe that sustainability in fashion has the potential to take hold in the long term, especially if there continues to be a joint effort between governments, businesses, and consumers to promote more sustainable and responsible practices.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: For me, the leader is Patagonia.

Interviewer: What makes this leading brand stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: I think what made this brand stand out was, first, the fact that it was a pioneer. It was one of the first to come up with such a strong value proposition, focused on creating clothes of higher quality and durability, rather than pieces that are worn for one or two seasons and then thrown away. The fact that it was a pioneer made it stand out. In addition, the brand emerged at a time when there was a lot of talk about conscious consumption, which helped to capture people's attention.

Another reason was the differentiated marketing. I remember a campaign they did when I was in college where the slogan was something like "If you don't need it, don't buy it", and the image showed a jacket. This goes against traditional marketing principles, which aim to encourage consumption, but it turned out to be an effective marketing strategy and made the brand stand out.

Interviewer: Moving on to the third section, where we will talk about the characteristics of Generation Z and the fashion choices they make. So, in your opinion, what are the main characteristics of your generation?

Interviewee: I believe that our generation is significantly more concerned about the environment compared to previous generations. This environmental concern is reflected in many of our choices, including fashion ones. We are aware of the need for sustainable practices and tend to support brands that share these values. On the other hand, we live in the age of social networks, which makes us highly influenceable. The trends and opinions we see online have a big impact on our purchasing decisions and our personal style. This

constant exposure to the information and opinion of others makes us quicker to adopt new trends, but also more critical and demanding of the practices of the brands we choose to support.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: In my case, I feel that social pressure and the influence of social media greatly affect my fashion decisions. On the one hand, there is a constant need to be up to date with the latest trends, which leads me to want to buy new pieces of clothing. This pressure to follow trends and the idea that it is not acceptable to repeat clothes often makes it difficult to adopt more sustainable practices.

However, I also try to balance this consumerist influence with more conscious choices. I've been looking to buy second-hand clothes and sustainable brands, encouraged by the growing popularity of these options on social media. Seeing other people adopt a more sustainable lifestyle inspires me to do the same. So, even if I still feel the pressure to be fashionable, I try to integrate sustainable practices into my purchasing decisions, such as reusing clothing and opting for eco-friendly materials whenever possible.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: I think the first point is the price. This is still a major obstacle. Sustainability usually entails higher costs, not only due to the choice of eco-friendly materials, but also due to the fact that sustainable brands are usually concerned with the working conditions of the people involved in the production process. This means that there is an appreciation and confidence in various stages of the production chain, which naturally increases the final cost of the product.

Another major challenge, looking at it from a business perspective, is the difficulty in achieving total sustainability. Even brands recognized for their sustainable practices face challenges in ensuring that all aspects of their production are completely sustainable. One of the main obstacles is logistics, especially when it comes to transportation and packaging. Even if a brand sells in physical stores, clothing needs to be transported to those stores, and this often involves practices that are not entirely eco-friendly. The production chain is often

global, and ensuring sustainability at every stage, especially in shipping and packaging, is a significant challenge.

In addition, there is the issue of transparency and the availability of information. It can often be difficult to identify whether a brand is truly sustainable, especially in physical stores where there is less information available about the production processes and materials used. Online, there is usually more access to detailed information about the sustainability of garments, but still, a lack of knowledge or clarity can make it difficult to make informed decisions.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: I believe that Gen Z's preferences have the potential to bring about significant and lasting change in the fashion industry. One of the main trends I see gaining traction is circularity in fashion, which involves the reuse, recycling, and purchase of second-hand clothes. This trend is strongly linked to the vintage movement and platforms for exchanging and selling used clothing, like Vinted. The growing adoption of these practices is already having a noticeable impact on the industry.

Vinted, for example, has represented a major revolution by facilitating the buying and selling of second-hand clothes, making these practices more accessible and popular among young people. The preference for vintage fashion and second-hand items is promoting a change in mentality, where sustainability and originality are valued.

In addition, this generation highly values the transparency and social responsibility of brands. As a result, brands are being pressured to adopt more sustainable and ethical practices to meet consumer expectations. The growing demand for transparency forces brands to be more open about their production processes, origin of materials and working conditions.

Interviewer: I think we can move on to the fourth section where we're going to cover how digital platforms and social media influence Gen Z's sustainable fashion choices.

Interviewee: I don't know if I've actively searched for new sustainable fashion brands, but I'm impacted daily by social media campaigns that promote sustainable brands. The algorithms on social media, especially on Instagram and TikTok, make me see ads and posts from brands that stand out for their sustainability. So even without directly searching, I end up discovering new sustainable brands through digital platforms every day. Instagram, in particular, seems to be the platform where I am most exposed to these campaigns, although TikTok also plays a similar role.

Interviewer: And how do social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media has a significant impact on my fashion choices, especially due to the pressure of consumerism. Many of the people I follow are naturally consumerists, which reflects the society we live in. This creates a constant desire to buy more and to be up-to-date with the latest fashion trends.

On the other hand, I also follow people with different profiles, more focused on sustainability. These influences help me to be more mindful and consume more responsibly. I remember a trend called the “capsule wardrobe” which had a positive impact on my choices. The premise was to have a limited number of timeless pieces that worked well together, promoting more conscious and sustainable consumption. The idea was to own only key, high-quality pieces, avoiding excessive consumerism. This trend is very much aligned with sustainable fashion principles, as it encourages the purchase of durable and versatile items instead of blindly following new trends.

Therefore, social media influences me in two ways: on the one hand, it promotes consumerism, but on the other hand, it also exposes me to ideas and practices that promote sustainability in fashion.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Sustainability campaigns on social media have a significant impact on my perception of fashion brands. Whenever I see a campaign that highlights values such as local production in Portugal, the use of recyclable materials and ethical practices, I feel more

inclined to support that brand. These campaigns help create an emotional and trusting connection with the brand, making me more likely to buy their products.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how? Can you give some examples?

Interviewee: I am positively impacted on Instagram by Catarina Barreiros and Joana Joes. Catarina Barreiros is an influencer totally focused on sustainability. I got to know her profile when I was in college and participated in an organization to reduce waste, where she was a speaker. Since then, I have followed her work closely. She is one of the best influencers in Portugal to talk about sustainability and makes numerous recommendations for sustainable brands, including fashion. In addition, it offers many suggestions on how to be more sustainable on a daily basis. Catarina owned a store called “Do Zero”, where she sold only sustainable products, and now organizes the largest sustainability fair in Portugal, called “Cidade do Zero”. This event brings together several brands that produce consciously and have a production located in Portugal. The fair also includes lectures on sustainability and practical demonstrations.

Another example is Joana Joes, founder of the bikini brand “Conscious the label”. She worked at L'Oréal and quit to create her own brand, which stands out for its sustainability. The bikinis are made with leftover fabrics and production is carefully planned to minimize waste. In addition to fashion, Joana adopts a sustainable lifestyle in all aspects. She lives in a house built entirely of wood, with her husband.

Both influencers have a positive impact on my fashion choices, inspiring me to seek out more sustainable brands and practices.

Interviewer: How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: For me, user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, is of immense importance. When I read reviews from other consumers who share their experiences with a product, especially those that align with my sustainability values, I feel

more confident in my purchase decision. If many users claim that a piece is really sustainable and of good quality, this positively influences my choice.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: Overall, I prefer to buy online. The convenience of being able to shop at any time and the variety available are great advantages. I also appreciate access to detailed product information, something that is often more complete online than in physical stores. Although I can opt for a physical store for my first purchase from a brand I have never bought, to ensure the right size, the good return and exchange policies of online stores make the process much simpler and more convenient.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the fifth and final section, let's talk about perceptions of sustainability in the fashion industry among Gen Z. To begin with, what is your take on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give some examples?

Interviewee: Well, I think a lot of brands are trying to be as sustainable as possible. Larger brands, with greater economic power, have more capacity and, therefore, a greater responsibility to implement sustainable practices. However, I also see significant efforts by smaller brands, which, despite having fewer resources, try to be sustainable according to their possibilities.

For example, Zara has been providing more information about its products, allowing customers to make more informed choices. This transparency effort is a step forward, and I believe it is not limited to Zara alone, but extends to the Inditex group as a whole. Zara also has a second-hand market in the UK, which is great for both consumerist consumers and sustainability.

Another brand, H&M, is recognized for its clothing collection program. They have been talking a lot about the number of pounds of clothing they collect to recycle and turn into new pieces, which is a commendable effort to reduce textile waste.

In addition to these big brands, there are also examples of new brands that are giving a new direction to the fashion industry. And on the other hand, platforms like Vinted have made it easier to buy and sell second-hand clothes, promoting circularity in fashion.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: This is an essential question for the future of the fashion industry. If someone knows the exact answer, they are sure to be very successful! But I believe that there are several strategies that we can adopt to balance these two aspects.

First, it's important to recognize that fashion is cyclical. We have already seen that old trends are back in fashion. For example, I remember when my mother wore bell-bottom pants. In my adolescence, I thought it was outdated, but suddenly, these pants became a trend again and I still wear them today. This cycle can be used to encourage the use of vintage or second-hand pieces.

To do this, we can keep a wardrobe with timeless key pieces that can be combined in various ways to stay current. Pieces that have proven their durability and style over decades can be the basis of our wardrobe.

Additionally, the fashion industry can be smarter by incorporating customization services. For example, the flared pants my mom wore may not be exactly what I want to wear now, but with a customization service, these pieces can be adjusted to fit current trends.

There is also the opportunity to further promote and scale the second-hand market, through platforms such as Vinted, where we can exchange or sell pieces that we no longer use. This not only extends the life of the clothes but also helps us to be fashionable in a more sustainable way.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: The brands that I consider aligned with my sustainability values and from which I have products are Conscious the Label, Veja and ASPORTUGUESAS.

Conscious The Label is a bikini brand that uses leftover fabrics to produce its pieces, minimizing waste. Veja is known for its sneakers made with eco-friendly materials and sustainable production practices. And ASPORTUGUESAS is a Portuguese brand that uses recycled materials and follows sustainable production principles.

All these brands promote the idea that we don't need to have a lot of pieces, but the right pieces of good quality. They focus on offering long-lasting products that don't need to be replaced frequently. In addition, the marketing of these brands is very much directed towards transparency and sustainability, which reinforces the trust I have in them.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I'm willing to pay more for sustainable products, although that depends on the brand and the timing. All the sustainable pieces I own were purchased considering cheaper options, but I ended up choosing sustainable brands because I believe in the durability and superior quality of their products.

My choice is based on the expectation that these products will be more durable, thus helping me to reduce my environmental footprint in the long term. In addition, by opting for sustainable brands, I feel that I am contributing to more ethical and responsible production practices, which is also an important factor for me.

Interviewer: What changes do you think are still needed in the fashion industry to better meet Gen Z's sustainability expectations and ensure that there continue to be significant changes?

Interviewee: I think that the fashion industry will necessarily have to adapt to the regulations that are being imposed and those that will still be imposed in the future. We have goals for 2030, like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which cover various areas including fashion. Although I'm not fully aware of all the specific guidelines for the fashion industry, I believe regulation will be crucial. Brands will need to embrace practices of circularity, recycling, and responsible consumption. These are critical trends for Generation Z, which is no longer as interested in rampant consumerism as in the past. The issue of second-hand and recycling are fundamental. Brands need to invest in solutions that allow the reuse and

recycling of products, extending the life of the parts and reducing waste. Responding to regulation and consumer demand for more sustainable practices will be essential for the survival and relevance of brands in the future.

In addition, transparency is vital. Brands should be clear about their production practices and the materials they use, so consumers can make informed choices. Transparent communication will help build consumer trust and loyalty.

Appendix H – Re-transcription of the 6th interview: Interviewee 6

Female, 20 years old, currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Graphic Design. Deeply committed to sustainability, she has transformed her lifestyle to fully align with her environmental values. Passionate about learning, she enjoys reading extensively on topics related to sustainability.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers are extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how individuals of your generation view sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors. Let's start by talking about sustainability. How do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: For me, sustainability goes beyond the basic concept. It is an attitude that aims for the good of all – for us, for the planet – ensuring that our actions do not compromise future generations' access to the resources we currently have. In essence, it's about living in a way that prevents the degradation and scarcity of natural resources for others.

Interviewer: So, what do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is so important in our society today?

Interviewee: So, of course, sustainability is extremely important. Firstly, due to climate change and the impacts it has on the planet. We are putting the future of the next generations at risk, who may not have access to the same resources that we currently have. Therefore, in

my opinion, the main reasons are the preservation of future generations and the protection of the planet.

Interviewer: Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, in what way? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on my views on sustainability and environmental protection. The need to stop and reflect on what was happening around us made many people, including me, reconsider our choices and their impacts on the planet. I believe that the pandemic was a kind of wake-up call to humanity about the damage we are causing to the planet.

During the lockdown, many people started shopping online because we couldn't leave our homes. This has generated an increase in consumerism, as the convenience of receiving products at home has become very attractive. This behavior, on the one hand, brought a certain comfort during a difficult period, but it also contributed to an increase in consumption and waste, exacerbating environmental problems.

For me personally, the pandemic reinforced the importance of adopting more sustainable practices. I saw the need to reduce excessive consumption and focus on more conscious choices. For example, I became even stricter about avoiding products with unnecessary packaging and choosing reusable alternatives. Additionally, the lockdown period made me value smaller brands more, leading me to choose local businesses and markets where the products tend to have less environmental impact and where my support could make a greater difference.

The pandemic has also highlighted the fragility of global production and distribution systems, showing how crucial it is to promote sustainability and resilience in all areas of life. I believe that this collective experience can be an opportunity for us to rethink our priorities and adopt practices that really benefit the environment and future generations.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: I have made several changes to make my daily life more sustainable. Basically, I swapped everything I could for greener options. For example, I switched from paper

napkins to cloth napkins and from liquid shampoos to solid ones. I also use a menstrual cup instead of disposable sanitary pads. When I go to the supermarket, I avoid products with plastic packaging and prefer to buy food at markets where the products are not visually selected and usually come without unnecessary packaging.

Regarding clothes, I stopped buying in conventional stores about three or four years ago. I sell my used clothes on online platforms or exchange them with friends and family. I always try to donate before selling to minimize the environmental impact of transport. I also started to wash clothes less frequently and in shorter cycles to save water and energy, filling the machine to the maximum before washing.

To reduce waste, I use rainwater or bath water to flush the toilet, wash dishes with the tap closed, and try to run the dishwasher during off-peak energy hours. As far as mobility is concerned, I do as much as possible on foot. Although I don't use the bike much, I opt for public transport whenever I can.

To reduce the digital footprint, I avoid storing photos and documents in clouds, try to use my phone more consciously and charge it less often. I use a reusable toothbrush, a natural deodorant that lasts for two years, and other sustainable products in my daily life. I take short showers, about five minutes, and I am conscious of the use of water and electricity.

Finally, and although it seems basic, I do recycle regularly. It's the least we can all do to reduce environmental impact. In addition, I often talk about these practices with friends and family to raise awareness and encourage similar changes. I believe that knowledge sharing is key to raising awareness about sustainability.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education on the topic of sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: Yes, absolutely. I believe we need more education and clarity on what it means to be sustainable. Often, we hear about recycling and reducing plastic use, but sustainability goes far beyond that. It is necessary to rethink all our choices and understand the full impact of our actions. So, it's not just about me, but about us as a society.

We need more comprehensive and detailed education on sustainability. It is essential that teaching on this topic includes a more holistic view, addressing all aspects of our lives and how we can make more conscious and sustainable choices. This would help prevent

oversimplification of the concept and allow everyone to have a deeper and more practical understanding of how to live sustainably.

Interviewer: Taking into account everything we've already talked about, let's move on to the second section, which will be about sustainability in the fashion industry. How often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? Can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: I don't have a set frequency, because I practically stopped buying clothes, especially in fast fashion stores. Even in the case of second-hand clothing, I take a very selective approach. Now, I only buy what I really need, and that happens only when a piece is damaged and needs replacement. The frequency of my purchases is very low because I feel like I already have everything I need, and I don't see the necessity to acquire more. This concept of 'need' is something I question a lot nowadays. Often, we are led to think that we need something new due to the constant exposure on social networks, where we are bombarded with ads and influenced by friends who show off their new fashion acquisitions. This creates a false need to always be up to date with the latest trends. Therefore, my purchase decision is much more conscious and focused on real needs, rather than momentary desires or social pressure. I prefer to invest in sustainable pieces that have greater durability and less environmental impact, aligning my choices with my sustainability values.

Interviewer: Beyond this, what do you think are the main factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: To be honest, I think that sustainable practices in the fashion industry are more than just a trend, but even if they are, I believe it's a positive trend. I believe that this trend has the potential to become permanent.

One of the factors that makes me believe this is the growing level of awareness and education about sustainability. As more people become aware of the importance of sustainable practices, the demand for sustainable products is increasing. This leads brands to adapt their processes and offerings.

Another factor is social and legislative pressure. Increasingly, we see regulations and policies that encourage sustainable practices. This forces brands to adopt measures that go beyond simple green marketing, truly committing to sustainability.

In addition, sustainable practices not only benefit the environment but can also bring long-term economic advantages. Resource efficiency and waste reduction can result in significant savings for businesses.

Finally, I believe that this trend of sustainability in fashion opens people's minds to the importance of being sustainable in all aspects of life. Even if it is initially seen as a passing fad, the awareness it brings can have a lasting impact, leading to a change in behavior and values that lasts over time.

So yes, I believe that sustainable practices in the fashion industry have the potential to extend into the future and become the norm.

Interviewer: So, which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: First of all, I think it's important to mention that fast fashion brands are excluded from this category. Among the brands that really try to make a difference in terms of sustainability, there are a few that stand out, but we need to be careful with greenwashing, which is when a brand pretends to be more sustainable than it actually is.

But even so, I would like to highlight a Portuguese brand that deserves recognition: ASPORTUGUESAS. This brand is known for its innovative approach to sustainable footwear production. They use recycled and natural materials, like cork, to create shoes that are not only sustainable but also durable. The brand promotes the idea that it's possible to produce high-quality and sustainable products without compromising style or comfort.

In addition, another brand that I can mention is Conscious the Label, which specializes in bikinis made from recycled materials. This brand is not only concerned with the sustainability of materials, but also with the ethics of the entire production chain.

It is important to mention that sustainability goes beyond the simple use of eco-friendly materials. It also involves fair production practices and the promotion of conscious consumption. Buying high-quality and durable products, even if they are more expensive, is a necessary mindset shift. This helps to combat the culture of fast fashion and excessive consumption.

Therefore, ASPORTUGUESAS and Conscious the Label are excellent examples of Portuguese brands that stand out for their sustainable and innovative approach to the fashion industry.

In addition, Patagonia is an international brand known for its product repair policy, which is an excellent initiative. This concept of repairing rather than replacing promotes the durability and sustainability of products.

Interviewer: I think you've already answered the previous question, but if you want to add something, what makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: Yes, I think these brands I mentioned stand out for their commitment to reducing environmental impact, promoting ethical production practices, and encouraging conscious consumption. They also serve as examples of how the fashion industry can evolve to be more sustainable and responsible, contributing to a greener and fairer future.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the third section, let's talk about the characteristics of Gen Z and how they affect your fashion preferences. So, in your opinion, what are the main characteristics of your generation?

Interviewee: I believe that my generation has a complex relationship with the world around us, even though we have access to a lot of information. We are quite materialistic and at the same time often disconnected from a deeper understanding of happiness and purpose. We have difficulty expressing our true feelings due to the fear of not fitting in or being judged. This need for social acceptance is a strong characteristic of Generation Z.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: These characteristics initially presented challenges for me. I felt a lot of pressure to buy new pieces, driven by the consumerism that is so common in our generation. I often acted on “autopilot” without reflecting on my choices. However, by informing myself and becoming more aware of sustainability, I was able to better align my fashion decisions

with my personal values. Today, I prefer to make more thoughtful and conscious choices, focusing on durability and ethics.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: One of the biggest challenges is greenwashing, where brands promote themselves as sustainable without actually being so. You need to do a lot of research before trusting any brand. In addition, it is difficult to deal with excessive consumerism and the constant feeling that we are lacking something. I always try to remember the reason for my sustainable choices and maintain discipline, even when I am surrounded by people who do not share this awareness.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: Gen Z's preferences have great potential to bring about lasting change in the fashion industry. We are big consumers and have a significant influence on trends. By opting for more sustainable and conscious choices, we can encourage the industry to adopt more responsible and ethical practices. Our generation can lead the way to a more sustainable future in fashion by promoting a balance between style and environmental responsibility.

Interviewer: So, according to everything we've said now, let's move on to the fourth section, which is about the digital behavior and communication preferences of Gen Z in the fashion industry. To begin with, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: Okay, I don't use social media currently, but I've used it a lot. Instagram and Pinterest were the platforms he used the most. Nowadays, I no longer have accounts on these platforms, and I have never used them specifically to discover sustainable fashion brands. I've always preferred to discover stores physically. When I was shopping for sustainable products, I used Instagram to research and review stores before making my purchases at trusted brick-and-mortar stores.

Interviewer: How do you think social media influences your fashion choices? Although you have already said that you don't use it now, have you influenced it?

Interviewee: Yes, absolutely. Social networks greatly influence the way we consume, not only fashion, but products in general. We are constantly being bombarded with new products, and that makes us feel like we need them. Humans are very visual, and seeing new and different things on social media appeals to our aesthetic sense and personal tastes. Social media and influencers create that “fear of missing out” (FOMO), making us want to buy new things to stay within the trends.

Also, nowadays not having social networks I don't feel out of fashion or feel like I need more things just because I see other people using them. I lead a more conscious and peaceful life, without being constantly exposed to what others have or don't have.

I've never had TikTok, but I know the content that circulates there through my friends. TikTok is undoubtedly the worst social network in terms of sustainability. It greatly promotes the rapid consumption of fashion, with trends such as Shein "hauls", where you buy in large quantities and show the products. This feeds a lot of consumerisms and makes people want to buy new things constantly.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: When I had social networks, I saw a lot of sustainability campaigns. For those who are already informed about the topic, these campaigns may not influence so much because we know what is really sustainable. However, they can help highlight better options and make people question their choices. The problem with campaigns is that they often focus on the consumer and not on the planet. We need campaigns that raise awareness about the importance of not consuming excessively, even if it is sustainable fashion.

Interviewer: Regarding digital influencers, do you feel that when you were more present on social media, was there anyone who influenced you by their sustainable fashion choices? If so, can you give an example?

Interviewee: I've never followed influencers specifically for their fashion choices, but recently I discovered a man named Rob Greenfield who lives in the middle of nowhere in a small house. He is the definition of sustainable, with everything he needs fitting into a single backpack. He sends the message that we don't need to have almost anything to be happy. This message helped me realize that the few things I have are enough and that happiness doesn't come from the products we own, but from ourselves.

Interviewer: How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: I think reviews are very good for making purchasing decisions because they make us rethink about products. Having access to reviews from people who have actually bought and tried the product is very influential. These criticisms help us to make a more confident decision. However, it is important to remember that reviews are subjective and that each person is different. For example, a negative review about a solid shampoo may be due to the way it was used, and not necessarily the quality of the product. So, while criticism is an asset, the final choice should be based on our own research.

Interviewer: To finish this section, do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain your preference.

Interviewee: Yes, I prefer to buy clothes in physical stores. The main reason is that, online, we cannot try on the clothes. Trying on the item is essential to know if we are making a good purchase because we need to see if the clothes fit well. Also, considering that I am looking to buy clothes that will last me several years, it is important for me to be able to try on and evaluate the quality of the garment before buying it.

Interviewer: Let's now move on to the fifth and final section, where we will understand the perceptions of sustainability in the fashion industry according to your generation, Generation Z. What is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I think there are still a lot of challenges. Often, brands mislead consumers into making them feel good about a purchase that is actually not sustainable, a practice known as greenwashing.

Besides these brands, the increasing popularity of second-hand clothing stores shows that more people are opting for more sustainable alternatives. This move towards reusing existing clothes is an important step in reducing waste and excessive consumption.

Future generations, including Generation Z, will play a crucial role in continuing this trend and demanding more transparency and sustainable practices from brands. By making conscious choices and supporting truly sustainable brands, we can promote a more responsible and eco-friendly fashion industry.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I think it is possible, yes, but it requires a change in mentality. First, it is essential to reduce the excessive consumption of fashion-related digital content. We are constantly being bombarded with images and advertisements of new pieces and trends, which makes us feel that we need more things. If we reduce this digital consumption, we can reduce this feeling of lack.

In addition, when buying products, we should focus on quality and durability. Instead of sourcing several cheap pieces, we can invest in high-quality items that last longer. This not only reduces waste but also helps us maintain a sustainable wardrobe.

Finally, we must be more conscious of our purchasing choices. Ask ourselves if we really need a new piece of clothing or if we are being influenced by a passing trend. Adopting more conscious consumption and focusing on durable products is essential to balance the attraction of new trends with the need for sustainable practices.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: To be honest, I don't have any specific brand that is fully aligned with my sustainability values. I am not excluding the possibility that there are brands with good

practices, but, taking into account my ethical principles and the seriousness with which I take the concept of sustainability, I think that no brand fits completely.

The simple act of buying something new, which is not absolutely necessary, is no longer sustainable in my eyes. In the current state of affairs, the situation requires us to stop consuming excessively.

I have never bought clothes from specific brands with a focus on sustainability, nor am I very aware, because I wear a lot of clothes that used to belong to my family. I have good-quality pieces that last a long time. Maybe in the future, when I really need a good quality sweater that will last me a lifetime, I'll do my research. But, at the moment, I can't indicate a brand that aligns perfectly with my sustainability values.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I am willing to pay more for sustainable products, as long as these products have a significantly longer durability than conventional products. In fact, I don't see it as an expense, but rather as an investment. If a product is more expensive, but lasts much longer, it ends up compensating for the extra amount paid initially.

I think that this willingness to pay more is very much related to the knowledge and understanding of the concept of sustainability. Many people have a hard time justifying buying more expensive items because they may not be fully aware of the long-term benefits, both for the environment and for their own personal economy. When you understand that paying more for a sustainable product is investing in a better future and world and in prolonged use, the perspective changes completely.

Interviewer: And ready, now to finish, what changes do you consider still necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of generation z?

Interviewee: I think the most urgent change would be to do away with fast fashion stores. This is the main problem because we continue to overproduce and consume, as if the planet could withstand an infinite cycle of production and disposal. Therefore, the main change would be to end fast fashion and focus on reusing what we already have. We should promote the purchase of used clothes and encourage circular fashion, where garments are reused,

recycled, and renewed. This would help reduce waste and the environmental impact of the fashion industry.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix I – Re-transcription of the 7th interview: Interviewee 7

Male, 24 years old, from Abrantes but currently living in Lisbon. He has a robust background in hospitality and tourism management, holding a bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management and currently completing a master's degree in Strategic Tourism Destination Management. Additionally, he has experience working as an operational manager at a major Portuguese hospitality firm. His interest in sustainability is significant, and he actively integrates sustainable practices into his professional work and daily routine, reflecting his dedication to promoting sustainability.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers are extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how individuals of your generation view sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors. Let's start by talking about sustainability. How do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: My definition of sustainability has evolved. Initially, it saw sustainability as the use of present resources without compromising future generations. In recent times, education, especially of the younger generations, has become crucial. A few years ago, sustainability focused on resource management, water and electricity consumption. Now, it also includes education for people to understand and implement these concepts in their daily lives, from sustainable fashion to a more conscious lifestyle. We live in a world where this topic is much more present, not only in the news and media, but also in the daily life of each person. Therefore, I see sustainability as the conscious use of resources so as not to

compromise future generations, but also as a continuous education about its goals and ways to integrate it into our daily lives.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is so important in society today?

Interviewee: At the moment, I believe that sustainability has gained a more important role due to the visible impacts we are experiencing. Past generations did not have the same education on sustainability, nor direct contact with environmental problems that we have today. This has resulted in a lot of damage to our planet.

Currently, we are witnessing worrying phenomena such as the melting of the polar ice caps, devastating forest fires, scarcity of resources and excessive waste, both in clothing and food. These problems have alerted our generation to the seriousness of the situation.

We are the first generation to really suffer the effects of the lack of education and sustainable practices of our ancestors. We are realizing that sustainability is not just an important topic but an urgent necessity due to the significant damage caused by its absence. Our appreciation for sustainability arises largely from the need to mitigate the damage already done and to avoid future environmental disasters.

Interviewer: And do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? In what way? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I think so. During the three years of the pandemic, the topic of sustainability was very much in focus. First, we observed improvements on the planet when people were all at home. That gave us a clear picture of the alarming pace at which we were living and the resources we were consuming. It was one of the main reasons that, after the pandemic, made people realize that maybe we needed to put a foot on the brakes and think about what we were doing wrong.

During the pandemic, when we were always at home, without being able to go out or carry out certain activities, we realized that we were spending too much and unnecessarily. For example, in relation to clothes, people realized that they didn't need to buy so many pieces

and could reuse what they already had. They began to think that they did not need to spend so much water or other resources.

The pandemic made us slow down a little and reflect on waste. By being locked at home for so long, we realized that many of our attitudes were unnecessary and influenced by others. We have become more individual and that has had a positive impact on the planet. The pandemic has shown us the importance of adopting more conscious and individual attitudes to protect the environment.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: I think I can talk about two points: sustainability as an individual and sustainability in my workplace. In my daily life, I try to be as sustainable as possible. I do rigorous recycling, separating paper, plastic, glass and organic waste. I also try to reduce water and electricity costs, taking short showers and using appliances only with a full charge. After the pandemic, I became even more aware of the need to avoid superfluous expenses, especially when shopping, where I only buy the essentials. I live alone, so I try to reuse and minimize food waste as much as possible.

In my work, which is in the area of tourism, sustainability is a constant theme in both my undergraduate and master's degrees. Playing a management role, I was able to apply a lot of knowledge about sustainability in the company where I work. For example, I have implemented practices to reduce material and water waste, such as using washing machines with a full load only and better maintaining materials to extend their life cycle. I also instilled recycling habits among my colleagues, many of whom had never had contact with sustainability. In addition, we promote the reuse of clothes and other materials, donating them to those in need, instead of discarding them.

I believe that sustainability should not only be an individual practice, but also a matter of education and sharing with others. Thus, the small changes we implement in our daily lives can have a big impact if we all contribute.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Can you explain?

Interviewee: Yes, I think so. In recent years, especially during the pandemic, I have learned a lot about sustainability and changed many of my habits. However, I know that there is still a lot to learn. I believe that continuous education is essential, because as we learn more, we can identify and correct less sustainable practices in our lives. As with many other topics, life is a constant learning process and I don't know everything about sustainability. Sometimes, some decisions I make, whether in terms of purchases or the use of resources, may not be the right ones.

Being more involved in this environment and knowing that it is an increasingly discussed topic in society helps us to learn continuously, whether through the news or global events. This continuous learning allows us to shape and transform our attitudes over time, which I consider very important. Constant education in sustainability is essential to adapt our practices to the new information and environmental challenges that arise, ensuring that we are always improving and contributing positively to the planet

Interviewer: So now in the second section, we're going to talk about sustainability that we just addressed, but in the fashion industry. So, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? You can justify the answer.

Interviewee: That's how it is, this was one of the things I've learned over the last few years. A few years ago, I didn't have much knowledge about sustainable fashion and, honestly, it wasn't something I opted for much. I have always had a sustainable attitude towards buying very little clothing. I only buy when it's necessary or when my clothes get damaged. I have the essential clothes to survive in winter and summer, and I don't buy more than I need. In that sense, it turned out to be sustainable. I often bought brands and products that I knew would last longer. For example, I have pieces of clothing that have lasted me for 7 or 8 years and are still good to wear, that is, I opted for quality without focusing too much on sustainability.

In recent times, with the globalization of sustainability and the information available, I realized that it is not because they are recycled or sustainable products that they lose quality. Now, I opt more for brands that offer sustainable products, realizing that these options can have the same or even higher quality. This change in attitude was a result of increased education and awareness of the importance of sustainability in fashion.

In a way, my sustainable attitude towards clothing was a little more about buying less quantity and not overbuying. I didn't look so much at the brand and how it had been manufactured, maybe wrongly, but I think that at this moment I have also improved a little. I'm already starting to know some brands that have sustainable and recycled products that I noticed and realized that the quality is still the same. But I think it took a lot of education on my part to realize that this was also possible, and there was also a change in the communication of brands in this sense.

Interviewer: And what, in your opinion, are the main factors that suggest that these sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than just a passing trend?

Interviewee: I think the biggest proof of this is the significant increase in sustainable fashion stores that have opened recently. For example, in the last year, in Lisbon, I heard about 10 or 15 new clothing stores, and at least 2 or 3 of them are brands that have a strong commitment to sustainability. In addition, many of the others are thrift shops or second-hand clothing stores. If it were just a passing fad, it would not have gained the dimension it has today, nor would there be so much supply.

Education has also played a key role. People are more aware of the benefits of buying sustainable and second-hand clothing. For example, it is possible to find quality clothes at a much more affordable price. Often, these pieces are in excellent condition because they were bought on impulse and were hardly used. The trend is that this practice will continue to grow, especially since we still have a lot to learn about sustainability. With greater education, the supply of stores of this type will increase even more, and people will prefer quality products that are also more economical and sustainable.

Interviewer: So, now talking about brands, which fashion brands do you consider to be leaders in sustainable practices? Just list the brands and then justify it.

Interviewee: Well, I think I can especially mention three brands: The North Face, Patagonia and Nike.

Interviewer: Of these brands you mentioned, what do you feel makes them leaders and stand out?

Interviewee: I can talk in more detail about The North Face and Patagonia, because I have more contact with these brands. The North Face stands out a lot for its communication. Before, there was a perception that recycled products had lower quality and durability. However, in recent times, The North Face has improved communication, showing that its recycled products have the same quality and durability as those made with new materials. For example, I bought a coat from The North Face recently without knowing that it was made from recycled material and was pleasantly surprised when I realized that the quality was excellent.

Patagonia, on the other hand, is known for its sustainability initiatives and environmental movements. My first contact with Patagonia was due to their actions in favor of sustainability, and not just for their products. They have been consistent in educating consumers and promoting sustainable practices, which makes them a benchmark in the industry.

As for Nike, I know that they have made efforts to introduce recycled products, especially in sportswear lines such as football and basketball jerseys. Despite recent criticism about some practices, they have shown initiatives to incorporate recycled materials into their products, which is a step in the right direction.

Interviewer: Very well. So, now moving on to the third section that talks about the characteristics of Gen Z and fashion choices. In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of your generation?

Interviewee: I think there are two main characteristics of my generation. First, we are the "fast" generation, the fast-food generation in everything. We want things that give us immediate pleasure and we want to consume it right away. We are a generation that makes many decisions at the moment and ends up consuming the easiest and most accessible.

Secondly, we are very influenced by digital media. We spend a lot of time in digital media and let ourselves be influenced by what we see online, both for good and for bad. Sustainability, for example, has managed to expand a lot because it is a very present theme

in digital media. In a way, it becomes easier for brands to sell now, because digital communication allows us to see something we like and buy it right away.

Interviewer: OK, very good. How do you feel that these characteristics you just said relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: Complementing what I just said, being part of this generation and having grown up with all these digital mechanisms, I am very influenced by what I see on the internet. If I like something and I have the possibility to buy it, I often do it on impulse, thinking about the momentary pleasure it will give me. In recent times, this has had a great weight in my fashion decisions, even though I control it a lot, because I buy few clothes. But if I see something I've wanted for a long time and it appears there, I buy it without thinking too much.

Brands exploit this impulsive consumption of my generation a lot. As we are constantly exposed to digital, it is much easier to sell us products. This momentary pleasure and digital influence are factors that greatly influence my fashion decisions.

Interviewer: And what challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: The main challenge I encounter is the amount of information and offers we constantly receive. When I look for a piece of clothing, I am bombarded with advertisements for various brands, many of them unsustainable. If I see an ad for a piece that seems to have quality and is the first to appear, I often end up buying without considering other sustainable options.

For example, if I'm looking for a shirt, I might see 20 ads, of which 15 are from non-sustainable brands and 5 from sustainable brands. As I buy little clothes and, when I do, I do it sporadically, if the first ad I see looks good, I end up buying right away. I don't see the other 14 ads that could have more sustainable options. This information overload and lack of clarity make it difficult to choose truly sustainable options.

Brand communication also plays a crucial role. Often, sustainable products are not highlighted effectively, which makes it difficult to identify more conscious options. To improve this situation, it would be important for sustainable brands to invest in clearer

communication about the benefits and durability of their products. Additionally, better organization and distinction of ads could help consumers make more informed and informed choices.

Interviewer: How do you feel that the fashion preferences of our generation can then lead to lasting changes in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: I think it doesn't depend only on our generation. It also depends a lot on the brands. Because we are very connected to digital, we are heavily influenced by what we see online, and people tend to follow each other. I believe we have the power and knowledge to promote concepts such as sustainable fashion, reuse of clothing and the idea of giving or selling second-hand clothing. These concepts have the potential to grow in the coming years. However, we face quite a few challenges, especially from low-cost brands, which are one of the main enemies of sustainable fashion due to their low prices and unsustainable practices. Most people with sustainable lifestyle habits avoid these brands, which have no commitment to sustainability.

I believe that change will come through education and influence. If some people start adopting more sustainable practices, they can influence their networks of friends and family. It's like in sports: if one or two people in a group start to be more active, they can inspire others to do the same. This can work both positively and negatively.

Unfortunately, I think sustainability and sustainable fashion will gain more weight as we feel more of the negative effects of climate change, such as ice melt, global warming, fires, and deforestation. When we start to feel these consequences firsthand, we are forced to make more sustainable decisions. It may be a little late, but I believe that this is how the sustainable fashion market will grow. For sad but necessary reasons, ongoing education and positive influence can help promote sustainable fashion more broadly.

Interviewer: And now moving on to the fourth section. We talk a little bit about the digital behavior and communication preferences of Generation Z in the fashion industry. So, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: I use digital platforms every day, but I don't use them specifically to look for new sustainable fashion brands. In my algorithm, so to speak, there is nothing directed towards the search for sustainable brands or fashion. For me, what has the most weight is the communication of the brands that appears spontaneously. If I see an ad or someone using a sustainable product with good communication, it will influence my purchase decision in the future.

For example, if I see effective communication about a sustainable product, chances are that the next time I need a coat, I'll consider that brand. It depends a lot on how brands communicate with me, as I rarely actively look for new brands. Usually, my purchases are influenced by the continuous education I receive through social media and other digital platforms.

Therefore, I don't often look for new brands on digital platforms. Instead, I respond to the innovations and good communications of the brands that appear to me. If a brand can communicate well and show innovation, I'm more likely to consider their products the next time I need something.

Interviewer: How do social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media significantly influences my fashion choices, mainly through the effective communication of brands and the recommendations of the people I follow.

For example, if a brand can clearly and succinctly communicate the characteristics, quality and durability of a product, this helps me a lot in the decision process. When brands communicate the benefits and sustainability of their products well, I'm much more likely to choose a sustainable brand over any brand that I usually buy but doesn't have any sustainability index.

In addition, the influence does not come only from me. It also depends on the communication that these brands make with the general public. Let's say I don't know of any new sustainable brands, but I follow people on social media who are interested in sustainability. If these people use and recommend a brand, and that brand's communication is compelling, I'm likely to buy from that brand as well.

A good example is the North Face, which has several sustainability indices and awards. People buy North Face products not only because the brand is known, but also because it

communicates the quality and sustainability of its products well. I myself bought North Face products influenced by people around me who used and recommended it.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media, which appear on various platforms, influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: For me, the influence is great.

I think that, as I said, it has a lot to do with quality. For me, I buy a product for its quality. So I think that's something important for brands to communicate.

It's the same thing if we go to another sector, such as hospitality. For someone who knows nothing about tourism, if I say that a hotel has won a Green Key award, that person may have no idea what that means or how important it is. For example, we have one of the most sustainable hotels in Europe in Lisbon, with several sustainability awards, but their communication is not just about the awards. I think fashion brands should do this too and have improved over the last few years. It is not enough to say that the product is recycled or that I don't know how many bags were used to make a coat. Brands should also talk about the characteristics of the product, explain that by choosing a recycled product, we are not losing quality. Communication should focus on explaining how the sustainable product benefits us, its durability and its quality.

For me, this is quite important, as unfortunately I don't have enough knowledge about many of the sustainability indicators. I know some indicators related to decent work and workers' rights, but I think brands need to explain in a more accessible way why the product is good, so that I can make an informed choice.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers, who are very present on social networks, influence your fashion choices? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I think so. I personally don't follow many digital influencers. But it's like I talked about the snowball effect. Even though I don't directly follow many influencers, I know that many of the people I follow digital influencers.

Our generation is very influenced by digital media, and this is visible in recent times. Previously, the ads used famous actors, football players, athletes or singers. Nowadays,

maybe 8 out of 10 ads use digital influencers instead of these celebrities, because they are the ones who are selling products now

So, I don't need to follow digital influencers to be influenced by them. There is a direct and indirect influence. For example, I may not follow a specific influencer, but the people who influence me follow, and so I end up being influenced indirectly. Right now, digital influencers are the ones who can most influence the fashion market.

Interviewer: How important is normal user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: I think that technology has transformed the importance of these indicators as reviews and evaluations. Nowadays, if someone wants to buy a product, the first two things they check are the price and the reviews. We have so many options available that reviews often decide whether we buy a product or not. Reviews, for me, are the second most important factor after price. Before, if we had 10,000 reviews of a product, we wouldn't read them all. But now, with technology, we get a summary of the evaluations. We can see how many people have given it 5 stars, how many have given it two stars, and understand the reasons behind those reviews. Technology makes it much easier to analyze these opinions, allowing us to realize if they are isolated cases or a recurring pattern.

In addition, the fact that we can buy everything online has also increased the importance of reviews. Ten years ago, when we bought in physical stores, we wouldn't ask the opinion of people who had already bought there, because that was seen as strange. We ended up buying it and, if we didn't like the product, we found out too late. Today, reviews are one of the first things we check after the price.

Interviewer: And do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain?

Interviewee: I prefer to buy in physical stores. I don't buy a lot of things online. As I have already mentioned, I buy little clothes. When I buy online, sometimes it happens that the size is not ideal. For example, I have already received a product in a size larger than I needed. As I don't have much patience for exchanges, I ended up with the larger product. Maybe I still use it, but someone else could stop using it.

When I shop in person, I can try the product, verify its quality, and evaluate how it feels. This helps me make a more accurate purchasing decision. Therefore, I prefer shopping in physical stores for the assurance it provides regarding product quality, which is important to me.

However, I recognize the ease of online shopping. Nowadays, it's easy to send something home and, if it doesn't fit, send it back. In a few days, we can make the exchange and solve the problem. Even so, for me, the experience of being able to see and try the product before buying is more satisfying, so I prefer physical stores.

Interviewer: Moving on to the fifth and final section. What is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Unfortunately, I think in many markets, including fashion, the main focus ends up being money. Some brands, such as Patagonia and the North Face, are truly concerned with sustainability and the footprint they leave. However, many other brands embrace sustainability as a trend because they have realized that it attracts money.

For example, there are brands that promote sustainable products, but end up encouraging excessive consumption. I've seen a documentary about a brand that sold sustainable tote bags. Many people bought these bags for fashion and accumulated several, which, in the end, uses more resources than using plastic bags.

Sustainability must be more than a trend. Brands need to clearly communicate the positive impact of their products, not just that they are recycled. They need to explain why a sustainable product is a better and longer-lasting choice.

Interviewer: And how can you balance the attraction of new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I think fashion is cyclical. Many old styles become trendy again. Products like cardigans, bell-bottom pants, and vintage jackets are back in style. Some people buy these items in thrift shops, which is a sustainable practice because they reuse products that are still of good quality. Brands should understand that they can use recycled materials or promote the resale of products. Many people prefer vintage items to new ones. Sustainability should

be something natural, integrated into people's lives, without the need to constantly create new products. It is essential for brands to understand and adapt to this.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider aligned with your sustainability values? Can you justify it?

Interviewee: For me, North Face is one of the top brands that is aligned with my sustainability values. In addition to the awards they have, they offer high-quality and durable products. Even with recycled products, they guarantee that they last 15, 20, 30 years. This aligns with my values because I prefer to pay more for a product that lasts a long time. Quality and durability are key to me, and North Face manages to deliver that.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: For me, paying more for a sustainable product is not enough. I need the product to also have quality and durability. I pay more for three factors: durability, sustainability, and product quality. If a brand guarantees that the product is durable and of high quality, I am willing to pay more. I buy little clothing, but when I do, I want it to last a long time.

Interviewer: What changes do you consider necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of our generation?

Interviewee: The main change is in communication. We spend a lot of time in the digital environment and seek momentary contentment. Brand communication must be clear about the benefits of sustainability and the quality of products. It's not enough to say that a coat is recycled; It is necessary to explain that it does not lose quality or durability. Brands must also expose the ethical practices they adopt, such as respect for human rights. Often, cheap and fast products violate human rights. Sustainable brands should highlight these issues and show why they are a better choice. Communication is essential so that sustainability is not only seen as a trend, but as a lifestyle.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix J – Re-transcription of the 8th interview: Interviewee 8

Female, 22 years old, from Tomar but currently living in Lisbon. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Management with a focus on Marketing at Nova School of Business and Economics. She holds a bachelor's degree in Marketing and Advertising from IADE and has worked as a brand assistant and social media manager. In her free time, she enjoys nature, traveling, and sports, which have heightened her awareness of sustainability issues. Her combined personal and professional experiences offer valuable insights into leveraging marketing to promote sustainability and drive positive societal change.

Interviewer: So, to start the first section, let's talk more about the concept and evolution of sustainability. How do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: For me, sustainability is about rethinking our approach to doing things. It's about giving a new purpose to our actions, ensuring that they are not just single-use. It is essential that our practices are beneficial to us, to the planet and to other people. It may seem a little abstract, but I believe that this is the essence of sustainability.

Interviewer: And taking this into account, what are, in your opinion, the main reasons why sustainability is so important in our society today?

Interviewee: Because, as we know, our resources are finite, and if we don't care about sustainability, eventually those resources will run out. Without enough resources, the planet will not be able to support so many people, industries and so much consumption. Therefore, I believe that sustainability is crucial.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and environmental perception? In what way? Can you give an example?

Interviewee: Personally, the pandemic hasn't changed my views on sustainability much. The moment that really influenced my consciousness in terms of sustainability was when I volunteered. I remember only doing one or two purchases during confinement, because we were at home and didn't need much. This led to a significant reduction in my consumerism. In my case, I didn't increase my consumption during the pandemic, but I know that for many other people there was an increase in online shopping.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine? What do you try to do to be more sustainable?

Interviewee: Currently, I try to be more sustainable mainly through my consumption. For example, I buy second-hand clothes and furniture and also sell items that I no longer use. I always try to look for second-hand options before buying something new. In terms of food, I try to consume foods that are as natural as possible. Fortunately, I have access to my grandparents' gardens, which allows me to consume fresh and local products. In addition, I recycle whenever possible.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: Yes, I think so, because more and more I realize that sustainability alone is not enough. We need to educate ourselves to understand what are the best strategies to help the planet and humanity. For example, the concepts of regenerative business and regenerative practices give a new purpose to sustainable actions. Sustainability is constantly evolving, and without education and access to information, we will not be able to keep up with these changes. Therefore, it is crucial that there is ongoing education on sustainability.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the second section, let's now address sustainability in the fashion industry. How often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? Can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: Well, as I said before, nowadays, whenever I need a new piece of clothing, I try to look at second-hand options first. If I find second-hand options, I don't even look for new options. Of course, there are items like underwear that I don't buy second-hand. But in general, I always try to opt for second-hand products before considering buying something new.

Interviewer: What do you think are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than just a passing trend and are really here to stay?

Interviewee: I think that, above all, because the end consumer is increasingly concerned about this. I don't believe it's just a passing trend, because going back would be very incoherent. Many brands have already incorporated sustainability as one of their core values. So I don't see it as just a fad. Although it is a trend, I think it will not change as other trends usually do.

Interviewer: What do you think are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than just a passing trend?

Interviewee: First, as I mentioned, is the growing concern of the end consumer. Secondly, I believe that brands are starting to realize the benefits of working more sustainably, whether in production, in the humane treatment of workers or in the final phase of the product. While profit remains a goal, I believe brands are realizing how positive it is to be sustainable for both them and the environment. Therefore, I believe that these practices will not go back. These are the two main factors, in my opinion.

Interviewer: What do you think are the fashion brands that you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: One of the first brands that comes to mind when we talk about sustainability is, without a doubt, Patagonia. Their products are produced ethically and with good materials, and they have a repair policy. If a piece gets damaged, it can be sent back and they

fix it. That reminds me a little of the times of our grandparents, when things were used to the limit. I think this idea makes perfect sense.

We also have some Portuguese brands that have this concern with sustainability. Although they are smaller brands, they do an excellent job. For example, Conscious The Label and Tema Creations produce locally and sustainably, with a strong environmental conscience.

Interviewer: What makes these brands, both Patagonia and Portuguese brands with the intention of sustainability, stand out and be leaders, in your opinion?

Interviewee: Patagonia stands out for its ethical production and high-quality materials, but above all for its repair policy. If a part is damaged, it can be returned, repaired, and sent back to the customer. This reflects a mentality of extending the life of products, something reminiscent of the times of our grandparents, when things were used to the limit.

As for smaller Portuguese brands, such as Conscious The Label and Tema Creations, they produce locally, which allows for a much more ethical production. Everything is done by hand, in factories where people are treated well and work in good conditions, which is also a crucial aspect of sustainability. Many big brands exploit workers in factories, which is anything but sustainable. Also, the materials used by these brands are of good quality and well-produced. Therefore, these practices make these brands stand out.

Interviewer: Okay, so now moving on to the third section. Let's talk about the characteristics of our generation and our fashion choices. In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of Generation Z?

Interviewee: I think our generation has a lot of different personas, which reflect the characteristics of our generation. We have a more concerned and conscious side, mainly because we have access to much more information than previous generations. This brings us almost the responsibility to be more aware. However, we also have a much more consumerist side, influenced by social networks, where we are much more involved than previous generations, which makes us want to consume and buy more things that are fashionable.

Interviewer: How do you think those characteristics you mentioned relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: I think nowadays I make an effort to be more conscious, not only to spend less money, but also to look at fashion in a more lasting way. When I buy a piece, I always think about how long it will last and not just if it looks good with an outfit I want to wear. I try to buy things that make sense in the long run and not just because they look good or because I saw someone wear them. Of course, sometimes I'm influenced by what I see in others, after all, I'm part of Generation Z, but I try to be aware of that. Above all, I think more before buying and try to make fewer impulsive purchases.

Interviewer: And also, now talking more about the challenges, what are the challenges you face when making sustainable fashion choices, besides the ones you already mentioned?

Interviewee: I think the main challenge is to find options that are truly sustainable. Many brands claim to be sustainable, but in reality, they are not. Therefore, trying to identify which brands are truly sustainable is a challenge. In addition, another major difficulty is finding sustainable pieces at affordable prices. That's why I often opt to buy second-hand. This not only helps to find cheaper options, but it's also a way to be even more sustainable. Nowadays, there are very cheap brands, which makes it difficult to justify spending 100 euros for a sustainable piece. However, second-hand fashion helps overcome this challenge because it allows finding more affordable options from sustainable brands. This way, I can be sustainable twice: by buying second-hand and by choosing sustainable brands.

Interviewer: And how can the fashion preferences of Gen Z you mentioned lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: Honestly, I think there are two types of people in our generation who influence fashion and its evolution a lot. On the one hand, we have those who care about sustainability, and I believe that this concern will continue to grow, leading more brands to adopt sustainable practices. On the other hand, there will always be an audience for fast fashion brands that don't have this concern. However, we are the consumers of the future and we

will be the parents and the example for the next generation. I believe that, by being more conscious, we will influence future generations to also be more conscious in their fashion choices.

Interviewer: And now moving on to the fourth section, let's talk a little bit more about the digital behavior and communication preferences of our generation in the fashion industry. How often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: Very often, I would say almost weekly. Although I don't shop every week, I discover new brands quite regularly.

I primarily use Instagram and often discover new brands through influencers I follow who focus on sustainability. Additionally, the ads that appear also help me find new options.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media influences a lot, especially because I follow a lot of influencers in the area of sustainability. This helps to increase my awareness of the subject and influences my purchasing decisions.

Interviewer: Do you think that sustainability campaigns on social media positively or negatively influence your perception of these fashion brands?

Interviewee: It depends on the brand. For fast fashion brands, sustainability campaigns don't influence me much, as I know that they are often not truly sustainable. But when it's smaller brands or brands that have really changed their practices to be more sustainable, I see that positively. Of course, big brands that take significant steps, such as eliminating plastic bags, can also have a positive impact, but often the production part still has a big impact that is not addressed.

Interviewer: Do you feel that digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, they influence a lot. I try to follow people who are aligned with my values. For example, I follow Catarina Barreiros, who has a very strong approach to sustainability. Other influencers, like Mariana Gomes, who buys a lot of second-hand items, are also a great inspiration for me. In addition, I admire Alice Trewinnard, who always tries to opt for smaller, Portuguese and sustainable brands. I consider this extremely positive, as it helps me to make more conscious fashion choices in line with my principles.

Interviewer: And how do you think content generated by ordinary users, such as reviews and testimonials, influences your sustainable fashion purchasing decisions?

Interviewee: It has a big impact. Even if a piece is sustainable, if other people say it's not of good quality or that it doesn't last, I'm not going to buy it. Therefore, the opinions and reviews of other consumers are very important to me.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you justify your preference?

Interviewee: Personally, I prefer to buy from physical stores because I can see and touch the products. However, buying online is much more practical and saves time. Many of my second-hand purchases are done online as it is more convenient. Although seeing the pieces live has its advantages, such as checking the quality of the material, the practicality of online often weighs more in my decision.

Interviewer: Okay, then, moving on to the fifth and final section on the perceptions of sustainability in the fashion industry by our generation. What is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Let me think. I think that, fortunately, there is an increasing concern for sustainability, mainly due to the factors I mentioned earlier. The end consumer is increasingly worried about these issues, and brands want to sell, right? So, it's positive that brands are responding to this concern.

I see the increase in brand transparency, with the acquisition of certifications and clear communication about their processes, as a positive development. Brands are becoming more transparent, and the effort to be more sustainable is visible and growing, which is very good. As for examples, I notice that fast fashion brands, which still have a long way to go, are trying to implement more sustainable options, either in the materials they use or in the way they make their products. While there is still much room for improvement, these steps are encouraging and important for the industry's evolution towards sustainability.

Interviewer: And how do you think you can balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I think Vinted is a great option. Also, I think it would be important to have a deeper education about sustainability in schools, so that people understand the importance beyond just recycling. Another idea would be for city councils to implement more markets for exchanging clothes or items, which makes perfect sense to promote sustainability in a practical way.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values?

Interviewee: The brands I know the most and that are aligned with my values are mainly Portuguese brands, as I mentioned before. They are concerned with sustainability in terms of materials, durability and production conditions. In addition to the Portuguese brands, I mentioned earlier, Patagonia is a brand I greatly admire because, in addition to producing sustainably, it has repair policies that extend the useful life of products.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: Yes, I'm willing to pay more for sustainable products, especially if they're from Portuguese brands. What I consider most important is the durability and quality of the

products. If a piece is of quality and has been made ethically, I am willing to pay more. In addition, I always try to look for cheaper options, such as second-hand products.

Interviewer: What changes do you consider necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of Generation Z?

Interviewee: I think it's crucial for brands to be even more transparent. We need big brands that really care about sustainability. This involves improving production processes, ensuring good working conditions, and using sustainable materials. In addition, it is important for consumers to be more aware and informed about their choices.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix K – Re-transcription of the 9th interview: Interviewee 9

Female, 24 years old, from Lisbon. She holds a bachelor's degree in Marketing and Advertising from IADE. Currently, she works as a Solution Expert at VML MAP. Her professional experience provides a solid foundation for her insights into the marketing industry and its evolving practices, particularly in relation to sustainability. She demonstrates a strong concern for the environment and adopts sustainable practices in her personal and professional life.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: Sustainability is defined as a set of small actions with a long-term result. It is present in all fields of our lives, from the clothes we wear to the food we eat.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is important in today's society?

Interviewee: Sustainability is important because it combats climate change, improves health and well-being, strengthens the economy, and promotes social justice, ensuring a balanced future for everyone.

Interviewer: Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, in what way? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted my views as it showed us how our health depends on the health of the planet. It showed us that we are a significant factor in environmental deterioration and how our actions are central to a greener future.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: I try to save water as much as possible, for example, by taking shorter showers and turning off the tap when not in use. I also wash dishes by hand and recycle all recyclable materials.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: I don't think there's ever too much information about such an important subject, so yes. I feel like I know the basics on this topic, but I could always dig deeper to make more sustainable decisions in the future.

Interviewer: Now we're going to focus on sustainability in the fashion industry in the second section. How often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? Please justify your answer.

Interviewee: I don't usually buy sustainable fashion products often, mainly because I don't know many options available and, when I do, the prices tend to be higher.

Interviewer: What are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: Technological advances have allowed the development of more sustainable processes that benefit both the environment and companies. In addition, stricter regulations and sustainability standards are being implemented, which helps to ensure that these practices are not just a fad but rather a lasting change in the industry.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Patagonia.

Interviewer: And what makes this brand stand out, in your opinion?

Interviewee: Patagonia stands out for several reasons. First, the brand has a sustainable commitment, integrating responsible environmental practices throughout its production chain. In addition, the brand promotes the longevity of its products through the "Worn Wear" program, encouraging customers to repair, reuse and recycle their clothes. This initiative not only reduces waste, but also extends the useful life of the pieces, promoting more conscious consumption. Patagonia also allocates a small portion of its annual sales to environmental groups around the world, demonstrating its commitment to protecting the planet.

Interviewer: In the third section, we'll discuss the characteristics of Gen Z and how they affect your fashion preferences. In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of your generation?

Interviewee: Our generation grew up with technology from an early age, so we are very digital. We value authenticity and are very concerned about social and environmental issues and look for brands that share these values. We prefer fast and efficient communication, especially through social networks, and we like personalization in products and services. We understand global problems well and use social media to express our opinions and influence others.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: These characteristics make it easier for me to know and buy sustainable products. I am always up to date with the news and I look for brands that are transparent and that align with my social and environmental values. Technology and social media help me make more conscious and informed choices about what I should and shouldn't consume.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: The main challenge is the high price of sustainable garments. These options are often more expensive than fast fashion, which can be a dealbreaker for those on a budget.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: If our generation starts to prefer more sustainable brands right now, the rest of the industry will feel compelled to be more sustainable. This pressure can lead to a reduction in the number of fast fashion brands and a greater adoption of sustainable practices across the fashion industry.

Interviewer: Now let's move on to the fourth section where we'll cover how digital platforms and social media influence Gen Z's sustainable fashion choices. How often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: Whenever I discover a sustainable brand, it's through social media.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media greatly influences my choices, as there are influencers who highlight the specific qualities of each brand. In addition, digital ads are a great source of inspiration and ideas for acquiring new pieces.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: They influence a lot, because through these platforms, brands are able to show all the qualities of their products. This creates a desire to consume these products, as we only see advantages in their acquisition.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, digital influencers have a strong influence on my fashion choices. They present updated styles and current trends, recommend specific products through commercial partnerships, and associate a desirable lifestyle with their clothing choices. This creates new trends and inspires followers to adopt these personal preferences. For example, I follow Catarina Barreiros, who promotes sustainability and inspires me to make more conscious choices.

Interviewer: How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: User-generated content is very important because it allows us to know the real experience of other people. If their experience was positive, I have more reason to believe that mine will be too, which influences me to buy from this brand.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: I prefer to buy online because it's easier to find exactly what I'm looking for, I don't have to go to the store and I can avoid queues and confusion. In addition, I can shop at any time of the day, without depending on the opening hours of the stores.

Interviewer: Finally, in the fifth section we will discuss Gen Z's perceptions of sustainability in the fashion industry. What is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: My opinion is that there is positive progress, but there is still much to be done to achieve truly sustainable practices throughout the production chain.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Balancing the attraction of new trends with sustainable practices involves opting for durable and timeless pieces, investing in quality to reduce overconsumption, and buying second-hand or sustainable brand options.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: I consider Zouri a brand that is really aligned with my sustainability values. As a Portuguese brand that stands out for collecting plastic from Portuguese beaches and transforming it into footwear, Zouri demonstrates that it is possible to create stylish and durable fashion products while promoting sustainability and environmental protection. This commitment to ocean cleanliness and the reuse of plastic waste perfectly reflects my environmental values.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I'm willing to pay more if I think the piece will be durable and that I'll be able to wear it for years.

Interviewer: What changes do you consider necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of Generation Z?

Interviewee: To better meet Gen Z's sustainability expectations, the fashion industry needs to be transparent throughout the production chain, prioritize sustainable materials such as organic and recycled, implement circular business models to reduce waste, and invest in sustainable technologies and ethical practices.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix L – Re-transcription of the 10th interview: Interviewee 10

Female, 24 years old, from Lisbon. She is currently an Account and Social Media Manager Trainee at Boca a Boca, where she is completing her internship. Her experience in marketing and social media management, combined with her role in a dynamic agency environment, provides valuable insights into the relationship between marketing practices and sustainability. Additionally, she practices sustainable behaviors in her daily life and is committed to promoting these practices to those around her.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: For me, sustainability is contributing to the preservation of the planet. In other words, it is the way we, as a society, use nature's resources in a responsible and balanced way, ensuring that we do not deplete these resources for future generations.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is so important in our society today?

Interviewee: Sustainability is crucial because it reduces waste, lowers operating costs and creates new jobs. In addition, it improves the quality of the environment. As sustainability is a very current topic, it motivates both companies and people to find innovative solutions to environmental and social problems.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? How did this happen? Can you give an example?

Interviewee: Yes, the pandemic has greatly impacted my opinions. During the lockdown, I spent a lot of time at home and started organizing. I realized that I didn't use half of the things I had and that I was a consumerist. This made me rethink my consumption habits. In addition, we saw on television that pollution has decreased and that animals have appeared in places where they were not seen before, and the waters have become cleaner in canals and rivers. The fact that we stopped helped the environment immensely. I began to realize the importance of reducing unnecessary consumption and adopting more sustainable practices in everyday life.

Interviewer: Okay, now talking more about yourself, how do you incorporate sustainable practices into your day-to-day life?

Interviewee: I try to use less and less plastic. At home, we reuse as much as possible and always recycle. In terms of clothing, I choose to buy second-hand, like on Vinted. When I lived in Barcelona, every Sunday I went to vintage and local fairs, where I bought reusable

clothes or clothes from local brands. Since the pandemic, I have started to practice recycling more and reduce purchases at big brands like Inditex. Additionally, I use public transportation whenever possible. If I need to go to Lisbon or meet a client, I prefer to use public transport to avoid driving into the city.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education on the topic of sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: I think so, I feel like there's always more to learn about sustainability. For example, I should learn more about the use of products such as the menstrual cup, as I still use many tampons and pads that are not good for the environment. I also want to learn more about sustainable alternatives in food and hygiene products, such as solid shampoos. We have so many disciplines that are not really useful, why not have a discipline that teaches sustainable practices and the importance of sustainability for the future? This would help people make more conscious choices from an early age.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section that talks about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: Very often, I would say about 90% of the time. For example, if I need to buy a dress for a wedding, I might not tell me if it's sustainable or not, or if I really need specific shoes. But in my day-to-day life, I always choose to buy at Vinted or at vintage fairs, like the ones in Barcelona. Unfortunately, in Portugal there are not so many fairs of this type. Sometimes I also choose more expensive and handmade pieces, from stores that have limited collections and that do not mass-produce, thus avoiding waste. I always think about the use I'm going to give to the pieces; for example, if I buy a jacket at Inditex for 50 euros, I think about whether I will wear it at least 50 times. I always try to maintain that mindset to ensure that I am making conscious and sustainable choices.

Interviewer: What are the main factors that suggest that the sustainable practices in the fashion industry that we observe may be more than a passing trend and that they are here to stay?

Interviewee: I think these practices are here to stay and that they will make more and more "noise". Over time, the importance of sustainability in fashion will increase. On ethical levels, people now have much more information available and cannot simply ignore it. Before, people didn't have as much information as we have today. Now, we know the negative impact of buying cheap clothes in bulk.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be leaders in sustainable practices, whether national or international?

Interviewee: Imagine, I did a work on Ivory and I know a lot about the sustainable practices they implemented from the beginning. So, it's a brand that comes to mind right away. Also, I don't just look for specific brands; I buy a lot of brands at Vinted. I know that Patagonia is known for its sustainable practices. There is also a bikini brand in Portugal, Conscious the label, which I also know makes efforts when it comes to sustainability.

Interviewer: And why do you think these brands are leaders and stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: In the case of Ivory, I know they implement sustainable practices from production, like using eco-friendly dyes and sustainable materials to make their pieces. For transportation, for example, if it's close by, they opt to deliver orders by bicycle. They try to be sustainable in every aspect of production, including packaging. Their commitment to sustainability at every stage is impressive and sets them apart.

Conscious the label also follows this line of thinking, using recycled materials to produce bikinis. In addition, the brand focuses on ethical production, ensuring fair conditions for all workers involved. This approach not only reduces environmental impact but also promotes social justice.

Patagonia is widely known for its sustainable practices, from the use of recycled materials to programs like "Worn Wear" which encourages customers to repair and reuse their clothes.

The brand is also transparent in its practices and allocates a portion of its annual sales to environmental causes.

Basically, all these brands share a common commitment to sustainability, adopting eco-friendly practices and focusing on reducing environmental impact and promoting social responsibility, which makes them stand out as leaders in the sustainable fashion sector.

Interviewer: In the third section, we'll discuss the characteristics of Gen Z and how they affect your fashion preferences. In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of your generation?

Interviewee: I think we're very adaptable. We were the only generation that grew up with the evolution of computers, starting with Magalhães in primary school. We were not born taught, but we had to learn and adapt quickly. We are an inclusive and diverse generation. At the same time, I think we have a certain resistance to growing; We want to grow, but not too fast.

Interviewer: And how do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: I think the main thing is the ease we have in finding information. We can be much more responsible because we know how to search. For example, my grandmother might have wanted to do research, but she didn't know how to do it. We don't have that excuse. If I have an event and need a dress, I first go to second-hand stores or sustainable brands. Our parents might go straight to the mall, but we have many options and know how to search. Sometimes, people choose the easiest option, but we have information on our side, so we can find more sustainable alternatives.

Interviewer: And what is the biggest challenge you identify when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: The biggest challenge is to know what is really behind things. Many brands say they are sustainable, but I don't always research to confirm if it is true. I end up not informing myself enough. In addition, the high price of sustainable clothes is also an

impactful factor. I like sustainable products, but I am not always willing to pay the higher price. Since I am still doing an internship and do not have a high income, it ends up being impossible for me, but I hope that when I earn more, I can primarily buy sustainable pieces only.

Interviewer: How do you think Gen Z's fashion preferences can lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: I think stores know that if they don't evolve with the mindset of our generation, they're going to have fewer sales. They can implement programs such as offering discounts on exchanges of old clothes, which are then recycled to create new pieces. They can also focus on limited collections to reduce waste. Our generation's mindset can force the industry to be more sustainable.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the fourth section, let's talk a little more about digital behavior and the communication preferences of Generation Z in fashion, namely on social networks and digital platforms. How often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: I don't usually look specifically for sustainable fashion brands, but they end up appearing on my social networks, especially on Instagram and TikTok. For example, I can see a bikini that I like and then check if the brand is sustainable or not. When I lived in Barcelona, I followed many sustainable and vintage markets because of the fairs I attended. I know a lot of brands this way, but online it's not something I actively research.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media influences my fashion choices a lot. When I see brands concerned with sustainability and influencers promoting these brands, I am more intrigued and give more value to these companies. This makes me look at these brands in a different way, because I realize that they are not just another brand, but one with values.

Interviewer: Do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands? How?

Interviewee: Yes, I think it's very positive. Basically, it adds a lot of value to the brand and makes it much more interesting. These campaigns arouse more curiosity about the products and make me see the brand in a more favorable light.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? Can you give examples of some that influence the way you dress and choose the items?

Interviewee: Yes, digital influencers influence my fashion choices a lot. For example, when I started to be more sustainable, I followed Moya Mawhinney, an influencer who makes a lot of sustainable choices and frequents thrift shops. She had a wardrobe with few pieces, but all of good quality, which made me rethink and realize that I don't need so many things, but good and lasting pieces. This had a big impact on the way I see sustainable fashion. Another example is Mariana Gomes. She also shares sustainable fashion content, and while I don't necessarily buy the same brands she recommends, her posts make me reflect more on my life choices and consider more sustainable options.

Interviewer: How important are reviews and testimonials from ordinary users in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: User reviews and testimonials are very important. Depending on the credibility of the person, a testimonial can greatly influence my purchase decision. Before buying something, I usually see if someone has already used it and talked about it on TikTok, for example. If multiple people have a good experience, I'm more likely to buy the product.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reason for your preference?

Interviewee: I feel like it's a 50/50 balance. Since the pandemic, I've gotten used to shopping online because I can find exactly what I want, especially when it comes to sustainable brands.

In physical stores, we are more limited to the options available and things are not so exclusive. Of course, I prefer to try before buying, but I'm used to waiting for online delivery. In addition, I feel that physically I ended up buying more unnecessary things, while online I make a more careful selection. In Barcelona, I preferred to buy in person at vintage fairs, as there was a wide variety of local and sustainable products that I can't find in Portugal.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, I wanted to know what is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: One of the biggest efforts is the use of sustainable materials. Big brands like H&M are already embracing this, which is a big step forward. If even the big brands are doing this, the others also need to evolve so as not to be left behind.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Applications like Vinted help a lot in this balance by allowing people to buy trendy pieces at an affordable price. Additionally, more fairs and markets with sustainable brands can reach a larger audience. Another example is transforming old clothes into new pieces, offering discounts to encourage this practice.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: The brands that I consider aligned with my sustainability values are Ivory and Patagonia. Ivory stands out for implementing sustainable practices in all aspects, from transportation to the materials used in its pieces. They make a conscious effort to reduce environmental impact and promote sustainability throughout their production chain. Patagonia, for instance, is widely recognized for its commitment to environmental responsibility and ethical practices. They are pioneers in using recycled and organic

materials, and they encourage the repair and reuse of clothes through the 'Worn Wear' program. Both brands show that it is possible to be sustainable without compromising the quality and aesthetics of the products.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I'm willing to pay more, but gradually. It is not possible to have everything sustainable at once, because it is expensive. However, I believe in quality over quantity, so I prefer to invest in pieces that I know I'll wear for a long time.

Interviewer: What changes do you consider necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of Generation Z?

Interviewee: More transparency is needed from brands, so that we can monitor the production process and know if they are really sustainable. Brands should advertise their practices more to gain consumer trust.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix M – Re-transcription of the 11th interview: Interviewee 11

Female, 22 years old, from Lisbon. Currently completing her Integrated Master's degree in Biomedical Engineering at NOVA School of Science and Technology. She incorporates sustainable practices into her daily life and shows a growing interest in expanding her knowledge on this topic.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: For me, sustainability is the ability to use resources in a way that does not compromise their existence in the future. In other words, it is being able to meet our current needs without depleting resources for future generations.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is important in today's society?

Interviewee: Sustainability is essential to ensure that future generations do not suffer the consequences of our current actions. It involves preventing overconsumption and promoting a more balanced use of resources. Sustainability also addresses environmental quality and economic efficiency, encouraging innovative solutions that can bring long-term benefits to society.

Interviewer: Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, in what way? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: The COVID-19 pandemic made me realize the importance of being more aware of the environment. During the lockdown, there was a decrease in pollution and a temporary recovery of some ecosystems, which highlighted our influence on the environment. The situation has shown me that we need to adopt more sustainable practices to protect our planet in the long term. In addition, during the pandemic, many people have started to do more things at home, such as cooking and growing food, which can reduce dependence on industrialization and therefore decrease the ecological footprint.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: I practice recycling at home, separating plastics, papers, glass, and metals. I use reusable bags for shopping and choose products with eco-friendly and biodegradable

packaging. In fashion, I look for and choose brands that use sustainable materials. I reduce the use of single-use plastics by using water bottles and reusable containers.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: Yes, I think it would be important to have more education on this topic from school. In our time, there was not much talk about sustainability, and this means that sometimes we do not know how to adopt more sustainable practices.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section that talks about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: I don't buy sustainable fashion products as often as I would like. Although I intend to be more conscious, higher prices and my limited knowledge of sustainable brands are often an obstacle. However, I am gradually paying more attention and hope to increase my sustainable purchases in the future.

Interviewer: What are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry are more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: The growing awareness and emphasis on sustainability in the media and education indicate that it is becoming an enduring movement. People are more informed and concerned about environmental impacts, which drives sustainable practices. In addition, the new generations are more environmentally conscious, putting pressure on brands to adapt and maintain sustainable methods.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: The first one that comes to mind is obviously Patagonia, but I can also mention Veja and Reformation.

Interviewer: What really makes these brands stand out is their holistic approach to sustainability. Patagonia not only uses recycled materials, but also encourages consumers to repair and reuse their clothes, promoting a longer life cycle for products. Veja combines eco-friendly materials with a strong commitment to transparency and fair working conditions in its supply chain. Reformation, in turn, not only uses sustainable fabrics, but also invests in technologies to reduce water and energy consumption during production. In addition, all these brands communicate openly about their processes and challenges, which increases consumer trust and loyalty.

Interviewer: All right, so now moving on to the third section that talks about the characteristics of Gen Z, the fashion choices, what do you think are the main characteristics of Gen Z?

Interviewee: Our generation is clearly more connected to technology and we have a lot more information available. We are also more environmentally conscious compared to previous generations. This combination of technology and environmental awareness defines us quite well.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: With greater access to the internet, we also have more information and can be more conscious about certain issues that were not as discussed before. This generation is already much more aware or at least could be because they have all the tools to acquire this knowledge. This influences my fashion decisions as I can research and choose brands that follow sustainable practices.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: Price is one of the biggest challenges, as sustainable products tend to be more expensive. In addition, I often like clothes that are not sustainable and that are more affordable. Also, since I am still studying and do not have a fixed income, I end up opting

for more economical options, but I hope this will change when I start earning my own money and have the financial availability to make sustainable fashion choices.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: I think this is because, while we are an irreverent generation, we are also an entrepreneurial generation, in which many people start to create their own brands. By doing so, this new generation already takes sustainability into account.

Therefore, I believe that it will start to be a recurring practice. When new brands emerge, they will always take this into account, and these brands will probably start to be the preference of the general public. So, the brands that already existed will also start to have this concern to keep up with what the most used brands at a certain time are doing. Other brands also think will follow this trend a little and, eventually, there will be a time when this will stop being a trend or a fashion, and will become essential for all brands.

Interviewer: So now in the fourth section, let's look a little at the digital behavior of generation z addressing digital platforms, social networks and how these influence the sustainable fashion of our generation. So, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new brands in a sustainable way, even if you don't buy any kind?

Interviewee: I use social networks like Instagram and TikTok a lot to discover new sustainable fashion brands. These platforms help me see recommendations and trends quickly and effectively.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media has a big impact on my fashion choices. When I see clothing items I like on Instagram or TikTok, I often feel inspired to look for and buy those items. Seeing how clothes look on other people and hearing their opinions greatly influence my decisions.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Sustainability campaigns on social media show me that brands are conscious and concerned about the environment. This increases my positive perception of these brands and makes me feel more inclined to support and buy from them. Seeing that a brand is committed to sustainable practices is very important to me.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, digital influencers have a big influence on my fashion choices. An example is Maria Guedes, known as Stylista. She is one of the biggest fashion influencers in Portugal and founder of Market Stylista. I really like the personal style tips she shares. In addition, she promotes events like Market Stylista, which brings together several brands she recommends. These events are a great opportunity to discover new and sustainable brands. She has a significant impact on my choices, especially when I'm looking for pieces that combine style and sustainability.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, I wanted to know what your opinion is about the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability. Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I think the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability focus primarily on the use of more sustainable materials. Many brands are trying to integrate eco-friendly materials into their collections, which is an important step. In addition, there is a significant effort in terms of transparency. Brands are making an effort to show that they are interested in sustainability and to clearly communicate their practices to consumers. This is visible not only in advertising campaigns but also on the brands' websites, where they often highlight their commitments and sustainable actions. This transparency is crucial as sustainability is becoming increasingly important to consumers.

Interviewer: How do you think you can balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I believe it is possible to balance fashion trend consumption with sustainability by opting for practices like buying quality pieces that last longer instead of choosing fast fashion. Additionally, social media plays an important role in promoting sustainable brands and influencing consumers to make more conscious choices. While pieces made 100% in Portugal and sustainably can be more expensive, it's essential to develop the mindset that we don't need thirty sweaters, but rather a few good quality items that we can wear repeatedly. Adopting a "capsule wardrobe" is an excellent way to maintain style without compromising sustainability. In addition, Vinted and other resale platforms are extremely important for sustainability in fashion, as they allow people to buy and sell second-hand items, reducing the need to produce new ones. This practice not only decreases waste but also makes sustainable fashion more accessible to everyone. Buying second-hand gives clothing a 'second life,' which is a crucial step toward sustainability. Moreover, these platforms help combat excessive consumerism by promoting a more conscious mindset toward fashion.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: One of the brands that I consider aligned with my sustainability values is Buzina Brand. This brand stands out not only for its sustainable approach, but also for its focus on valuing women's individuality. Buzina Brand's capsule collections are produced in limited quantities, using sustainable materials, which minimizes waste. I identify with this brand because, in addition to promoting sustainability, it also emphasizes the importance of unique and high-quality pieces, which celebrate the uniqueness of each woman.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I'm willing to pay more for sustainable products. I believe that investing in higher-quality, sustainably made products is worth it in the long run. These products generally have greater durability, meaning I won't need to replace them as often. In addition,

supporting sustainable brands is also a way to encourage responsible practices in the fashion industry, contributing to a more sustainable future.

Interviewer: What changes do you think are still needed in the fashion industry to better meet Gen Z's sustainability expectations? Justifies.

Interviewee: I think the fashion industry needs to focus more on not using animal products, as Gen Z places a high value on protecting animals. Additionally, it is essential for brands to pay attention to human rights and equality, ensuring that all workers involved in the production process are treated fairly. Transparency is also key – brands must be clear about their sustainable practices and the environmental impacts of their operations. These factors are crucial to meet the sustainability expectations of Generation Z, which is increasingly aware and demanding in relation to these topics.

Appendix N – Re-transcription of the 12th interview: Interviewee 12

Female, 23 years old, currently working as a Marketing Trainee at BEL Portugal, a company that actively integrates sustainable practices into its operations, particularly with the Terra Nostra brand. She holds a master's degree in International Management from NOVA SBE and Maastricht SBE. In addition to her professional role, she volunteers at ReFood and is highly conscious about sustainability. Working at a sustainable company, she is eager to expand her knowledge and learn more about sustainability.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: For me, sustainability is the ability to meet our needs in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own, focusing on three areas: social, economic and environmental.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is important in today's society?

Interviewee: I think it is crucial for preserving the environment, reducing the carbon footprint, conserving natural resources, and promoting a fairer and more responsible economy.

Interviewer: Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, in what way? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, the pandemic has made me more attentive and informed about the importance of sustainable practices. During lockdowns, we saw an improvement in air quality and a reduction in pollution. Working from home has also decreased the carbon emissions associated with commuting.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: So, I try to reduce meat consumption, recycle, buy Portuguese and second-hand products. I try to be conscious in my daily choices to minimize environmental impact.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: Yes, I think so, since sustainability is a complex topic with many stakeholders involved and interests. For me, understanding the environmental side is a challenge because I don't have specific training in this area. We are always learning, so continuous education is essential to better understand the impact of our actions and promote a more sustainable future.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section that talks about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: Sometimes. Whenever I see that the quality and benefits of a sustainable product are superior to those of a non-sustainable product, I opt for it. It is important to me that my choice makes a difference.

Interviewer: What are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: I see that consumers are increasingly demanding in terms of transparency and sustainability. Nowadays, people want to know where products come from, how they are made, and whether they respect the environment and human rights. In addition, industrial regulations are putting pressure on companies to adopt more responsible practices, which indicates that sustainability in fashion is here to stay. Companies that do not adapt to these demands risk losing consumer trust and loyalty.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Patagonia and Veja.

Interviewer: What makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: I think Patagonia and Veja stand out for their transparency in the supply chain, use of recycled materials, and the ethical and environmental commitment they demonstrate.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the third section that talks about the characteristics of Gen Z, the fashion choices, what do you think, what are the main characteristics of Gen Z?

Interviewee: Our generation is the first to be fully digital, always connected to the internet. We place a high value on authenticity and transparency, both in personal relationships and

in the brands we support. We care deeply about social and environmental issues, and we are more open-minded, we don't like labels.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: These characteristics directly influence my fashion decisions. As digital natives, we have access to a large amount of information about brands and their processes. I prefer brands that are transparent in their practices and demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability and social responsibility.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: I face several challenges when making sustainable fashion choices. First, the higher cost of sustainable products can be a significant barrier. In addition, it is difficult to discern what is truly sustainable and what is just greenwashing. Many brands claim to be sustainable without actually making significant changes to their practices. Another challenge is the limited availability of sustainable options, especially compared to the abundance of fast fashion options.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: Gen Z's fashion preferences have a significant impact on the fashion industry. As consumers, we have the power to dictate the demand that brands will have. When the demand for sustainable products increases, it puts pressure on brands to adopt more responsible practices and promote structural changes in the industry. Our insistence on transparency and ethics forces companies to be more responsible in their operations and to adapt to our expectations.

Interviewer: So now in the fourth section, let's look a little at the digital behavior of generation z addressing digital platforms, social networks and how these influence the

sustainable fashion of our generation. So, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new brands in a sustainable way, even if you don't buy any kind?

Interviewee: Rarely. I don't usually explore digital platforms much specifically to look for sustainable brands, but I end up getting to know some through other content I follow.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social networks influence a lot. They are a constant source of inspiration and aggregate opinions of several people about the products. Seeing how others use and combine different pieces helps me come up with new ideas. I believe that because we are so connected, we end up being influenced a lot by what we see online, whether it's the trends that emerge or the opinions that others share about certain products.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: It depends a lot on the brand and the campaign. Some campaigns can have a negative impact if sustainability efforts are revealed to be false. When we find out that a brand is greenwashing, trust disappears. However, initiatives like Humana's activations with influencers have a positive influence on me, because they feel genuine and well-intentioned. Humana, for example, has been able to convey a message of sustainability in an authentic way, which makes me look at the brand with more respect and interest.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, of course. Influencers are a source of inspiration and provide real opinions about products, especially when it's not advertising. For example, Lanidor has been betting a lot on influencers and this has changed my perception of the brand, making it younger and more modern, while before I saw it more as a "mother's brand". Seeing influencers that I

follow and trust wearing Lanidor pieces makes me consider the brand in a way that I didn't before.

Interviewer: How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: It is very important for any type of product, not only for sustainable fashion. Reviews and testimonials help me better understand the quality and ethics behind a brand or product, directly influencing my purchase decision. I always prefer to read the opinions of other consumers before making a purchase, as I feel that they give me a more realistic and honest view of what I can expect from the product.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: I prefer to buy physically and research online. I like to see and try on clothes before I buy, because what looks beautiful online often doesn't sit well on my body. To avoid this disappointment, I research online and then go to the store to decide. The experience of being able to touch, see the real colors and try on the pieces is irreplaceable, especially since what we see in the photos does not always correspond to reality.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, I wanted to know what your opinion is about the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability. Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I don't think they are enough. Often, the profit interests of companies are not aligned with the costs of switching to sustainable practices. For example, the efforts of fast fashion brands are very close to greenwashing. We can see brands that use recyclable fabrics but still exploit workers. On the other hand, brands like Patagonia and Humana are good examples, but the big players still have a long way to go. A real and deep commitment is needed for the fashion industry to become truly sustainable.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: It's a difficult question, because the Portuguese consumer is very sensitive to price. I would say that brands need to promote conscious consumption and educate consumers about the importance of investing in quality and long-lasting pieces, instead of blindly following all new trends. I also believe that there should be a greater effort to make sustainable products more economically accessible, which can help balance this dynamic.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: The Human, without a doubt. They have a very strong social and environmental focus and offer affordable prices, which makes it easy to choose sustainably without compromising the budget. The work they do to promote the reuse of clothes and support social causes is something I can relate to a lot.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I am willing when I have the money for it and I see that the monetary effort is worth it for the durability and use of the product. For example, if it's a top to wear only once, I prefer to opt for the cheapest, regardless of the less sustainable practices. However, for pieces that I know I'll wear often, I'm willing to invest more if it means I'm making a more sustainable choice.

Interviewer: What changes do you consider necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of Generation Z?

Interviewee: To better meet Gen Z's sustainability expectations, the fashion industry needs to be more transparent throughout the production chain, prioritizing sustainable materials such as organic and recycled, implementing circular business models to reduce waste, and

investing in sustainable technologies and ethical practices. These changes are essential to creating a more responsible industry that is aligned with the sustainability values that Gen Z values.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix O – Re-transcription of the 13th interview: Interviewee 13

Male, 27 years old, from Lisbon, currently working in the banking sector. He is pursuing a master's degree in International Economics and European Studies at Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão. He is dedicated to sustainability and environmental responsibility, always seeking to learn more and improve his practices.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviours.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: Sustainability, in my view, can be defined as the satisfaction of individual, material needs, without compromising the ability of others to meet their needs in the long term. In other words, it is as if we were not taking a credit from resources that future generations, such as our children and grandchildren, will need.

Interviewer: And what, in your opinion, are the main reasons why sustainability is so important in our society today?

Interviewee: Let's put this into three pillars. First, in an economic context, it is necessary to make a responsible management of resources due to their scarcity. We cannot always be

growing indefinitely; We need more sustainable practices. Then there is the social perspective and the promotion of equity. Communities with fewer resources tend to have less ability to consume certain products. Sustainability promotes a fairer redistribution of resources. Finally, there is the environmental perspective. Less sustainable practices mean we need more resources, which can lead to more oil drilling or mining, negatively affecting the planet.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? In what way? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, I believe COVID-19 has had a significant impact. For example, during the pandemic, we saw news about how reduced economic activity led to an improvement in air quality. In India, for example, the peaks of the Himalayas have become visible due to reduced pollution. This showed that rapid changes can have a positive impact on the environment.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: I try to recycle and reuse whenever possible. But when it's not possible, I tend to focus on buying only what is necessary, avoiding consumerist behaviors. I prefer investing in basic, durable pieces that will last. In addition, I try to support companies and products that promote sustainable practices.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: Yes, I think I need more knowledge on the topic. It is a very current and important subject, both for society and for my work. Increasingly, ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) topics are crucial and I feel that I do not have enough in-depth knowledge. I believe that more education would help apply sustainable practices in both my personal and professional life.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section that talks about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: I confess that I don't have a strict criterion to determine whether or not a brand is sustainable. I don't buy a lot of clothes, I prefer basic and long-lasting pieces. However, I try to avoid brands that are known for not promoting sustainability.

Interviewer: What do you think are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry can be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: One of the factors is the cost-benefit ratio for companies. If sustainable practices prove to be economically advantageous in the long run, companies will have more incentives to adopt them. In addition, consumer pressure for greater transparency and social responsibility also forces brands to be more sustainable.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Timberland and Patagonia are two examples that come to mind.

Interviewer: What makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: Timberland, for example, uses sustainable materials such as cork soles in the boots and has reforestation policies. Patagonia is also known for its sustainable practices and moving away from less sustainable industries, such as finance, to maintain its environmental integrity.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the third section that talks about the characteristics of Gen Z, the fashion choices, what do you think, what are the main characteristics of Gen Z?

Interviewee: Gen Z is much more digitally connected. There is a constant need to be connected and to be seen in the digital environment. In addition, it is a generation with

greater environmental awareness and a looser and more alternative fashion style, breaking more traditional norms.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: I'm slightly influenced by what I see on social media. My fashion decisions are guided by the content I consume online, although they are not the determining factor. Observing others embrace sustainable fashion choices, especially within the social context I'm in, influences me to do the same.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: Transparency about what really constitutes a brand's sustainability is one of the main challenges. Another major challenge is economic. With the rising cost of living, opting for sustainable products, which are generally more expensive, becomes difficult, creating a financial barrier for many consumers.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: Gen Z is constantly connected and influences other people's choices. This is a competitive advantage for companies to have Gen Z on their side in promoting their products. If Gen Z promotes sustainability, companies will have to adjust so that their products meet these principles.

Interviewer: So now in the fourth section, let's look a little at the digital behavior of generation z addressing digital platforms, social networks and how these influence the sustainable fashion of our generation. So, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new brands in a sustainable way, even if you don't buy any kind?

Interviewee: I don't use it for that, that is, I end up finding out more through word of mouth than through social networks or having some knowledge. But usually, it ends up being more in conversation.

Interviewer: And how do you feel that social media influences your fashion choices?

Interviewee: It gives me some guidance, whether it's things I see that catch my interest and I'm able to change my consumption profile. But not much, it typically happens more in real life, let's say, when I'm with a certain group of friends or people and see things that catch interest and model more from there.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: The impact of a campaign can be greater on a large brand. Smaller brands are born with this environmental awareness. In larger brands, with wider production chains, sustainability may not be a priority. Therefore, a campaign that showcases sustainable practices can have a more significant positive impact on a larger brand.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Yes, I think digital influencers have a role in influencing some choices, not so much by the brand, but more by the style and direction of the things I like to wear.

Interviewer: How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: While direct criticism of brand sustainability is not my main criterion, I recognize that they play an important role. I tend to rely more on the brand's legacy and reputation, but user reviews can complement that perception. If the reviews are positive, it increases my predisposition to choose a brand, knowing that other consumers have had satisfactory experiences.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: I prefer to shop in physical stores to try on clothes. I don't shop for clothes frequently, so I take some time to see and try on items calmly. I start shopping online more when I already have an affinity with the brand and know the sizes and pieces, which makes shopping easier.

Interviewer: Very well. So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, I wanted to know what your opinion is about the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability. Based on what you have said before, what are the efforts you are currently seeing in the industry?

Interviewee: I think the fashion industry's efforts towards sustainability are cross-cutting, but still insufficient. Many brands try to adopt more sustainable practices, but there are also cases of greenwashing, where sustainability is more of a marketing strategy than an actual practice.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I believe that balance can be achieved if new trends are intrinsically linked to sustainable practices. If fashion trends are born with this awareness, there will be no conflict between following fashion and being sustainable. In addition, promoting reuse and second-hand buying can be a solution, as platforms like Vinted do.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: I consider Timberland and Springfield to be aligned with my sustainability values. Timberland, for its reforestation practices and use of sustainable materials. Springfield, for incorporating sustainable cotton into its pieces. In addition, Portuguese brands such as Quebramar, which has partnerships for the sustainability of the oceans, are also aligned with my values.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I am willing to pay more for sustainable products, as long as the quality is maintained. If I believe that a piece will be durable and that I can use it for years, the additional cost is justified. I prefer to invest in quality and sustainability, knowing that it will bring long-term benefits.

Interviewer: What changes do you consider necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of Generation Z?

Interviewee: To better meet Gen Z's sustainability expectations, the fashion industry still needs to implement several changes. Firstly, it is crucial to use more sustainable, durable, and innovative resources, while also ensuring that suppliers practice sustainability. The proximity of production chains to the end market is important to reduce environmental impact, avoiding long transport distances. In addition, transparent communication of brands' sustainable practices is essential to gain consumer trust. Brands should collaborate with Gen Z to spread the word and improve these sustainable practices. Finally, It is crucial to promote and facilitate the reuse of clothes and accessories, encouraging conscious consumption and reducing waste.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix P – Re-transcription of the 14th interview: Interviewee 14

Female, 25 years old, originally from Abrantes but currently living in Lisbon, works as a consultant at Deloitte. She holds a master's degree in Strategy and Entrepreneurship from Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics, as well as an undergraduate degree in Business Administration and Management from the same institution. At work, she is involved in various projects, many of which focus on sustainability. She is conscious about environmental and social issues, and her work aligns with her values of promoting sustainable practices.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: So, I think sustainability has various levels and encompasses various factors. We often associate sustainability with the environment, but in my opinion, sustainability also includes social and economic dimensions. And basically, it is what allows us to use resources consciously to ensure that in the future we will continue to have them available.

Interviewer: And taking that into account, what are, in your opinion, the main reasons why sustainability is so important in today's society?

Interviewee: For several reasons. First, we live above the possibilities of planet Earth, we consume more resources and at a speed greater than that which the Earth can renew. On the other hand, there have also never been so many people on Earth. So, in addition to consuming at a higher speed, there are also more people consuming. In addition, we are in an extremely consumerist society, which aggravates this whole issue of lack of resources. Hence sustainability is a very current and important subject for us to try, in a way, to balance things a little.

Interviewer: Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, in what way? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: People stopped because they were forced to stop, not because of a conscious choice that we are harming the environment and we need to change our habits. Things stopped because they had to. There was a lot of talk about reducing pollution and waste, especially in the aviation industry, but when people were able to travel and move again, everything went back to pre-COVID. So, I don't believe that the pandemic has impacted anyone's opinion on sustainability, at least that's my opinion.

Interviewer: And then as for you, how do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily life?

Interviewee: I try to do those basic things that tell us, but in a way, I think are very important. The recycling, of course, of waste; try to save water whenever I can, such as using the water while you are heating up for the bath to water the plants; and try to avoid buying disposable products, such as plastic plates and cutlery, opting for reusable options.

Interviewer: And with that in mind, do you think you need more education about sustainability?

Interviewee: I think I'm quite aware of the problems and the importance of sustainability. However, more education is never bad. I think that sustainability is often associated with environmental issues, but it goes beyond that. At least, I'm not 100% aware of the subject and I don't think other people do either. So maybe it was important, yes.

Interviewer: So, to move on to the second section, let's talk about sustainability in the fashion industry. How often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: Fewer times than I would like. I choose sustainable fashion products when I can, but I often resort to fast fashion due to the more affordable price and convenience.

Moreover, fast fashion brands usually have a greater availability of products and quicker access. However, I am becoming increasingly aware of the importance of making sustainable choices and hope to continue improving my purchasing decisions in the future, opting more and more for brands that have a strong commitment to sustainability.

Interviewer: And what are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: People's awareness of the subject, the negative perception that is being created in fast fashion chains, whether by child labor, slave labor, the use of unsustainable materials and extremely aggressive environmental practices. But I think that, above all, people's awareness. Our generation is increasingly aware of the problems that fast fashion chains bring, and we have to try to combat them.

Interviewer: And which fashion brands do you consider to be leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: The first ones that come to mind are Patagonia and Veja, if I'm not mistaken, they are both B Corps, that is, they are companies that from the outset have a seal of environmental and social sustainability, following ethical and responsible practices.

Interviewer: Why do you think they are leading brands? What do you think makes these brands stand out from the rest?

Interviewee: Patagonia stands out because it has high quality products and the B Corp seal, that is, it has the best of both worlds. Veja, honestly, I think it's a more passing trend. I know people who have Veja products and say that the comfort and quality are not so spectacular. Therefore, I believe that Veja will not become a leading brand. The brands that really stand out are those that manage to associate quality with sustainability values, such as Patagonia.

Interviewer: So now moving on to the third section where we will focus more on the characteristics of Generation Z and their fashion choices. In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of your generation, generation Z?

Interviewee: I will speak from my personal experience and also from my network of friends and contacts. I think we are the generation most concerned with environmental issues and this is seen in several situations and I think this is very positive. But on the other hand, I think we are also a generation that is a little impatient in some matters and that wants things very immediately. I think that's why it ends up being here on two very opposite sides of the spectrum because if on the one hand we are very concerned and want to change things, on the other hand sometimes our behaviors are a little antagonistic to this concern.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics you mentioned relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: I think I end up opting for slow fashion brands less often than I would like. When I do it, it's because I realize the importance of durability and quality of products. Sometimes it's worth more to invest a little more money in pieces that will last longer, which is in line with our environmental concern. However, impatience and the search for immediate gratification end up leading me, at times, to choose fast fashion options that are more affordable and readily available. This behavior reflects the duality between our environmental awareness and the need for immediate satisfaction.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making your sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: One of the main challenges is how quickly we want things. We often opt for convenience and immediate availability, which is more common in fast fashion brands. Another challenge is the availability of the products themselves. Sustainable brands often produce in smaller quantities, which means we don't always find the color or size we want. Additionally, many of these brands have difficulty gaining visibility in the market, which makes it more difficult for consumers to discover and make purchases. It is much more difficult to shop at brands that have not yet been able to have this exposure.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: Gen Z's fashion preferences can lead to lasting change in the fashion industry through a number of forms. We opt for quality products at affordable prices and are concerned with social and human issues, often associated with fast fashion brands, in addition to environmental issues. We want to buy in a sustainable way, use the internet to make these purchases, always be informed and enjoy transparency on the part of brands. However, I have some doubts about whether these changes will be lasting. The fashion industry itself is somewhat responsible for the concept of fast fashion, and fashions change very quickly, which does not help to promote sustainability.

The tendency to always want what is new and the speed with which fashions change make many people want to renew their wardrobe frequently, which runs counter to the idea of lasting change in the industry. In the past, people had far fewer pieces of clothing and accessories than they do today, and choosing sustainable practices still doesn't necessarily mean reducing the quantity. People who opt for sustainable options often have financial possibilities and end up having a lot of clothes and accessories. Therefore, I believe that there is change and that it is important, and even if we have several things, it will always be better to opt for more sustainable practices. But even so, I think it's a bit hypocritical, because there's still a strong tendency toward consumerism and wanting what's new.

Interviewer: So now in the fourth section, let's look a little at the digital behavior of generation z addressing digital platforms, social networks and how these influence the sustainable fashion of our generation. So, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new brands in a sustainable way, even if you don't buy any kind?

Interviewee: Look, honestly, not much. The only digital platform I use recurrently is Instagram, and I don't necessarily use it to discover new brands, whether sustainable fashion or another type of fashion. What ends up happening is that I find it organically. If someone posts something I like, I go to search, and I look at the brand pages. Or, if any digital influencer I follow posts something that interests me, then I also end up going to see it.

Interviewer: And how does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social networks influence the sense of following people with whom I identify, and we always have access to a lot of information and content that adapts to our style. I follow some influencers who mention brands and stores, and then I pay more attention to them. But I would say that they don't influence my fashion choices so much. I have my own style, I follow those with whom I identify more for inspirational reasons.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns that appear on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Sustainability campaigns have a positive impact on my decision to buy or not from a brand. Brands like Primark, which are known to be less sustainable, have more difficulties. Campaigns can help change my mind if they show real sustainability initiatives.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes. I guess digital influencers have a role in influencing some of my choices, more in the direction of the things I like to wear than the brands themselves.

Interviewer: How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: It has a moderate impact. If the criticism is about the sustainability of the brand and the quality of the product, then it influences my purchase decision. I prefer quality because this is linked to sustainable practices, as a good quality product lasts longer.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: I tend to buy in physical stores, because I like to try on clothes. When I have an affinity with a brand and already know the product, I shop online to replace parts more easily.

Interviewer: What is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I think there are positive efforts, but there is still a lot to be done. Some big brands are making remarkable efforts, such as H&M with its Conscious line and Zara with Join Life. These initiatives show that they are trying to integrate more sustainable practices into their business models. However, these actions can often seem superficial, such as greenwashing, to attract conscious consumers without making significant changes to their production chains. Smaller and local brands tend to be more genuine in their sustainability efforts, such as making clothing from recycled materials and promoting ethical labor practices. Despite this, it is important that more brands adopt a holistic and transparent approach to sustainability, going beyond marketing campaigns and actually implementing systemic changes that contribute to the preservation of the environment and social justice.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I believe it's a challenge, but it's possible to find a balance. One way is to focus on buying quality pieces that can be worn on multiple occasions, rather than blindly following all the new trends. This reduces the need to constantly buy new clothes. Another approach is to support brands that have a genuine commitment to sustainability and that offer products that are both trendy and ecologically responsible. Additionally, the reuse and recycling of clothes, whether through exchanges with friends or buying in second-hand stores, are practices that help balance the attraction to new trends with the need for sustainability.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: I consider brands like Patagonia and Stella McCartney to be aligned with my sustainability values. Patagonia is known for its commitment to environmental conservation and ethical production practices. They encourage repairing clothes instead of buying new ones and use recycled materials in their products. Stella McCartney, on the other hand, is a luxury brand that does not use leather or animal skins, and is constantly working to improve sustainability in its production chains. Both brands are examples of how it is possible to be sustainable and still offer high-quality products with attractive design.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I am willing to pay more for sustainable products as I believe it is an investment in the future of our planet. Sustainable products generally have a higher quality and a longer durability, which ultimately compensates for the higher initial cost. In addition, knowing that I am supporting ethical and responsible practices makes me feel better about my consumption choices. However, I recognize that this is not possible for everyone due to budget constraints, but whenever I can, I prefer to opt for sustainable products.

Interviewer: What changes do you consider necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of Generation Z?

Interviewee: I think the fashion industry needs to be more transparent about its production practices and environmental impact. Brands must invest in sustainable materials and production processes that minimize waste and carbon emissions. It is also crucial for companies to promote fair and safe working conditions for all workers along the production chain. Additionally, it would also be beneficial to encourage the recycling and reuse of clothes, perhaps through return and buy-back programs for used clothing. Innovation also plays an important role, with the development of new technologies that make fashion more sustainable. Finally, marketing campaigns should focus on educating consumers about the importance of sustainability, helping to shift the collective mindset towards more conscious consumption.

Appendix Q – Re-transcription of the 15th interview: Interviewee 15

Female, 22 years old, from Lisbon, currently pursuing a master's degree in Communication Sciences at Universidade Católica Portuguesa. She values learning more about sustainability to better understand the impact of her actions and to find new, effective practices.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: For me, sustainability involves several acts that we can implement in our daily lives so as not to compromise future generations due to global warming and other problems. It includes conserving natural resources, reducing our ecological footprint, and promoting practices that minimize environmental impact, such as recycling and other sustainable measures.

Interviewer: So, in your opinion, what are the main reasons why sustainability is so important in our society today?

Interviewee: Sustainability is very important, mainly due to the climate change that we are all already feeling. If we don't act while we have time, we will regret it. It is crucial to preserve biodiversity and, ultimately, also our health, because everything is interconnected with nature. Without sustainable practices, natural resources will be depleted, affecting our survival and the quality of life of future generations. Therefore, these are the main reasons why we should really care about this topic.

Interviewer: And do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and this whole concept of environmental protection? If so, in what way?

Interviewee: Yes, absolutely. During the lockdown, I spent more time online and on social media, which deepened my interest in sustainability. I learned various tips to be more sustainable at home, many of which I still practice today. For example, I implemented a more efficient recycling system at home, and this period of reflection was crucial for consolidating my commitment to sustainability, also influencing my family.

Interviewer: That said, how do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily life and routine?

Interviewee: Recycling is a constant practice in my routine. In addition, I encouraged the installation of solar panels in my home. I also try to reduce plastic consumption and prefer to buy fruits and vegetables in local markets, which have a smaller ecological footprint compared to imported products, from large commercial areas. These actions are small, but I believe they have a significant impact.

Interviewer: And given all this, you said, do you think you need more education about sustainability? If so, can you explain why?

Interviewee: Yes, I think we can all benefit from ongoing sustainability education. It is essential to understand the impact of our actions on the environment and discover new practices and technologies that can contribute to a more sustainable future. Continuous education helps us maintain awareness and motivation to act responsibly, as well as keep us updated on innovations and best practices in the field.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section. Let's address sustainability in the fashion industry. How often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? Can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: Although I still buy clothes from fast fashion stores, I have made a conscious effort to reduce this practice. I try to limit purchases in these stores because I know that the production of these pieces is harmful to the environment and often involves unethical

working conditions. However, sustainable brands usually have higher prices, which can be an obstacle, especially for young people who are starting their career. To get around this, I use platforms like Vinted to buy and sell second-hand clothes, extending the life of the pieces and contributing to sustainability.

Interviewer: What are the factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than just a passing trend?

Interviewee: Sustainability in fashion is increasingly becoming a permanent necessity, driven by growing environmental awareness among consumers, especially younger ones. In addition, there is a growing pressure for transparency and ethical practices from brands. Governmental regulations are also becoming more stringent, compelling the industry to adopt more sustainable practices. All this indicates that sustainability in fashion is not just a passing fad, but a necessary and lasting change.

Interviewer: According to what you've already said, which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Two brands that stand out to me are Veja and Patagonia. Veja is known for using sustainable materials in the production of its sneakers, and Patagonia uses recycled and organic materials in its clothing, as well as promoting the repair and reuse of the pieces. These brands show that it is possible to combine sustainability with quality and appealing design.

Interviewer: What makes these brands stand out as leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: These brands stand out because they challenge the perception that sustainable fashion has little variety and is less attractive. Veja and Patagonia offer a wide range of high-quality products made with recycled and sustainable materials. In addition, they invest in educational campaigns that increase consumer awareness of the importance of sustainability. This combination of quality, innovation, and education makes them stand out as leaders in the field.

Interviewer: All right, so now moving on to the third section that talks about the characteristics of Gen Z, the fashion choices, what do you think are the main characteristics of Gen Z?

Interviewee: Generation Z is extremely digitally connected and socially conscious. We grew up with access to the internet and social media, which makes us well-informed and active in social and environmental causes. We value transparency, authenticity and are willing to support brands that share our values. In addition, we are quick to adopt new technologies and trends, but we also demand social and environmental responsibility from companies.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to the fashion decisions you make?

Interviewee: These characteristics make me and many of my generation prioritize brands that reflect our values. We prefer brands that are committed to sustainability, diversity and social responsibility. We seek transparency in brand practices and want to know how and where products are made. This strongly influences our fashion choices, leading us to support brands that demonstrate a genuine commitment to ethical and sustainable practices.

Interviewer: What challenges do you typically face when making sustainable fashion choices, other than price? You can justify and add other factors.

Interviewee: In addition to the higher price, I face challenges such as the lack of variety and availability of sustainable pieces. Many sustainable stores are small and don't have the same diversity of products as the large fast fashion brands. Additionally, geographic availability can be an issue, as many of these stores are not present in all regions. These factors make it more difficult to find and buy sustainable fashion conveniently.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: Gen Z's preferences for transparency, sustainability, and social responsibility are forcing brands to adopt more ethical and innovative practices. This consumer pressure is driving significant changes in the industry, encouraging companies to invest in more sustainable production processes and to be more transparent. However, for these changes to be lasting, it is crucial that we continue to demand responsibility from brands and support those that truly commit to sustainable practices.

Interviewer: So, I think we can move forward? Ready in the fourth section. What I'm going to try to understand is whether the digital behavior and communication preferences of your generation in the fashion industry. And so, the first question is, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: I often use platforms like Instagram and TikTok to discover new sustainable fashion brands. Social networks are an excellent source of inspiration and information, where I follow influencers and pages dedicated to sustainable fashion. These platforms allow me to discover brands that I might not have known about otherwise and see reviews and recommendations from other consumers.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media has a great influence on my fashion choices. Through them, I am exposed to new trends, brands, and sustainable practices. I enjoy watching hauls, reviews, and style tips from the influencers I follow, which often inspires me to make more conscious and sustainable purchases. Social media advertising campaigns also play an important role, especially when they are transparent and show brands' commitment to sustainability.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of these fashion brands? Do they make you see brands in a better way?

Interviewee: I think that as long as the campaign is genuine and not just a greenwashing strategy to attract consumers, I'm immediately interested. If I notice that a brand is making a real effort to be sustainable, it piques my interest and makes me want to know more about

their products. These campaigns make the brand more differentiated in my mind and I take its commitment to sustainability more seriously. I try to better understand their production processes and what makes them sustainable, which usually results in a much more positive perception of the brand.

Interviewer: Do you think digital influencers influence your fashion choices? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes. Digital influencers have a great influence on my fashion choices. I follow several micro-influencers who share my values of sustainability and give tips on where to buy or find sustainable clothes. For example, I follow Inês Teixeira, who often shares fashion options from Portuguese brands and ends up choosing more expensive brands, but that end up lasting longer, and her recommendations have a great weight in my purchasing decisions.

Interviewer: How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: User-generated content is extremely important in my purchasing decision. Reviews and testimonials from other consumers help me trust the quality and sustainability of products. I prefer to rely on the genuine opinions of regular users rather than direct advertising from brands because I believe they are more authentic and less biased.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: This is a bit of a tricky question for me. Although buying clothes online is very convenient, because I don't have to leave the house and there is a greater diversity of options available, I still prefer to buy clothes in physical stores. I like to be able to try on clothes, feel the fabrics, and see the quality firsthand. Additionally, I can take the item home immediately, without having to wait for shipping, which can take several days. Therefore, despite the advantages of online shopping, the experience of shopping in physical stores is something I value more.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, what is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I think the fashion industry is making great strides towards sustainability. More and more brands are adopting more sustainable practices, such as the use of recycled materials, including plastic, and the implementation of recycling and reuse programs for clothing items. However, there is still a long way to go for these practices to become the norm and be adopted by the majority of companies. While there is a growing effort, most brands are still not fully sustainable. So, I think we need to continue to push for meaningful change so that sustainability becomes a standard in the fashion industry.

Interviewer: How do you think you can balance the attraction to new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I think this balance can be achieved by promoting slow fashion and valuing quality over quantity. Although these clothes can be a little more expensive, their durability pays off in the long run. Instead of following passing trends on TikTok and Instagram, we should invest in high-quality pieces that will last for many years. It is also important for brands themselves to encourage reuse and recycling, as well as the purchase of second-hand clothing. Part of the balance comes from us, consumers, when we realize that it is better to buy less, but with more quality. Brands also need to actively promote reuse and recycling to help achieve this balance.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values?

Interviewee: Some of the brands that I consider aligned with my sustainability values include Patagonia and Conscious the label. Patagonia is known for its commitment to environmental conservation and its ethical production practices, using recycled and organic

materials. Conscious, the label I follow on Instagram, offers a variety of bikinis and swimsuits made with eco-friendly materials and transparent production practices. These brands combine sustainability with attractive design and quality, which is in line with my values.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: At this point in my life, as I am still studying and don't have a stable source of income, I'm not fully willing to pay more for sustainable products. However, I hope that in the near future, when I start working, I can choose products based on their quality and environmental practices, and not just for price. I recognize that environmental practices are essential to the health of our planet and society, and as such, I am committed to making more sustainable choices as my financial situation improves.

Interviewer: What changes do you consider necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of Generation Z?

Interviewee: It is critical for the fashion industry to become more transparent about its production processes and how it can make them more environmentally friendly. Brands should promote the reuse of garments, for example, by providing collection containers in stores so that used clothes can be recycled or reused. Additionally, it is important to educate consumers about the importance of sustainability, which can help foster a broader behavioral shift. Reducing the costs of sustainable products to make them more affordable is also crucial, so that a greater part of the population can opt for sustainable fashion. As long as prices remain high, sustainable fashion will remain accessible only to a niche of consumers.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix R – Re-transcription of the 16th Interview: Interviewee 16

Female, 23 years old, from Lisbon, holds a bachelor's degree in Management and a master's degree in Finance, both from Nova School of Business and Economics. She is currently working in strategic consulting at Deloitte. She incorporates sustainable practices into her daily life but is eager to learn more about sustainability.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: Okay, I think sustainability is the ability to meet our current needs without compromising the needs of future generations. This implies the preservation of the ecosystem and nature. In essence, it's about ensuring that the resources we use today will be available for future generations.

Interviewer: With this in mind, what do you think are, in your opinion, the main reasons why sustainability is so important in society today?

Interviewee: First of all, there are several negative environmental consequences arising from industrialization and population growth. Two major reasons for sustainability are the mitigation of climate and environmental preservation. In addition, economic development, social equity, public health and health preservation are important reasons to ensure a sustainable world.

Interviewer: Did you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, in what way? Can you give some examples?

Interviewee: Yes, I feel that the pandemic has impacted my opinions. For example, when it comes to public health, COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of conserving ecosystems and wildlife to slow the spread of disease. On a personal level, confinement and mobility restrictions made me rethink the importance of access and contact with nature and having a healthier lifestyle. Therefore, the pandemic influenced my opinion on sustainability.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: Yes, I feel like I've never had much education on this subject. I believe that there should be more practical training on how we can contribute to a more sustainable world in our daily lives. I feel a lack of guidance on how I can make a difference in a concrete way.

Interviewer: Now, in the second section, we're going to talk about sustainability in the fashion industry. How often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? Can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: Infrequently, less than I would like. Sustainable pieces tend to be more expensive, there is less variety available, and I have less access to these brands compared to the big fast fashion chains.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than just a passing trend?

Interviewee: Environmental and social concerns have grown over time, and there is a great incentive for brands to implement sustainability policies. These concerns do not seem to be temporary, but something that is here to stay.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: First of all, second-hand brands. Then, worldwide, Patagonia, which produces sustainable sporting goods, and nationally, I remember the ISTO. brand, that has sustainable concerns.

Interviewer: What makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: Second-hand brands give a new life to the pieces, showing concern for sustainability. Other brands stand out for their transparency in the disclosure of materials used and production sites, and many make donations for environmental defense purposes.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the third section that talks about the characteristics of Gen Z, the fashion choices, what do you think, what are the main characteristics of Gen Z?

Interviewee: We are a very technological, pragmatic and agile generation. In addition, we have a higher environmental and social awareness than previous generations.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: Because we are more conscious, we are more careful in our consumption choices, which can influence my fashion decisions. It makes me look more carefully at the composition of the products I choose and where they are produced, for example.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: Sustainable fashion brands tend to be more expensive and have less variety. In addition, there is less accessibility to these types of brands compared to the big fast fashion chains.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: If there is a demand for brands with environmental and social concerns, brands will tend to adapt to this demand, implementing more care in the materials used, production sites and social issues of employees.

Interviewer: So now in the fourth section, let's look a little at the digital behavior of generation z addressing digital platforms, social networks and how these influence the sustainable fashion of our generation. So, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new brands in a sustainable way, even if you don't buy any kind?

Interviewee: I use it quite often, especially social networks like Instagram and TikTok.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media influences me by seeing products I like and searching for them. They have a great influence on my choices.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Social networks are a great way to get to know the work and principles of brands, especially micro brands. For larger brands, social media is more of a platform, but it also has some impact on brand perception.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, especially micro influencers, who seem more organic and have more credibility. I remember influencers like Inês Teixeira on TikTok, who have an influence on my choices, and she always tries to present Portuguese brands or more expensive ones, but which are sustainable and end up lasting longer.

Interviewer: How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: It's very important, especially when I'm not familiar with the brand. I always look for comments, reviews, and photos from other users to verify the quality of products.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: I prefer to buy in physical stores because I can try and check the quality of the products. However, I also like to buy online, especially when I already know the brand and trust its exchange and return policy.

Interviewer: So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, I wanted to know what your opinion is about the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability. Based on what you have said before, what are the efforts you are currently seeing in the industry?

Interviewee: I think there is a visible effort on the part of the industry to adopt social and environmental responsibility policies. Many small brands with environmental concerns are emerging, and even large chains are trying to be more transparent and donate for sustainable purposes.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: It's a challenge, because sustainable fashion tends to be slower to adopt new trends. However, second-hand stores allow you to consume new trends in a sustainable way. In addition, sustainable brands can have a smaller stock to minimize environmental impact.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: I highly value brands that place sustainability at the center of their operations. A prime example is the Portuguese brand ISTO, which I have mentioned before. The brand stands out for its commitment to transparency, publishing detailed production costs and selecting only factories that maintain high standards of social responsibility.

In addition to traditional brands, I believe that platforms like Vinted play a crucial role in sustainability. Although Vinted is not a fashion brand in the conventional way, it promotes the circular economy by facilitating the buying and selling of second-hand clothes. This practice extends the life of garments and reduces the need for the production of new clothing, thus contributing to environmental sustainability. I think it's very interesting how Vinted encourages people to rethink their consumption habits and make more conscious choices.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, if you feel that the product generates value and follows important policies for sustainability.

Interviewer: What changes do you consider necessary in the fashion industry to better meet the sustainability expectations of Generation Z?

Interviewee: The fashion industry is still very much focused on mass production and consumption. It is necessary to reduce this production and ensure that large chains have more environmental and sustainability concerns.

Interviewer: It's done. Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix S – Re-transcription of the 17th Interview: Interviewee 17

Female, 23 years old, from Braga, currently pursuing a master's degree in Marketing and Communication Sciences at Universidade Católica Portuguesa. She is working as a marketing and communication manager for a company that supplies sustainable knitwear to the textile industry, and since then, she has become more conscious about this issue.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: For me, sustainability is the awareness of our planet's finite resources and making more conscious decisions to avoid possible future tragedies. It's about managing the planet better and ensuring quality for future generations.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is important in today's society?

Interviewee: Sustainability is important because we are moving towards an unsustainable world, where there are not enough resources for the growing population. Our choices must ensure quality of life for the next generations and take care of the planet.

Interviewer: Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, in what way?

Interviewee: The pandemic has not significantly changed my view of sustainability. The lockdown made me think more about daily choices, but my opinion on sustainability was already formed.

Interviewer: How do you actively incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: I practice recycling, reusing objects and avoiding waste. I feel that there is still a long way to go, but daily awareness helps me to make more sustainable decisions.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Can you explain why?

Interviewee: Yes, I think you can never have too much sustainability education. We need more practical knowledge to contribute more effectively to a sustainable world.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section that talks about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: I buy sustainable fashion products with some frequency. I always try to opt for recycled materials and make more conscious choices about the composition and durability of the pieces.

Interviewer: What are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: Growing environmental and social concerns and government regulation encourage brands to adopt sustainable practices. These concerns are not fleeting and are becoming the norm.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I consider brands like Pangaia and Patagonia to be leaders in sustainable practices due to their transparency and use of recycled materials. In Portugal, I would highlight Conscious the label and Lemon Jelly, which also demonstrate a strong commitment to sustainability.

Interviewer: What makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: The brands I mentioned earlier stand out mainly for their transparency in sustainable practices and clear communication with consumers, providing detailed information about the materials used and production processes, which is essential to create trust and credibility with consumers.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the third section, let's talk about the characteristics of Gen Z and how they affect your fashion preferences. So, in your opinion, what are the main characteristics of your generation?

Interviewee: Our generation is extremely demanding and well-informed, thanks to easy access to information. We have the ability to compare prices and products quickly and effectively, making us more conscious and discerning consumers.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: Before making a purchase, I try to ensure that I am making an informed and responsible choice, opting for brands that are transparent about their production processes and use eco-friendly materials. In addition, I prefer brands that align with my ethical and environmental values.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: The main challenge is the high cost of sustainable products, which are usually more expensive. In addition, these products are less physically accessible, since I prefer to buy from physical stores where I can see and touch the products before deciding. The lack of variety and availability of sustainable products compared to fast fashion options is also an obstacle. Sometimes, it's hard to find pieces that are both sustainable and stylistically appealing.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's fashion preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: Our quest for transparency and sustainability forces brands to adopt more responsible practices. Brands that don't adapt to our expectations risk losing relevance and customers. When Generation Z demands ethical and sustainable practices, it creates significant pressure for change in the industry. This can lead brands to improve their production processes, use more eco-friendly materials, and be more transparent about their practices, thereby promoting a lasting and positive change in the fashion industry.

Interviewer: So now in the fourth section, let's look a little at the digital behavior of generation z addressing digital platforms, social networks and how these influence the sustainable fashion of our generation. So how often do you use digital platforms to discover new brands in a sustainable way?

Interviewee: Daily, especially on social networks such as Instagram.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media has a significant influence on my fashion choices. Through platforms like Instagram and TikTok, I follow influencers and brands that align with my values and personal style. When I see an influencer, I trust to use and recommend certain products or brands, it greatly increases my interest and trust in them. In addition, social media allows me to stay up to date with the latest fashion trends and news quickly and conveniently.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Well-designed sustainability campaigns have a positive impact on my perception of brands. If a brand demonstrates a genuine commitment to sustainable practices, my trust in it increases. However, if I perceive that a brand is greenwashing, that is,

pretending to be sustainable just for marketing, it significantly reduces my confidence and my willingness to buy their products.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: Yes, digital influencers have a significant impact on my fashion choices. I follow several with whom I identify and seeing these content creators showing new or different pieces from various brands piques my interest and influences my purchasing decisions. I especially like to follow influencers who promote sustainable practices and follow their recommendations, even if I don't know the brands they mention beforehand.

Interviewer: How important is user-generated content, such as reviews and testimonials, in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: User-generated content is extremely important to me, especially for online shopping. Reviews and testimonials from other consumers help me make more informed decisions by giving me an idea of the quality, durability, and compliance of the products with the descriptions provided by the brands.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: I prefer to buy in physical stores because I like to see and try the products before making a purchase. That gives me a better sense of the quality and fit of the parts. However, I also buy online, but in brands that I already know and trust.

Interviewer: Very well. So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, what is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I think the fashion industry is taking important steps towards sustainability, but there is still a long way to go. Brands like Patagonia have gained notoriety due to their commitment to sustainable practices. Our generation values these initiatives more and more, which is positive. However, to achieve a higher share of sustainable manufacturing, greater regulatory support will be needed to eliminate less sustainable practices.

Interviewer: And how do you think you can balance the attraction to new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Consumerism is often associated with unsustainable practices, but we can balance this by opting for products made with sustainable materials and promoting reuse and recycling. For example, if we continue to buy clothes, but choose pieces made from recycled materials, we are contributing to a more sustainable production cycle. Of course, the ideal is to consume less and make more conscious choices, but using sustainable products is already a big step. Some brands implement interesting initiatives that encourage recycling and reuse. An example is Patagonia, which offers a repair service to extend the life of its parts. In addition, they collect used products for recycling and reintegration into the production chain, helping to create a more sustainable cycle for their products.

In addition, platforms like Vinted are great for giving a new life to clothes that we no longer wear. I've been using Vinted for a while now and I really like it. These applications and services are essential to promote sustainability, allowing our clothes not to sit still and be reused by others.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Can you justify it?

Interviewee: I didn't want to repeat myself, but Patagonia and Pangaia are brands that immediately come to mind. These brands align well with the sustainability values I strive for, due to their transparency and sustainable practices. Of course, I also buy from other brands and, often, from brands that are not so sustainable. But I believe I'm on a path, and the effort to choose sustainable brands is already a good start.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Can you justify it?

Interviewee: Yes, I'm willing to pay more for sustainable products. As I mentioned earlier, I believe that price is an important factor, but to a certain extent. I'm not talking about unrealistic values, but if I have to choose between a sustainable product and a similar one that is not sustainable, but is cheaper, I prefer to pay a little more for the sustainable product. I know I will be contributing to a better world, making a more conscious choice, and opting for better quality materials.

Interviewer: What changes do you think are necessary in the fashion industry to better meet Gen Z's sustainability expectations?

Interviewee: We are already seeing some positive changes, as we mentioned earlier, with several sustainable initiatives and services. However, it is crucial that these solutions are scaled up and become the norm, rather than remaining a niche. Sustainable products should be the standard across all brands, not just an exception. This transformation is key to meeting Gen Z's sustainability expectations and creating a significant impact in the fashion industry.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your input is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix T – Re-transcription of the 18th Interview: Interviewee 18

Female, 22 years old, from Entroncamento, currently finishing her bachelor's degree in Nutrition Sciences at Universidade Lusófona. For the past five months, she has been completing an internship in her field and expects to graduate this year, with plans to start working in September. In her free time, she runs a crochet shop, which is her hobby. She is concerned about the environment and is eager to learn more about sustainability.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim

of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors. So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: For me, sustainability is what is maintained over time. It is the ability to preserve resources and ensure that future generations can also enjoy them.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is so important in our society today?

Interviewee: I think the most important thing is the preservation of the environment. We need to ensure that natural resources are used responsibly to avoid future problems.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection?

Interviewee: Yes, but more in the post-pandemic. During the pandemic, with the constant use of masks and other disposable products, I realized the negative impact this had on the environment.

Interviewer: How do you incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: I do simple things like avoid using plastic, don't throw garbage on the ground, and save water and electricity. I also do recycling.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Why?

Interviewee: Yes, I think education is never too much. Although I learn about sustainability in food during the course, I know that there are other areas where I need more information.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section that talks about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: I don't buy very often. As I'm not much of a consumerist, I end up buying only what I really need. I don't necessarily choose it because it's sustainable, but I try to make conscious choices.

Interviewer: What are the main factors that suggest that sustainable practices in fashion are here to stay and are not just a passing trend?

Interviewee: I think it's something to stay, but I don't see that much information available. New brands, especially micro brands, seem to have this concern, but I feel that even more publicity is needed.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: I know some footwear brands, such as Cariuma, that explain in detail how their products are made and what materials. I also know the Natural World brand, which has a sustainable approach.

Interviewer: What makes these brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: Transparency and clear information about materials and production processes. This builds trust and shows a true commitment to sustainability.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the third section, let's talk about the characteristics of Gen Z and how they affect your fashion preferences. So, in your opinion, what are the main characteristics of your generation?

Interviewee: We are very connected to technology and social networks. We also give a lot of importance to the physical aspect and we are quite influenced due to the constant exposure on social networks.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: If I see something I like on TikTok, for example, I'll look at the comments to find out where it's from and, if I really like it, I'll try to buy it. The ease of access to information and the influence of social networks greatly shapes my fashion choices.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: The biggest challenge is the lack of accessible information. As I am not much of a consumerist, this information often does not reach me. I would like to see more awareness about sustainability in fashion so that I can make more informed choices.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: I believe that the changes will not be so lasting because many people still prioritize price over sustainability. The popularity of platforms like Shein, which offer very low prices, shows that price continues to be a deciding factor for many consumers.

Interviewer: So, I think we can move on to the fourth section. What I'm going to try to understand is the digital behavior and communication preferences of your generation in the fashion industry. How often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: I use digital platforms on a daily basis to discover new sustainable fashion brands. I primarily use TikTok and Pinterest. TikTok is excellent for watching short, dynamic videos where users share their discoveries and recommendations for sustainable brands. On Pinterest, I find a lot of visual inspiration and style ideas, which helps me

discover new brands and trends that align with my sustainability values. These platforms keep me up to date on the latest in the world of sustainable fashion.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media has a big influence on my fashion choices. When I see something, I like, I try to learn more about the piece, such as the brand, the materials used and the opinion of other users. If the piece really interests me and is within my budget, I end up buying it. In addition, social media helps me discover new trends and get inspired, which directly influences my purchasing decisions.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Sustainability campaigns on social media have a significant impact on my perception of brands. When I see a well-done and informative campaign about sustainable practices, it increases my interest in the brand and makes me consider it more responsible and trustworthy. These campaigns help to fix the brand in my mind, and when I'm looking for something to buy, I'm more likely to remember those brands that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how?

Interviewee: Yes, they influence a lot. When I see an influencer speak well of a piece or a sustainable brand, I am more inclined to try it. Their opinion, especially when they give detailed recommendations and honest reviews, carries significant weight in my purchasing decisions. I've already bought several pieces after seeing these recommendations and reviews, which help me to be more confident in the quality and sustainability of the products.

Interviewer: How important are the testimonials and reviews of other users in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: They are very important. I always check the comments and ratings before buying something. Video testimonials, especially, are extremely impactful because they allow you to see the piece in real use and hear detailed opinions from other consumers. This helps me make more informed and reliable decisions than just reading a written publication.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: I prefer to buy online because it is more practical and convenient. I can research and compare options without leaving home. However, for footwear, I prefer to try it on in physical stores first, unless I already know the brand well and am confident in the size and fit.

Interviewer: Okay, then, moving on to the fifth and final section on the perceptions of sustainability in the fashion industry by our generation. What is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I think there is a growing effort, especially among smaller brands. However, the big chains still have a long way to go. Transparency and information about materials and production processes are positive steps, but there is still much room for improvement.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: We can balance this by being less consumerist and opting for small, local brands. The quality and durability of the parts are also important. Buying second-hand, like on Vinted, also helps in finding trends in a more sustainable way.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: I consider Parfois to be in line with my sustainability values because it is a Portuguese brand that is making significant efforts to reduce CO2 emissions and use green energy in its operations. Additionally, I value brands like Natural World for their commitment to using sustainable materials and eco-friendly production practices. These initiatives show a true commitment to sustainability, which is something I consider essential.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I'm willing to pay more if I know the product is long-lasting and sustainably made. I prefer to invest in quality pieces that will last longer, contributing to a more conscious consumption and reducing the need to buy frequently. Durability and sustainability are important factors to me, and I believe it's worth paying a little extra to support ethical and responsible practices in fashion.

Interviewer: What changes do you think are necessary in the fashion industry to better meet Gen Z's sustainability expectations?

Interviewee: It is important to give more value to small Portuguese brands, as they are often already implementing sustainable practices. The big chains need to be more transparent and truthful in their communications about sustainability, avoiding greenwashing. In addition, it would be useful to see more educational campaigns that reach everyone, including on online shopping apps, so that information about sustainability is more accessible and understood by a wider audience.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your contribution is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Appendix U – Re-transcription of the 19th Interview: Interviewee 19

Female, 23 years old, from Lisbon, recently graduated with a master's degree in Finance from Nova School of Business and Economics. She completed her bachelor's degree in

Economics and Finance at Universidade Católica Portuguesa and spent a year studying abroad during her academic journey. She is eager to learn more about sustainability and improve her sustainable actions.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: I think sustainability is the practices we adopt to meet present needs without compromising future generations. It is about finding a balance in the use of available resources so that they can also be used in the future. This applies to both personal life and life in society, including companies and factories.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is important in today's society?

Interviewee: It's important for us to live in balance now and to ensure that future generations will also have access to natural resources. If we don't use resources sustainably, we will deplete them and future generations will be compromised. Therefore, sustainability is crucial to our survival and quality of life.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? In what way?

Interviewee: Yes, the pandemic made us stop and reflect on the direction things were taking. For example, we saw satellite imagery that showed a drastic reduction in pollution in Asia when factories were closed. This made us think that something needs to be done to reduce pollution. It also gave us time to reflect on our individual actions, such as recycling more and having a more conscious consumption.

Interviewer: How do you incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: I recycle at home with my parents. I also try to be more conscious in consumption, such as avoiding taking the car when I go to have a snack with friends in the city center. Also, I try to buy better quality products and less fast fashion.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Why?

Interviewee: Yes, I think we still need a lot of information for sustainability to become a natural practice for us. The generation that follows has already grown up with this, but we are still trying to adapt and implement these practices in our daily lives.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section that talks about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: I'd say it's about 50/50. I still buy fast fashion, but I'm paying more attention to the labels to check if the products are produced sustainably and in Portugal. I try to balance my fashion purchases by choosing higher quality and more durable pieces.

Interviewer: What are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than just a passing trend?

Interviewee: I think that our generation and the following generations are born with these practices instilled. There is a growing concern about the future and the impact of our actions. People's mentality is changing, and I believe that this is not just a passing fad, but something that is here to stay.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: The first brand that comes to mind is Patagonia. They have been using recycled materials to manufacture their products for many years. This practice is not recent, but

something that the brand has always adopted, even before sustainability became an important issue in society.

Interviewer: What makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: Patagonia stands out globally for staying true to its principles for so many years. Many brands adopt sustainable practices now because it is fashionable and sells, but Patagonia already did it before it was a trend. This demonstrates that brand values are genuine and not just a marketing strategy.

Interviewer: So, I think we can move forward? Ready in the fourth section. What I'm going to try to understand is whether the digital behavior and communication preferences of your generation in the fashion industry. And so, the first question is, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new sustainable fashion brands?

Interviewee: I use it daily, I don't need to actively search. Brands appear in my feed, especially on Instagram, based on my searches and interests. It is almost automatic to discover new sustainable brands through social networks.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social networks influence a lot. I often see influencers and stores advertising products on social media. When I see something, I like, I keep it and then look for it in the store. It's the easiest way for brands to reach me these days.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Sustainability campaigns on social media have a big impact. Watching videos and posts about a brand's sustainable practices increases my willingness to buy from that brand, especially if I see that they are making a difference in disadvantaged communities.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how?

Interviewee: Yes, they influence a lot. I follow some influencers with whom I identify and trust their recommendations. I've bought several products after seeing influencers talking about them and recommending them.

Interviewer: How important are the testimonials and reviews of other users in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: They are very important. I always check the comments and ratings before buying something. I think video testimonials, like those on TikTok, are even more impactful than just a written post.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: I prefer to buy in physical stores because I like to try before I buy. Online, I can't have the same perception of the product and, many times, I don't know if it will fit well.

Interviewer: Very well. So, now moving on to the last section, the fifth section, I'm going to understand a little bit more about your generation's perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. To start, what is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I think most brands are striving to adopt sustainable practices, often because they are socially pressured to do so. A concrete example is the Portuguese brand ISTO. They focus on creating high-quality basic clothing for everyday life, using GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standards) certified suppliers. ISTO also adopts a comprehensive transparency policy, providing a list of all the factories it works with and the detailed actual cost of each component of its parts. In addition, the brand sells globally through its online store and has three physical stores in Lisbon.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Vinted is an excellent solution because it allows people to follow fashion trends sustainably by buying second-hand pieces. This keeps the consumption cycle going without creating waste. It's complicated for large fast fashion brands to implement 100% sustainable practices, but platforms like Vinted offer a good alternative.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: I deeply appreciate Portuguese brands that produce locally. They demonstrate a genuine concern for sustainability and apply responsible production practices, while also contributing to the local economy.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Currently, no, due to financial limitations as I'm at the beginning of my career. However, in the future, when I have a stable salary, I will be willing to pay more for sustainable products.

Interviewer: What changes do you think are necessary in the fashion industry to better meet Gen Z's sustainability expectations?

Interviewee: It is essential to find a balance between sustainability and price. Our generation is open to sustainable practices, but price remains a decisive factor. Brands should focus on implementing sustainable practices that are also affordable for the consumer.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your contribution is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Interviewee: Thank you.

Appendix V – Re-transcription of the 20th Interview: Interviewee 20

Male, 24 years old, from Lisbon, graduated in Marketing and Advertising from IADE. Currently works as a project manager at an advertising company. He is passionate about innovative marketing strategies and enjoys staying updated with the latest trends in digital marketing. He is highly aware and supportive of sustainable practices in his personal life.

Interviewer: Hello, thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be extremely important for my research on Gen Z's perception of sustainable fashion. The aim of this study is to understand how your generation views sustainability, especially in the context of fashion, and what influences your choices and behaviors.

So, now for the first section, let's talk a little bit about the concepts of sustainability evolution. So, to begin with, how do you define sustainability?

Interviewee: Sustainability is something that does not harm the environment. It refers to practices that allow for the reuse and recycling of materials, minimizing environmental impact and ensuring that resources are available for future generations.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main reasons why sustainability is so important in our society today?

Interviewee: Sustainability is crucial to ensure the longevity of the resources we have at our disposal and to minimize the negative impact on future generations. Without sustainable practices, we risk depleting the planet's resources.

Interviewer: Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your views on sustainability and environmental protection? If so, in what way?

Interviewee: Yes, the pandemic has had a significant impact. During the lockdown, there was a reduction in pollution and consumption, which showed that if we want to, we can

adopt more sustainable practices. It also increased my awareness of the importance of reusing and recycling.

Interviewer: How do you incorporate sustainable practices into your daily routine?

Interviewee: I recycle daily at home and seek to repurpose items until they are truly unusable. Additionally, I am a conscious buyer, avoiding impulsive and unnecessary purchases.

Interviewer: Do you think you need more education about sustainability? Why?

Interviewee: Yes, I believe we all need it. Sustainability is an ever-evolving topic, with new discoveries and practices emerging regularly. Being informed about these changes is crucial for us to adopt more effective practices.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the second section that talks about sustainability in the fashion industry, how often do you choose to buy sustainable fashion products instead of non-sustainable fashion products? And can you justify your answer?

Interviewee: I always try to buy durable and good quality pieces, I believe that by choosing clothes that last longer I am contributing to sustainability, even if the pieces are not labeled as sustainable. I prefer to focus on durability to avoid frequent purchases.

Interviewer: What are the key factors that suggest that sustainable practices in the fashion industry may be more than a passing trend?

Interviewee: We have already seen sustainable practices implemented for several years. The growing concern about the planet's limited resources suggests that these practices are here to stay and will become increasingly common. Sustainability is gaining importance and people are increasingly aware of the need to preserve the environment, which indicates that these practices are not just a fad, but a lasting change in the industry.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider leaders in sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Internationally, Patagonia is a notable example. At a national level, I highlight ISTO, a Portuguese brand that focuses on sustainability, using organic and recycled materials.

Interviewer: What makes these leading brands stand out in your opinion?

Interviewee: Patagonia stands out for its transparency and long-term commitment to sustainability. They have pioneered the use of recycled materials and the promotion of responsible practices. ISTO, in turn, focuses on ethical production and the quality of its products, ensuring durability and reducing waste. Both brands clearly communicate their values and practices, which inspires trust and loyalty in consumers.

Interviewer: Now moving on to the third section, let's talk about the characteristics of Gen Z and how they affect your fashion preferences. So, in your opinion, what are the main characteristics of your generation?

Interviewee: We are a very digitally connected and well-informed generation. We value transparency and authenticity, but we also have a tendency for quick and impulsive consumption.

Interviewer: How do these characteristics relate to your fashion decisions?

Interviewee: I try to be a conscious buyer, opting for pieces that last. Our generation has easy access to information, which makes it easier to research the durability and quality of products before buying.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face when making sustainable fashion choices?

Interviewee: Price is an important factor, but the lack of advertising and clear information about sustainable products is also a challenge. If it were easier to identify which products are truly sustainable, I believe more people would buy them.

Interviewer: In what ways can Gen Z's preferences lead to lasting change in the fashion industry?

Interviewee: Our generation is influencing the fashion industry by demanding more transparency and sustainable practices. As we continue to value and consume sustainable products, the industry will have to adapt to these demands.

Interviewer: So now in the fourth section, let's look a little at the digital behavior of generation z addressing digital platforms, social networks and how these influence the sustainable fashion of our generation. So, how often do you use digital platforms to discover new brands in a sustainable way, even if you don't buy any kind?

Interviewee: I use it often, but not specifically to look for sustainable brands. Brands appear in my social media feed, especially Instagram, due to my interests and searches.

Interviewer: How does social media influence your fashion choices?

Interviewee: Social media has a great influence, especially through the influencers who dictate trends. However, I'm also influenced by what I see in my daily life, not just online.

Interviewer: How do sustainability campaigns on social media influence your perception of fashion brands?

Interviewee: Well-done sustainability campaigns bring brands closer to consumers, showing genuine concern for the environment. This creates a stronger connection with the brand and increases the likelihood that I will buy their products.

Interviewer: Do digital influencers influence your fashion choices? If so, how?

Interviewee: Yes, they do. If I see an influencer, I follow speaking well of a sustainable product or brand, I'm more inclined to try it. However, I prefer to analyze the products and their reviews before buying.

Interviewer: How important are the testimonials and reviews of other users in your decision to buy sustainable fashion?

Interviewee: They have a significant impact. Before buying, I always look for reviews and testimonials from other users. That helps me make a more informed decision.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to buy clothes online or in physical stores? Can you explain the reasons for your preference?

Interviewee: I prefer to buy in physical stores because I can try on the pieces and ensure they fit well. Additionally, it avoids the need for returns and exchanges, which is more practical and sustainable.

Interviewer: Okay, then, moving on to the fifth and final section on the perceptions of sustainability in the fashion industry by our generation. What is your opinion on the fashion industry's current efforts towards sustainability? Can you give examples?

Interviewee: I think the fashion industry is making a good effort right now. Many brands are starting to use recycled and organic materials. For example, many T-shirts are already made with a large percentage of reused materials. However, I believe that the industry can still do more. Some brands may not be as committed because it's not as profitable for them, but there's visible progress.

Interviewer: How can you balance the attraction of consuming new fashion trends with the need to adopt sustainable practices?

Interviewee: Using platforms like Vinted, which allows you to buy and sell second-hand clothes, is a great way to be fashionable in a sustainable way. Donating clothes that we no longer wear is also an effective way to ensure that these pieces have a second life.

Interviewer: Which fashion brands do you consider to be aligned with your sustainability values? Justifies.

Interviewee: Internationally, Patagonia is an example of commitment to sustainability. On a national level, ISTO is also very much in line with my values, using recycled materials and producing responsibly.

Interviewer: Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Justifies.

Interviewee: Yes, I am willing to pay more for sustainable products, as long as they are of quality. I prefer to invest in pieces that I know will last longer and that are ethically produced. I believe that investing in sustainable products is essential to promote more conscious and responsible consumption. I would say that the types of products for which I am most willing to pay the most are shoes, pants and jackets, as it is the one, I use most often and they benefit from greater durability.

Interviewer: What changes do you think are still needed in the fashion industry to better meet Gen Z's sustainability expectations?

Interviewee: Can I be controversial? I think it is necessary to change people's mentality. Sometimes, being sustainable doesn't necessarily mean doing good for the environment. You may be polluting much more to obtain the sustainable label than by producing a normal product made of common materials. It is important to understand that the sustainability label has its limitations, and some industries use it misleadingly, which is called greenwashing. People need to realize that just because something is labeled as sustainable, it doesn't mean it is really good for the environment. In addition, it is essential for the fashion industry to invest in advertising to promote sustainability in a transparent way and strengthen its sustainable practices. Making known which products are truly sustainable is crucial.

I also believe that incentives should be created for brands that promote sustainable practices, as is the case in the automotive industry with tax benefits for electric vehicles. This would help drive a more significant shift in the right direction.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and for sharing your opinions. Your contribution is crucial to understanding how Gen Z perceives and influences sustainability in the fashion industry.

Interviewee: Thank you.