



Content with less:

A netnographic study on the Slow Fashion online community

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the MSc in Management with specialization in Strategic Marketing, at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, January 2020.

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Abstract

The slow fashion movement is gaining prominence as consumers have become alerted to the fashion industry's practices. In a fast-fashion dominated industry, slow fashion proposes a holistic outlook on fashion, considering garment's movement throughout the supply chain. It advocates an ethically conscious and environmentally aware fashion, ensuring transparent production systems. The present dissertation aims to study the slow fashion online community resorting to netnography. Deviating from previous academic research focused on slow fashion definition, the present research uncovers slow fashion's meaning to its advocates and common practices. Results demonstrate how slow fashion's adoption is consensually perceived as a journey and identified its drivers and barriers. The slow movement weights circular fashion and anti-consumerism principles aiming for self-contentment with less. It contributes to current academic discussion on fashion brand's trust, unveiling skeptical and defrauded consumers that resort to alternative means to evaluate corporations' credibility. Mistrust in brands is aggravated by the inexistence of an organization nor government body which regulates fashion industry guidelines. Transparency was appointed to lessen the perceived deception greenwashing exerts on brand attitude and perceived company performance. Implications suggest a strategy focused on transparent communication and consumer education, namely on how to increase garments durability.

Keywords: Slow Fashion, Circular Fashion, Ethical, Sustainable, Conscious, Consumerism, Trust, Transparency, Greenwashing, Netnography

Título: Contente-se com menos: Um estudo netnográfico da comunidade online Slow Fashion

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Resumo

O movimento slow fashion está a ganhar proeminência, uma vez que, os consumidores têm sido alertados para as práticas da indústria da moda. Sendo a indústria dominada por fast fashion, o movimento slow fashion propõe uma visão holística, considerando o movimento do item de vestuário pela cadeia de distribuição. O movimento defende uma moda eticamente consciente e sustentável que garanta sistemas de produção transparentes. A presente dissertação pretende estudar a comunidade online de slow fashion, recorrendo ao método de netnografia. Desviando-se de estudos anteriores, que se focaram na definição de slow fashion, a presente dissertação revela o significado de slow fashion para os consumidores, bem como práticas comuns. Resultados demonstram que a adoção de slow fashion é, consensualmente, encarada como uma jornada; revelando, ainda, motivações e barreiras. O movimento slow fashion combina princípios de moda circular e anti consumismo, visando a satisfação com menos. A dissertação contribui para a atual discussão académica, relativa à confiança em marcas de moda, revelando consumidores céticos e defraudados, que recorrem a meios alternativos para avaliarem a credibilidade das empresas. A desconfiança sentida por marcas de moda é agravada pela inexistência de organizações ou corpos governamentais que regulem diretrizes. Transparência foi apontada por reduzir a decepção causada pelo greenwashing relativamente à atitude face às marcas e desempenho empresarial. Implicações sugerem uma estratégia focada em comunicações transparentes e educação do consumidor, nomeadamente de como estender o ciclo de vida de peças de vestuário.

Palavras-Chave: Slow Fashion, Moda Circular, Ética, Sustentabilidade, Consciente, Consumismo, Confiança, Transparência, Greenwashing, Netnografia

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude and appreciation to my thesis supervisor, Pedro Oliveira, for his support and availability throughout the semester. Thank you for the guidance and time dedicated to my research.

I would a like to express my gratitude to my mom and dad for all the encouragement and wise advice. Thank you for all the opportunities you have provided me and for always being present! Thank you to my grandmother and aunt for their caring words of reassurance. I offer my special thanks to my godmother, Ziza, for her recurring interest in the work I was developing and for the countless sustainability discussions we had. I am extremely grateful for your optimism and inspiration.

Nevertheless, I would like to thank Thomas for his endless patience and genuine care. Your peculiar sense of humor was highly needed and appreciated.

Finally, I wish to extend my appreciation for all my colleagues attending the digital consumer insights seminar. Thank you for the constructive feedback and collaboration.

Thank you!

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1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Definition and Relevance

The burgeoning supply and demand for fashion created a vicious cycle demanding designer, retailers, and manufactures to react faster. The negative implications of mindless fashion production and consumption have been increasingly subject to consideration (Ertekin & Atik, 2015). Fashion has been intrinsically associated with resource and human exploitation (Beard, 2008). The growing awareness, among consumers, for sustainable and ethical garments has exerted pressure in the fashion industry challenging the, until then, embedded procedures.

The fashion industry is amongst the largest polluters in the world. Concerning the environmental impact, fashion's criticism resides on its carbon footprint, groundwater pollution and water consumption, ocean pollution by microfibers, soil degradation and desertification, fashion waste and rain forest destruction. The current mass production and linear take-make-disposal model is highly wasteful and resource-draining. In 2015, the global textiles and clothing industry was responsible for the consumption of 79 billion cubic meters of water, 1715 million tons of CO₂ emissions and 92 million tons of waste. Such figures are estimated to increase by 50% or more, under a business-as-usual scenario, by 2030 (Kerr & Landry, 2017). Furthermore, it often resorts to offshore manufacturing, which outsources cheap labor force. Fashion comprehends a global foundation of consuming garments designed, manufactured and retailed in more than one location (Clark, 2008). To attain fast and cheap fashion, human rights are neglected, child and forced labor is employed. The precarious working conditions, inexistence of safety regulations, lack of unions and wage laws have been exposed as common fashion practices.

The ethical and environmentally conscious consumers have become an inviting segment to pursue due to its profit potential. Consumers aim to support businesses that share their environmental and social ideals, with 66% willing to pay more for sustainable goods (Amed, Bergsara, Kappelmark, Hedrich, Andersson, Young, & Drageset, 2018). Green marketing campaigns have been progressively adopted by fashion brands that communicate products and services' green benefits. Alongside with green marketing, greenwashing emerged as unsubstantiated environmental claims that mislead consumers. Trust in fashion brands has,

therefore, fallen. Slow Fashion emerges as an alternative smaller scale production, resorting to local materials and markets (Fletcher, 2010). This unforeseen shift is recent and little is known on consumers' perceptions. The present dissertation aims to provide insights on slow fashion's advocates community, addressing an evident gap in academic research on this matter.

1.2. Objective and Research Questions

The present dissertation aims to unveil underlying consumers' perceptions regarding slow fashion. Drivers and barriers will be explored as an attempt to gather insightful meanings. The thematic will be analysed in a holistic manner, embracing the culture and values reflected on lifestyle practices. Consumers' increased awareness of the fashion industry unethical practices and the absence of environmental concerns has established a trust deficit. Slow fashion advocates' perceptions of brands' trustworthiness will be evaluated as they are more demanding than average fashion consumers. Following a qualitative research approach, it is possible to interpret ideals and attitudes leading to behaviours associated with slow fashion. Netnography was selected as the most suitable research methodology, provided that online communities are actively debating the slow movement in fashion. Moreover, the online medium revealed to be best suited to follow the rapidly changing industry and consumers' preferences.

Findings propose to uncover slow fashion's advocates reasonings and behavioural practices as an attempt to derive relevant managerial and theoretical implications. Results must be prescriptive on how to address slow fashion consumers, either by building ethical businesses from inception or by incorporating slow principles to existing ones. Moreover, it aims to derive recommendations to restore the trust in fashion brands. As an attempt to address these matters, the following research questions are raised.

RQ1: What meaning does slow fashion has to its adopters?

This research question unveils slow fashion judgments to its advocates, highlighting the valued dimensions. It analyses the distinct conceptions for the slow fashion concept, considering the environmental context it emerged.

RQ1.2.: What are the practices associated with slow fashion?

This research question addresses the practical dimension of slow fashion, uncovering its latent lifestyle actions. It identifies common behaviours shared by slow fashion advocates that reflect the movement's ideals.

RQ3: What are the drivers and barriers when adopting slow fashion?

This research question detects the underlying motivations to adopt slow fashion as well as challenges, which can inhibit adoption. As community members are at distinct stages of the slow fashion journey, it will also cover the efforts of carrying the lifestyle practices.

RQ4: How is brand trust perceived and evaluated by slow fashion advocates?

This research question examines the slow fashion advocate's judgment on the brand's trustworthiness. Factors considered by community members to access brand trust will be revealed in order to gain insights on personal judgments. Ultimately, it intends to derive relevant managerial implications on how to regain customers' trust.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

Six sections divide the present dissertation. This first chapter defined the problem definition and research questions the study proposes to answer. The second chapter reviews academic literature on the dissertation problematic, namely slow fashion's meaning, its adoption and consumers' trust. Subsequently, the methodology applied is introduced, acknowledging its strengths and weaknesses and clarifying its procedures. The themes identified are then described and clarified with community member's quotes in the fourth chapter - Results analysis. Lastly, theoretical and managerial implications are presented as well as conclusions derived. Research limitations' and suggestions for future research are also revealed.

2. Literature Review

This section exhibits a review of the existing literature on the dissertation's main research field: Slow Fashion. It provides a theoretical foundation to establish a base for the empirical analysis. A definition of slow fashion will be advanced, uncovering its origins and values. Literature will elucidate movement's adoption through common practices while acknowledging drivers and barriers. Academic discussion surrounding consumer's trust in brands will be included due to its pertinence.

2.1. Slow Fashion Movement

The slow approach was originally introduced in the slow food movement, ensuring time to produce, appreciate and cultivate quality (Clark, 2008). This response to the emerging fast-food trend emphasized the quiet material pleasures of cooking and eating and, ultimately, reconnect people to their origins. Besides introducing slow cooking methods, the movement supported local farmers while promoting the use of local seasonal produce (Fletcher, 2010). Posteriorly, it was imported to the fashion industry challenging the ingrained fashion ideals and practices.

Slow and fashion are not conceived as oxymorons, rather an approach for a sustainable future which appeals for an urgent fashion redefinition. It offers a more sustainable and ethical alternative of being fashionable by impacting design, production, consumption, and use (Clark, 2008). Congruent with Slow fashion's philosophy of attentiveness, it is mindful of its stakeholders and subsequent impact on workers, consumers, and systems. Slow fashion objects against economic growth aiming at a discontinuity to current practices that require infrastructure and throughput alterations (Fletcher, 2010). Its intention is not to slow down the supply chain, instead, it purposes a holistic emphasis on outlining a sustainable process encompassing design planning, production, sourcing, and consumer education (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010). Agreeably, Nakano (2009) perceives slow fashion as not being time focused, instead, it favors quality of production, design, and consumption; considering product movement through the supply chain (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). Slow fashion values local resources and distributed economies, challenging the established hierarchy of designers, producers, and consumers and providing agency at the local level. "Distributed economies" as a "multi-local society" projects globality as a network of local systems which benefit from

physical and social resources available. The employment of transparent production systems, that don't seek to obscure garments' origins and oblige less intermediation between producer and consumer are imperative. Slow fashion renounces the rooted value of the "new" and prescribes fashion as an individual creative choice rather than a mandate (Clark, 2008). Fletcher (2010) recognizes slow fashion beyond the design of timeless classic garments by identifying a heightened awareness to design process and consequent impact on resources, ecosystems, workers, and communities. It's less growth-focused, as it employs local materials in small scale productions resorting to skilled traditional techniques that ultimately lengthen lead time. While promoting variety and multiplicity of fashion production and consumption, the slow movement celebrates the pleasure and cultural significance of fashion within biophysical limits. Slow Fashion incorporates social responsibility, sustainability, and transparency as well as other core principles that improve business practices while maintaining profitability. The authenticity and transparency values have been exponentially demanded by consumers in products and brands in order to meet their expectations and aspirations (Beard, 2008).

Slow fashion garments are sustainable and sensorial products, with longer usable lives and are more highly valued than typical consumables (Clark, 2008). Ceppi (2006) defines "sustainable sensoriality" as garment's understanding from the knowledge of how it is manufactured from a raw material to an end product. Slow fashion products are long-lasting and, therefore, priced higher than average, reflecting true ecological and social costs. It presents itself as a profitable alternative to the high-volume standardized fashion by selling fewer high-priced items (Fletcher, 2010). Johansson (2010) explores the personal connection with garments and their history behind it, having more appreciation. The quality of the garment is a focal value for the slow approach (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013).

2.2. Slow Fashion practices

Slow fashion shares circular economy's values of reusing, recycling and repurposing. This economic model has been progressively adopted by fashion - circular fashion - which intends for the garments to be retained, returned and recycled efficiently, therefore preserving material resources in the system (Goldsworthy, 2017). Renting, upcycling, repurposing garments and acquiring second hand are preferred practices, as they prolong the product lifespan, while offering the novelty consumers seek (Amed et al, 2008). The notion of circularity in fashion

pursuits restorative and regenerative procedures that narrow, slow and close the resource and energy flows (Bocken, De Pauw, Bakker, & van der Grinten, 2016; Pal & Gander, 2018). Circular fashion's holistic view facilitates retaining higher value of the original garment through long lasting design, maintenance and repair (Geissdoerfer, Savaget, Bocken, & Hultink, 2017). Reusing fashion in the second hand market is a circular principle of slowing down fashion consumption and increase garment's lifespan. (Machado, Almeida, Bollick, & Bragagnolo, 2019). The cult of vintage fashion is intrinsically related to the slow movement, provided consumers' awareness for sustainability and the retro comeback, the second hand, and the vintage clothing market has been growing considerably (Beard, 2008). It further instigates consumers to denounce the trend driven mass production fashion, opting to acquire less but more durable garments (Machado et al., 2019). By understanding slow fashion in its emerging nation's context, Machado et al. (2019) perceives second hand shopping as consumers protesting against fast fashion and consumerism. Slow fashion is, therefore, also associated with the anti-consumerist ideology of rejection, reduction, and reuse. Most sustainability studies note that anti consumerism is most likely to be environmentally motivated (Cherrier, 2009). Despite the ecological drivers, these practices uncover a web of identity claims and responsibilities. The environmentally motivated choice discloses subjective individualistic needs such as independence, quality or value for money (Black & Cherrier, 2010). Contrasting to the consumerism prevalent in western society, an increasing segment of consumers is now questioning own contribution and impact on society as a whole diverging from capitalistic values (Beard, 2008).

2.3. Motivations and barriers

Since its establishment, the fashion industry has been associated with peoples' and resources' exploitation (Beard, 2008). Just in time production, innate to fast fashion, results in excess consumption and fashion waste (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). Consumers have become knowledgeable about environmental and social concerns, pressuring companies to incorporate sustainable, ecological, green, socially responsible and other practices into their business plan. Consumers are aware of individual overconsumption, ongoing cycles of appetite that is voracious and insatiable (Joy, Sherry Jr, Venkatesh, Wang, & Chang, 2012). Sustainability is prominently a core consideration for the Fashion industry, affecting strategy, operations,

workforce engagement and connection to consumers and communities (Orlitzky, Siegel, & Waldman, 2011). Striking high environmental costs from extensive natural resource exploitation to effluent and landfill generation, the fashion industry is amongst the most polluting industries. In a fast fashion led industry, retailers struggle to deliver superior garment quality while maintaining low costs, resorting to unethical practices (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). Ethical consumers have risen in past years, willing to pay a premium, demanding goods that neither harm the environment nor the workers (Gam, Cao, Farr, & Heine, 2009; Kahn, 2009; Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). On the corporate level, ethics is continually balanced against profitability under the self-regulating model of social responsibility. It embodies a corporate orientation that acknowledges the environment, people and the value chain (Dickson, 2000). Ethics ensures that design, manufacture trade and consumption have a positive impact on people, culture and the environment (Thomas, 2008). Consensually, ethical consumers are the ones who consider their consumption's impact on others and the environment (Barnett, Cloke, Clarke, & Malpass, 2005). Besides the consensual animal welfares, environmental, fair trade, fair wages and human rights issues, ethical consumption also incorporates self-interested health concerns (Carrigan, Szmigin, & Wright, 2004).

Slow Fashion demands a redefinition of fashion alongside a transformational movement. It challenges the established hierarchy of designer, producer, consumer by prescribing collaborative and cooperative work. It questions the ingrained value of the new and fashion's reliance on trends (Clark, 2008). Consumer ethical choices' complexity reveals to be an additional barrier as it incorporates detailed personal and social evaluations of benefits and harms derived from ethical product attributes (Freestone & McGoldrick, 2008). The most evident barrier to adopt to slow fashion derives from an evident polarization in behaviour amongst consumers. The contradiction lies in the fact that despite consumers' sustainability awareness, they continue to seek out fast inexpensive fashions (Johansson, 2010). Regardless the increasing concern for garments' ethical impact both on people and on the environment, consumers are accustomed to the availability of affordable trend led fashion and demonstrate little guilt about its disposability (Beard, 2008).

2.4. Trust

The increasing consumers' ethical and sustainable concerns has been significantly impacted corporate environmental practices. Alongside green marketing practices, greenwashing is also becoming prevalent. Green marketing analyses how the environment is impacted and how it can be incorporated in corporate marketing decisions. It is the set of all the activities designed to satisfy human needs or wants with minimal detrimental impact on the environment (Mendleson & Polonsky, 1995). In opposition, greenwashing is misleading or deceiving consumers intentionally with false claims about a firm's environmental impact (TerraChoice, 2010). Beard (2008) claims that similarly to cosmetic brands often accused to blind customers, fashion brands bombard customers with ethical and sustainable claims supported by advertising and promotional strategies. Resorting to terms such as "ethical", "fair trade", "organic", "natural", "recycled" and even "second hand", consumers are persuaded into believe the garments purchased are environmentally friendly and ethically sound. Consequently, corporations' deceptive environmental claims leave consumers sceptical, having a negative impact on credibility and therefore the company's performance (Vanhamme & Grobben, 2009). It translates into unfavourable consumer brand attitude and perceived deception which culminates into negative impact on organizational credibility and perceived company performance (Webb & Mohr, 1998). Realizing how beneficial business wise it is to be associated with environmental and ethical issues, fashion brands defraud customers with false claims (Nyilasy, Gangadharbatla, & Paladino, 2014). Sustainable and conscious fashion has been incorporated as a trend for further economic growth rather than as a transformational movement (Fletcher, 2010). The need for transparency and social responsibility might be perceived as a short-lived fad by the mainstream and fast-fashion chains. However, it is and will be crucial to maintain customers' trust in fashion (Beard, 2008). An investment in transparency reflects a willingness to accountability from corporations towards its consumers, society, and workers. Transparency grants a collaboration opportunity to ensure that employees' rights are met. Between 2013 and 2019, the number of corporations publishing a list of suppliers has more than doubled, highlighting the swift towards transparent supply chain practices (Sanders & Mawson, 2019). The authenticity and transparency values have been exponentially demanded by consumers which will reward players that take a strong stance on social and environmental issues beyond traditional CSR (Amed et al., 2018).

2.5. Online communities

In the past years, online communities have undergone profound evolution from chat rooms and forums to social media domains. Chat rooms and forums are synchronous exchanges of messages between physically distant users. As the internet has become fragmented, chat rooms have evolved into distinct sub-niches. In order to post a message in a forum or a messaging board, users were asked to create a profile that generates a stronger sense of community. Messages were subsequently archived as threads, facilitating consultation of user's inputs over time. According to contributions and knowledge on the topic, members' would build credibility and respect within the community (Kozinets, 2002). Internet based technology facilitated the emergence of online communities in which users communicate and forge relationships (Rheingold,1993). Wellman and Gulia (1999) retired the relational side in communities, concerned with social interaction among its members. Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001) outlined the five conditions for an online community: aggregation of people, rational members, interaction in cyberspace without physical collocation, social exchange process and a shared objective, property/identity, or interest between members. Preece (2000) identified four elements: people with a shared purpose, policies and computer systems. Furthermore, Kim (2000) advanced five factors crucial to online communities: clear purposes or visions, flexible and small-scale places, members' role, leadership of community moderators and both online and offline events. Despite minor incongruities among online communities' preconditions, academics settled on the interaction of individuals with specific purposes, under governance of certain policies which is facilitated by computer-mediated communication (CMC). Online communities are having a major impact on enhancing Internet users' online experience (Lin & Lee, 2006). Beside facilitating knowledge sharing, it impacts online business activity (Ahituv, Igarria, & Sella, 1998). In fact, Almquist & Roberts (2000) argue that consumer advocacy positively influences brand equity. Members of online communities often partake in discussions attempting to inform and influence fellow consumers about products and brands (Kozinets, 1999; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Such consumer groups share to an extent certain tastes, desires, relevant symbol-systems and decision-making influences of particular consumers and consumer groups (Kozinets, 2002). Online communities enable online retailers to expand their markets and provide an effective way to retain potential customers (Hagel & Armstrong, 1996). Effective management and marketing research on online communities is valuable for both consumers and business.

Given slow fashion's novelty, this dissertation aims to broaden the limited literature on the topic. Existing academic papers have focussed on defining the movement, neglecting consumer research. The present dissertation suggests a netnographic study on the slow fashion online community resorting to consumers insights, obtained unobtrusively.

3. Methodology

The underlying chapter outlines the methodological approach to conduct research on the proposed research questions. It clarifies how resorting to digital consumer insights, managerial implications can be drawn. Additionally, its advantages will be highlighted while acknowledging the selected method limitations.

3.1. Introduction to Netnography

The method of netnography was firstly introduced by Robert V. Kozinets (2002) as research technique for the online medium uncovering consumer insights. The qualitative research methodology can be understood as an ethnographic approach adapted for online communities. Consumers inserted in consumers groups are information sources for the present marketing research technique, primarily based upon the observation of textual discourse (Kozinets, 2002). Naturalistic by orientation, netnography is a flexible approach to explore and interpret diverse online communities generating rich descriptions (Kozinets, Dolbec, & Earley, 2014). Adaptable yet focused on context, it relies on the "researcher as instrument" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981), emphasizing the immersive feature of the technique.

Netnography's strength drives from the particularistic ties to specific online consumer groups and depth of their online communications (Kozinets, 2002). Moreover, online data is often plentiful and easy to obtain. It leverages the internet's connective power and organizing capabilities for data accessibility and openness (Kozinets et al., 2014). When compared to alternative qualitative research methods, netnography is less obtrusive, observing naturally occurring consumer behaviours in a non-fabricated environment. It provides marketing research

outputs both descriptive and analytical in a timely manner which is less costly (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010).

Netnography's limitations lay in its reliance on online communities alone, the lack of informant identifiers on the internet and the requirement for researcher interpretive skill. The generalization of results outside the community sample is, therefore, challenging (Kozinets, 2002). Large volume of data obtained online is often difficult to categorize at the coding stage (Kozinets et al., 2014). To be trustworthy, the conclusions of a Netnography must reflect the limitations of the online medium and the technique. Netnographers must be aware of unrepresentative vocal extremists which possibly may mislead research. Moreover, the potential self-promotion by manufacturers and retailers can arise within communities and must be excluded (Kozinets, 2002). Social media facilitates across platform conversations challenging the contextualized cultural understanding of communities (Kozinets et al., 2014). Provided that netnography is contextually embedded, researchers might be directed to collect corroborating evidence in order to generalize findings or transfer findings to other contexts (Kozinets, 2002). Researcher must be aware of personal biases as the netnography output relies heavily on interpretive skill.

Netnography's output can be descriptive or analytical and provides deep consumers' insights on marketplace descriptions, comprehension of online communication, social understanding of consumer choice, brand meaning and embedded consumer discoveries (Kozinets et al., 2014; Kozinets et al., 2010). Online interactions are perceived as valuable cultural reflection, yielding deep human understanding (Kozinets et al., 2010).

3.2. Research Planning

The first step in research planning is the formulation of research questions considering the qualitative nature of netnography. Search queries on search engines and social media platforms were followed. Locations such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Twitter, Pinterest, Reddit, and LinkedIn were consulted. Prior assessment of slow fashion's online presence is crucial for understating its online communities, individual members and pattern behaviours. Kozinets et al. (2010) emphasizes the importance of understanding the context for a successful cultural entrée. The multiplicity of terms used to define the emerging concept of ethical and sustainably

conscious fashion resulted in keywords such as “slow fashion”, “ethical sustainable fashion”, “conscious fashion” and “sustainable fashion”. Two domains were finally selected to conduct netnography research on: Facebook and YouTube. Online community is the computer mediated non private domain whereby online participants develop social relationships by carrying authentic discussions (Rheingold, 1993). Similarly, consumption online communities encompass online interactions based upon shared enthusiasm and knowledge regarding a consumption activity or related group of activities (Kozinets, 1999). Community members sharing interest in a product category seek for advice, to affiliate with other likeminded individuals or to engage in complaint or compliment interactions (Williams & Cothrel, 2000; Kozinets, 1999; Hoffman & Novak, 1996). By providing information and social support, communities have become a fundamental mean for social and consumption behaviour (Wellman, Salaff, Dimitrova & Garton, 1996). Online communities selected on Youtube and Facebook fall under the definition of consumption online community as members share knowledge on slow fashion practices and purchases. The selected online domains and posteriorly communities were chosen upon relevance to the research questions proposed. Moreover, communities with higher traffic of recent posts displaying descriptively rich were preferred for being “relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous, data-rich and experientially satisfying” (Kozinets, 2015, p.175). On both social media platforms, community members were more vocal through lengthy and insightful comments. The domain’s social components facilitate content sharing and enriching discussion among its members. Posts were downloaded and pre classified into relevant or non-relevant facing the research questions. The collection of relevant posts was coded for subsequent data analysis and interpretation.

3.3. Entrée

Following Kozinets (2002) recommendations, a prior background research was carried to ease cultural entrée. Youtube was the dominant domain selected to conduct research. In the specific case of slow fashion, community members resort to Youtube to educate themselves on the topic and obtain inspiration from established knowledgeable communities. Moreover, the platform is one of the preferred domains to consume fashion content due to the rich visuals. In the video’s comment section, creators are able to receive feedback from subscribers, answer their questions and initiate conversations. A Youtube community goes beyond creator subscriber interaction,

the interplay between community members is predominant and generates valuable insights. The following Youtube channels were selected:

Use Less is a channel inspiring woman to buy less and making careful choices, having a minimal approach to a sustainable and ethical wardrobe. Signe, a 28-year-old Dane, created her channel on 2011 and counts with over 14 M views and 170K subscribers.

Alyssa Beltempo shares sustainable fashion tips on how to shop smarter, discover individual style and embrace slow fashion for a mindful closet. On her channel, she has a series named “shop your closet” encouraging viewers to rediscover garments already in their closet and not giving into mindless overconsumption. Alyssa started to create content on Youtube in 2011 and has surpassed 70K subscribers.

Sedona Christina shares intentional living content with her 170K subscribers. Since 2012, Sedona has been publishing videos surrounding zero waste lifestyle and sustainable practices such as second hand shopping.

Jean Bookishthoughts creates videos on literature, ancient history and social issues with her 63K subscribers since 2012. She mostly shares her favorite books and authors, but also second hand clothing she mindfully purchases. Jean bookishthoughts’ audience is therefore distinct from the other Youtube channels mentioned, enriching the dataset.

My Green Closet Youtube channel was suggested in another online community due to its relevance and perceptive content. The videos surround slow fashion and living more consciously, having as an underlying value buying less but better. Erin created My Green Closet Youtube channel in 2011 and is close to reaching 75 K subscribers. She also has a blog, an eBook on how to quit fast fashion and a Facebook group for her community.

In addition to the insightful data collected from Youtube, My Green Closet Facebook group was chosen. In order to be accepted in the community, a set of questions developed by administrators must be answered honestly. It is asked from members to maintain relevant discussions to the topic. Self-promotion for brands and content creators is also encouraged, provided the slow fashion thematic. My Green Closet Community counts with 2874 members that post relevant articles, contribute with informed tips and share slow fashion brands and resources. The community provides a mentorship program, having knowledgeable slow fashion advocates as mentors. Facebook groups facilitate members interactions, information sharing and learning in a collaborative setting.

3.4. Data Collection

Online data can be recorded by copy paste into a word processing software or by capturing a screenshot of data (Kozinets et al., 2014). The netnographic methodology relies on archival data, fieldnotes and elicited data. Archival data corresponds to the naturally occurring online data. Netnography is not involved in its creation as it represents a portrait of the community prior to the research. It gathers verbatim quotes through observation chosen upon its richness of content, descriptiveness and relevance (Kozinets, 2002). Fieldnotes are researchers' notes on unanticipated findings for the purpose of research recording, reflection and analysis. Field Notes should document researcher's journey from an outsider to an insider cultural member. The reflective notes capture in moment impressions and experiences illustrating the introspective analysis. Elicited data is deliberately generated by the researcher and members of online media community through social interaction (Kozinets et al., 2014). Research was additionally informed by searches of slow fashion related web pages, magazines' and newspapers' articles and documentaries.

3.4.1. Collection of archival data

Fashion's sustainability has increasingly become a concern debated online, therefore data respecting this matter is plentiful. Between October and December 2019, over 200 threads were downloaded and analysed. As an attempt to gather timely insights to generate relevant managerial implications to the rapidly changing fashion industry, archival data was collected from 2018 onwards.

On Youtube, the following videos' comments were analysed:

1. "It's time to quit fast fashion" by My Green Closet with 8163 views and 39 comments;
2. "How to spot greenwashing brands" by My Green Closet with 15409 views and 105 comments;
3. "Changing My Relationship with Fast Fashion | Sustainable Living" by [Jean Bookishthoughts](#) with 4138 views and 45 comments;

4. “How to shop sustainable online | Minimalist shopping guide” with 17608 views and 88 comments;
5. “Slow fashion mistakes and how to avoid them | Easy tips and tricks” by Alyssa Beltempo with 28843 views and 236 comments;
6. “Quitting Fast Fashion | how I transitioned to a sustainable wardrobe without \$\$\$ & why” by Sedona Christina with 191 595 views and 493 comments.

Provided the specificity of each Youtube video, several had to be consulted in order to gather sufficient data addressing each research question. Furthermore, sponsored threads, non-relevant or redundant comments were excluded. On Facebook, threads regarding difficulties in adopting slow fashion and solutions presented by more experienced members were selected. Threads revealing actual behaviours were preferred to the ones enclosing thoughts. The cognitive constructs might expose an idealistic self-perception; while, behaviours are accurate representations of identity. During the collection process, practical insights were favoured which contributed to limit and manage the data set. Moreover, understanding the data while collecting it simplified data analysis.

3.4.2. Member Checks

Member checks are conducted by online informants which revise findings in order to ensure trustworthy interpretations. Member checks allow for additional elicited data which is usually more specific insights on meanings. It promotes a bidirectional ongoing communication exchange between researcher and online communities. Member checks mitigate concerns regarding ethical standards compliance without compromising the value of unobtrusive observation (Kozinets, 2002). Online community member’s suggestions were constructively considered and quoted in the discourse of this dissertation.

3.4.3. Ensuring Ethical Standards

Despite the unobtrusive and observational nature of netnography, ethical research procedures were followed. Archival data is posted publicly on the web and therefore can be perceived as

published, yet ethical concerns inherent in quoting directly from online sources arise. Elicited data requires an accurate online representation of identity and informant's consent must be sought. Moreover, researcher's presence on online communities was disclosed. Confidentiality and anonymity of informants were kept. Community administrators were contacted and asked permission to use posts that are directly quoted.

3.5. Research Representation and Analysis

The data collected was analysed resorting to grounded theory. Data was initially translated into codes, posteriorly categories and finally themes (Spiggle, 1994). Grounded theory provides an explanatory framework following an inductive reasoning from which theories and implications derive from data's insights. Netnography can resort to software which facilitate data collection such as HTTracker and Nvivo. Computational assisted netnography software facilitate sourcing, tracking, marking, reducing, visualizing and pervading activities yet might create an understanding barrier for subsequent data interpretation. Manual coding was, however, conducted, leaving netnographer closer to data which ultimately fosters creativity (Kozinets, 2015). As an attempt to reduce personal researcher's bias, coding was also performed with colleagues familiarized with the method.

Out of the downloaded threads, codes were identified which were aggregated into categories. Posteriorly, correlated categories lead to the broad themes identified. A thematic network outlining the employment of grounded theory is presented (Appendix 8.1).

4. Results Analysis: Ethnographic Themes

The present chapter underlines the themes identified from qualitative data analysis recurring to grounded theory. Slow fashion meaning, slow fashion adoption and trust were the identified themes.

4.1. Slow Fashion Meaning

Slow fashion meaning was a recurring theme among the data collected. The present research identified slow fashion's values, unveiling what it represents to its adopters. Meaning discloses slow fashion values and common practices amongst adopters.

Slow fashion emerges as an alternative to the embedded fast approach to fashion which encourages mindlessly acquiring trend-driven garments. Converting to slow fashion is consensually perceived as a journey of gradually incorporating ethical and sustainable garments. New Member 1 accurately predicts "I'm guessing it will be a very long, slow process (...)". Agreeably, member 2 disclosed "I am carefully choosing and collecting over time, gradually gathering more wonderful quality pieces that I love, and that last, and letting go of things that are poor quality or don't suit me". Online communities are partly responsible for member's awareness and education on the topic. Members of online communities often partake in discussions attempting to inform and influence fellow consumers about products and brands (Kozinets, 1999; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Members share frustrations and knowledgeable insights in a tolerant and sympathetic environment "(...) No one should be frustrated when they don't always manage to be as sustainable as possible, especially when they are just starting out." member 3 reinsures. When slow fashion is not an available alternative, a forgiving outlook is revealed by peers "So I think it is fine if one has to make an imperfect decision every now and then if there isn't a better option" member 4 reinsured.

Slow fashion appeals to a slower consumption pace of fashion, encouraging mindful and conscious options. Member 5 considers slow fashion an "(..) important movement towards sustainability, mindful shopping, and appreciating what one already owns.", emphasizing the "buy better" maxim which favours quality over quantity. Agreeably, member 6 advises "(...) one of the best ways to cut down your consumption of fashion is learning to identify good quality" referring to garments' durability. Members' perceptions align with Clark's (2008) portrait of slow fashion garments as sustainable and sensorial products with longer usable lives and are more highly valued than typical consumables. By advocating a long-term outlook on fashion, it favours timeless over trendy garments. Mindless consumption of trend-driven garments is rejected, instead, member 7 realized "I don't need a ton of clothes" allowing for an unforeseen appreciation of already owned items. The local value is intrinsic to slow fashion as

an attempt to bring value to local communities as well as a guarantee of ethically and sustainable garments. Member's 8 statement concisely outlines slow principles "I take a slow approach to editing. I keep pieces for decades. I take care of my pieces and usually invest in high quality".

The stated values shared by slow fashion advocates are reflected in their practices which are environmental and ethically driven. A radical yet popular approach to slow fashion is rejecting consumerism, as member 9 concluded: "(...) not consuming is the most impactful". As an incentive, community members self-impose challenges such as member 10 "I'm doing a no-new-clothes year for 2019". Nevertheless, provided the inevitability of purchasing new garments, it must be mindful and responsible as member 11 reveals "I just add items to fill a gap or replace". One for one exchange is a prevailing technique to keep accountability of new purchases: for each new garment purchased, an existing one must be consciously discarded. Shopping second hand is always preferred as opposed to acquire new slow fashion. Member 12 admits "I am all about second hand first", revealing how thrifting is contemplated as a first alternative for fashion consumption. Purchasing brand new garments is recognized as a less desirable choice or a "last resort". Member 13 explains the preference for thrifting "I have always shopped second-hand clothing- I love the hunt, and I love that I have something unique and special". Member 14 stated "One slow fashion option that I think is becoming more & more popular & is relatively inexpensive is "remade" clothing out of vintage garments". Recycling garments as in repurposing or upcycling are congruent with the slow fashion movement. Upcycle corresponds to the creative transformation of a garment into a better quality unique one. Repurposing finds a new function for clothing items, for instance, member 15 suggests "(...) cutting old items up for cleaning etc. - I think repurposing is so smart". Sewing was pointed out as an important skill among slow fashion advocates for either recycling or making their own clothing items. Reusing and recycling garments aiming to preserve material resources in the system is intrinsically related economic model of circular fashion (Goldsworthy, 2017). Renting is another slow fashion alternative among online communities aiming at fashion's circularity. Member 16 perceives it as "a great option for people who are really into fashion (like myself) who might enjoy wearing a new look to different events, but also avoiding then owning items that you've only worn once".

4.2. Slow Fashion Adoption

Sustainability and Human Rights are the underlying motivators to adhere to Slow Fashion. Community members desire to live more sustainable and reject the fast fashion's model that neglects human's basic rights. Member 17 inferred "encouraging modern slavery and child abuse through the simple fact of buying clothes, was just too hypocritical". Moreover, there's an evident renounce to the current consumption patterns and a clear desire to be "content with less" revealed by member 18. Community members confessed how guilt worked as a motivator "I consider if buying this thing would cause guilt later on for any reason. Guilt is SO powerful, imaginary guilt is even WORSE!". By discouraging superfluous consumerism, members converted to slow fashion also to economize and invest in quality garments. Member 19 confessed, "I'm sick of feeling wrong for wearing the same thing more than twice", renouncing the trend driven fashion that celebrates "the new".

Despite the evident slow fashion's environmental and ethical impact, some other unanticipated benefits were identified by its advocates, member 20 admitted "I think that slow fashion has many more benefits other than being better for the environment. For instance, it has helped me a lot with gaining more self-confidence, not feeling the pressure to buy a new wardrobe every season and spending lots of money on items that will only last one season". It is congruent with Clark's (2008) notion of slow fashion prescribing fashion as a choice rather than a mandate. Moreover, slow fashion is recognized to stimulate creativity through the personalization and recycling of second hand garments. Johansson (2010) defended that each slow fashion garment acquired has a story and consumers have more appreciation and connection.

Converting to slow fashion is not an effortless uncomplicated transition as member 21 admitted "Thank you for validating the overwhelmed feelings/confusion that comes with trying to adopt a sustainable lifestyle! It's so relatable". Many dilemmas arise when attempting to make the most sustainable purchase. Member 22 shares the predicaments of shopping for slow fashion online "(...) there's a much larger carbon footprint for the clothes to be shipped here and I feel that it defeats the purpose of sustainable shopping. It's something I battle with when shopping for affordable ethical brand clothing ". Amongst online communities, shopping online is discouraged due its carbon footprint and packaging waste. Furthermore, shopping second hand comprehend some challenging barriers identified by community members. When transitioning to slow fashion, many maintain the fast fashion consumption patterns resulting in over thrifting. Member 23 commented, "I eventually realized that attempting to purchase quality, ethically

made clothes at the same rate as I would fast fashion/mainstream clothes is counterproductive -not much better for my closet or the environment". Findings are congruent with academic literature which states that consumers are aware of individual overconsumption, ongoing cycles of appetite that is voracious and insatiable (Joy et al., 2012). Thrifting's garments increased demand revealed to be problematic as member 24 described "I'm 47 and I'm sure that I will keep on shopping vintage and pre-loved clothing- even though it became more difficult to find great pieces, because it is rather popular here in Denmark right now". Despite thrifting's popularity, community members admitted there is still a prejudice against second-hand garments. Member 25 declared "I hate the stigma of people thinking that when you buy clothes at thrift stores, you must be poor and 'look poor', that all your clothes are 'out of style' and dirty". Furthermore, there's preconceived notion that second hand garments are unhygienic, revealing a reluctance in acquiring used items. Thrift shopping comprises some practical drawbacks concerning garments sizing as it doesn't address the plus size or petit consumer segments as member 26 objects "it's so hard to find plus size clothing on thrift shops... Since I'm a bigger woman I prefer buying from small, trustworthy businesses". Both second hand and Slow Fashion brands do not offer ethically produced and sustainable underwear options. Member 27 stated "Underwear is always an issue. Some people make their own (...) but not everyone can". The last barrier is not consensual as some members consider second-hand garments not affordable. Member 28 admits "I have noticed some thrift store prices can be expensive...I avoid going to those stores I know have higher price tags". Transitioning from fast fashion low prices and poor-quality demands expectation of consumers to be adjusted. Slow fashion garments are undoubtedly pricier, reflecting superior quality of materials, fair working conditions, and sustainable practices (Fletcher, 2010). Moreover, member 29 protests "I know some people have that mindset of "I am only one person. I can't change the world" or "I won't be here when in x amount of years." But your kids will, your grandkids will... If everyone thought the way, we would never have changes". The belief that one's individual impact is not enough to make changes is a cognitive mechanism to refuse accountability and a critical barrier.

4.3. Trust

Trust is a crucial determinant of customer relationship, revealing a belief of reliability, truth and transparency. Consumers have become more educated on fashion industry practices and increasingly alert as member 30 states “I think it's particularly hard to keep on top of as brands grow and change and sometimes take advantage of their customers' trust”. Slow fashion alternatives are said to solve consumers disbelief and “change your way of thinking and get you free because you realize how brands work to manipulate you to buy their things, especially those you don't need”, declared member 31. Trend driven fashion are criticized and perceived as a scheme to incentivize consumerism as member 32 elucidates “fashion changing quickly is an illusion created by brands in my opinion, so they sell more. They change the clothes they have in store every month or even week, but in reality, they look more or less the same for years”.

Consumers are resorting to alternative approaches to access companies' compliance to sustainability and ethical standards. Member 33 suggests “(...) not everyone has time to look for a sustainable brand, write e-mails and read between the lines just for buying a t-shirt.”. Community members resort to independent information sources and certifications that ensure fair working conditions and sustainable practices. Member 34 suggested “A great way to check a brand is to use the amazing app 'Good on You'. The app is independent and goes through and assesses the brand”. Despite the abounding trade associations monitoring and encouraging ethical practices, there is no single organization or government body to regulate codes of conduct for the fashion industry (Beard, 2008). Even these certifications and information sources are questioned, reinforcing the lack of trust consumers experience. Member 35 adverts fellow consumers “I think it can be a good resource to help with research but I always recommend being careful with rating sites as they only use what information is available (and many brands don't have accurate information or purposely hide things) and the way they weigh elements might not be the same way you'd personally prioritize things”. This aligns with academic findings stating that ethical and sustainably motivated choices uncover a web of identity claims and responsibilities, disclosing subjective individualistic needs (Black & Cherrier, 2010).

Moreover, consumers scrutinize annual reports and compare marketing with production and sustainability budgets as an attempt to recognize greenwashing. Current environmental and human rights concerns are perceived to be exploited by Fast Fashion's houses as yet another trend. In the same line of thought, Fletcher (2010) recognizes sustainable and conscious campaigns as a trend for further economic growth rather than as a transformational movement. Recent attempts of introducing sustainable practices by Fast Fashion chains have left consumers in disbelief, emphasizing its lack of credibility. Member 36 alarms "H&M would have to completely change their ENTIRE business model to become sustainable. Anything they say they are doing is lip service and I worry their clientele will fall for it". Member's insights corroborate academics findings that deceptive environmental claims leave consumers skeptical, having a negative impact on the credibility and therefore company performance (Vanhamme & Grobden, 2009). Community members condemn lack of transparency, challenging ethical and sustainable choices. Member 37 alleged "Hard to know with clothing. Like they don't label where / how they are made. So very hard to make the conscious / unconscious decision". Transparency in the fashion industry might restore customers' trust. Clark (2008) suggests that transparency in fashion can be achieved by not obscuring garments origins under a generic designer or brand name.

5. Conclusions and Implications

The present chapter attempts to answer the research questions proposed and discloses relevant theoretical managerial implications. Conducting research on online communities surrounding slow fashion was preferred due to its richness, openness and culturally diverse context. Naturalistic by orientation, netnography yields profound intellectual and behavioural insights obtained unobtrusively. The qualitative method applied, uncovered slow fashion adopters' beliefs and subsequent practices. The data gathered revealed valuable knowledge from which managerial implications on product and service development, communication and distribution were drawn.

RQ1: What meaning does slow fashion has to its adopters? What are the practices associated with slow fashion?

Slow fashion is consensually perceived as a journey, provided the latent process of gradually gathering slow garments, of being content with less. It favours quality over quantity and its adopters associate it to long-lasting timeless quality garments. Slow fashion is acknowledged by its trend refusal by rejecting consumerism and its embedded compulsion to buy. Purchases are conscious and bear an environmental and ethical connotation, profoundly considered by community members. Slow fashion adopters attempt to minimize or even cease their fashion purchases participating in challenges that encourage a year of non-fashion purchases. One for one exchange is a common practice amongst community members, in order to keep accountability of new purchases. When acquiring a garment is unavoidable buying second hand is preferred. The purchase is conscious and informed, revealing prior research. Upcycling garments, repurposing, clothing swaps and renting are common practices amongst community members.

RQ2: What are the drivers and barriers when adopting slow fashion?

Sustainability and human rights are the underlying motivators to adhere to slow fashion. Community members reject superfluous consumerism and desire to invest in quality garments with longer useful lives. Moreover, guilt was identified as an effective motivator to not fall under fast fashion consumption patterns. Several barriers arise when converting to slow fashion. It is perceived as a complex effortful journey which might be discouraging for new members. Furthermore, many factors must be considered when attempting to purchase slow fashion and might require some personal compromises. Slow fashion and second-hand physical stores are insufficient provided the demand. Alternatively, community members resort to online slow fashion sites which entails a larger carbon footprint and packaging waste. Thrifting has been increasingly adopted which results in reduced variety and higher prices practiced. Some consumers question garment's financial value due to expectations shaped by fast-fashion chains. Moreover, consumers don't alter their consumptions habits which results in over thrifting. Despite second hand shopping popularity, there's still a prejudice against thrifted garments associated with lower-income class. Moreover, hygienic concerns are raised. Thrift shopping comprises some practical drawbacks regarding garments sizing as it doesn't address the plus size or petit consumer segments. Both second hand and slow fashion brands do not offer ethically produced and sustainable underwear options.

RQ3: How is brand trust perceived and evaluated by slow fashion advocates?

A fashion brand is perceived as trustworthy by slow fashion advocates when it transparently considers the environment and human rights. Transparency is highly demanded by slow fashion advocates and is considered fundamental for establishing a trust relationship with brands. Consumers have become more educated on fashion industry practices and increasingly alert and sceptical. Traditional information sources have been rejected and replaced by alternative approaches to access companies' compliance to sustainability and ethical standards. Brands are carefully inspected, sustainability budgets on annual reports are scrutinized and rating sites are examined. Community members reach out to companies and resort to independent information sources and certifications that ensure fair working conditions and sustainable practices. However, rating websites and certifications are disbelieved as brands are known to purposely hide and not provide accurate information. Moreover, an outsider appraisal might not consider and weight aspects as it would be personally prioritized by community members.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The present dissertation aimed to expand the theoretical academic knowledge on slow fashion. Although some authors have provided definitions on the topic (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010), none have elaborated on its meaning. Community members consensually perceive slow fashion adoption as a journey; however, such practical aspect is not included on the theoretical definitions consulted. Consumers' insights on the topic were collected revealing slow fashion values identified by academics (Beard, 2008) that were reflected on community member's behaviours. Furthermore, the present dissertation establishes a parallelism between the academic definition of anti-consumerism (Black & Cherrier, 2010) and the actual behaviors consumers engaged in order to keep accountability of new purchases. No new clothes year challenge and one for one exchange technique are prevailing amongst the slow fashion online community.

Results demonstrated unanticipated benefits from converting into slow fashion that have not been contemplated in literature. Clark (2008) portrays fashion under the slow movement as a choice rather than a mandate, which is validated by community members revealing increased self-esteem. However, what literature has not considered, is how slow fashion fosters creativity

from garments' transformative acts. Practices such as recycling, upcycling and repurposing, not only evoke problem solving skills, but also stimulate creativity.

Academics have recognized the importance of transparency, which is exponentially demanded (Beard, 2008). The present research expands knowledge on the factors considered by consumers when accessing brand's trustworthiness. Moreover, it uncovers the means consumers undergo to evaluate brand's ethical and sustainability standards as there is no consensual reliable source nor organization that regulates fashion's practices (Beard, 2008).

In this regard, little qualitative research resorting to the netnography methodology has been applied to explore the slow movement in fashion. Resorting to online mediums for a fashion related research revealed to be best suited to the rapidly changing industry and consumers' preferences (Kozinets et al., 2014).

5.2. Managerial Implications

With regards to the results analysis, managerial implications concerning product and service; and communication and distribution were drawn.

Product development wise, research reported an unmet demand for slow fashion underwear and inclusive sizing garments. Despite the high request, there is still no wide range of brands offering ethical and sustainable underwear. The intimate garments should be mindful of fabrics employed not only from a sustainability standpoint but also personal wellness. A further gap encountered was second-hand limited sizing offerings. To address all body shapes, slow fashion lines should introduce inclusive sizing offers. By integrating different sizes, slow fashion brands could be associated to the body positive movement that surely would generate positive word of mouth.

Provided fashion's industrialization, sewing is no longer a common practice. However, it is an important skill among slow fashion as it facilitates tailoring and upcycling second-hand garments. Therefore, tailoring and upcycling services could be provided at thrift stores as an incentive to purchase pre-owned items that are tailored and recycled into a unique personalized garment. Moreover, sewing and fashion recycling courses could be offered in-person and

online. It is of extreme importance to educate consumers on product care and repair. Simplistic online practical guides should be facilitated to extend garments durability. Consumers should be encouraged to reduce fashion consumption by using items longer, contrary to current fashion's practices.

Transparent communications must be implemented to attend the scepticism towards fashion brands. Brands should follow an underlying "why", which relates to consumers' personal beliefs. It is noticeable a motion towards smaller brands with authentic and compelling narratives. Consider the unconventional case of The Ordinary¹. The skincare brand provides "clinical formulations with integrity" and transparently discloses percentages of ingredients used. The brand has little focus on advertising, which allows for an inferior price point while ensuring quality formulas. Being a pioneer due to its honesty and integrity policies, positive word of mouth has been generated. Consumers' mistrust evokes an evident breach from current communications' strategies. Business wise, it is incongruous to continue to advertise at the same rate. Therefore, slow fashion can reduce the advertising budget and redirect it to sustainability or support a cause that relates to its mission. Corporations must be aware of its shortcomings and address them in a conscious manner. For instance, if a company has a large carbon footprint due to its worldwide shipping, it could commit to plant a tree for every purchase delivered. Additionally, for each slow fashion garment acquired, consumers should have statistics that highlight the environmental and social impact of its purchase. Information on amount of water and other resources saved or employment of recycled materials is a positive reinforcement mechanism that incentivizes a future conscious purchase instead of a mindless fast fashion one. Posteriorly, slow fashion brands should report its sustainability achievements and other social causes' goals that were met. Brands can also resort to traceability tools for a rigorous reporting of social and environment impact. Tracking technologies can track carbon dioxide, water used in production and specifying costs behind garment's materials, labour, transport, duties and mark-up. Moreover, corporations must educate consumers about the materials, the processes and the operations behind the garments' production. Consumer must be involved and taken behind the scenes to fully understand the sustainable and ethical efforts the company is incurring. Social media is perceived to build awareness and increase transparency, therefore is an excellent tool to communicate with consumers and generate positive word of mouth.

¹ See <https://theordinary.com/about> for more information about The Ordinary.

Present research identified distribution as a barrier to adoption. Second hand and slow fashion stores are not geographically accessible for everyone; being the next best alternative online shopping. Online shopping is not the preferred solution due to its carbon footprint and packaging waste. The solution is to incentivize local businesses for locally sourced and produced garments that are environmentally and ethically concerned. Besides increasing the offer of slow fashion options, it develops the local economy. Local and online are not mutually exclusive channels as fashion is progressively enhancing omnichannel strategy due to consumer's growing desire for convenience and shop close to home. The local store formats will complement the digital channels for returns and sales (Amed et al., 2018).

Aligned with circular fashion principles, designer Stella McCartney partnered with the luxury online consignment marketplace The RealReal. Stella McCartney offered 100\$ credit to consumers consigning her products on the platform. Not only it expands the life cycle of consumer goods, but also builds confidence on Stella McCartney's products quality and longevity. Similarly, higher end slow fashion brands could partnership with similar platforms aiming at a circular flow of fashion.

6. Limitations and future research

Despite research's ability to adequately address research questions, some limitations must be acknowledged. The most evident are the methodology's inherent shortcomings. Firstly, netnography's qualitative nature could benefit from posterior quantitative research to hypothesize qualitative findings and generalize results. The present netnographic study relies on a few online communities alone, that might not be a representative sample or accurately represent slow fashion community. Secondly, the lack of informant identifiers on online communities' challenges segmentation for marketing purposes. Finally, data selection and posterior analysis heavily relies on researcher interpretive skill. Netnographer must be aware of personal biases which may mislead research. A selection bias was identified due to the preference for English speaking communities. The generalization of results outside the community sample is, therefore, challenging. To be trustworthy, the conclusions of a netnography must reflect the limitations of the online medium and the technique.

As such, further academic research is advised. Provided the lack of informant identifiers on online communities' research could be conducted as an attempt to identify profitable segments to target. It could be interesting to explore other ideologies besides anti-consumerism, such as zero waste, minimalism and veganism that could instigate slow fashion adoption. In short, a quantitative research exploring possible casual relationships between slow fashion and the mentioned lifestyles is pertinent. Netnography revealed to be a suitable methodology for the dynamic nature of the fashion topic obtaining consumer insights in an unobtrusive and timely manner. The same methodology should be applied to other online communities in distinct domains aiming to compare results. Opting for online communities that are not exclusively English speaking would eliminate selection bias. I would finally suggest a quantitative research testing consumer's perception of a non-marketing marketing campaign for slow fashion brands. Similarly, to The Ordinary skincare brand, an abrupt cut from current marketing strategies might generate positive word of mouth. However, before implemented, it must be tested.

Slow fashion academic literature will expand considerably, provided the movement's proliferation. The barriers of adoption still constitute considerable impediments to convert to slow fashion. However, when perceived as a journey of gradually incorporating garments that are environmentally aware and ethically concerned, it works as a learning curve. A significant question arises - will slow fashion progress to the mainstream market? Conducting consumer research highlights business' customer centricity and its aspiration to fulfil consumers' needs and wants. Consumers are in such position that can dictate future of business. Alongside relevant regulations, government policies and organizations change can be attained.

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8. Appendix

Appendix 8.1. – Thematic Network

Slow Fashion

MEANING

ADOPTION

TRUST

Values

Practices

Drivers

Barriers

Benefits

Greenwashing

Transparency

Journey	Mindful shopping
Sustainable	Second hand shopping
Ethical	Recycling
Local	Repurposing
Quality	Renting
Timeless	Not consuming
Durable	Investment garments
	Appreciation

Sustainability
Human rights
Overconsumption
Guilt

Ingrained patterns
Ethical dilemmas
Complex choices
Garments sizing
Availability
Second hand stigma

Contentment
Self confidence
Creativity

Lip service
Manipulation
Illusion
Hide

Budgets
Practices
Wages
Materials
Certifications
Parameters