



OULU BUSINESS SCHOOL

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**ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR GAP IN SUSTAINABLE FASHION
CONSUMPTION: HOW THE GAP COULD BE BRIDGED?**

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Abstract			
<p>The fast-fashion industry has experienced pressure due to creating unsustainable impacts on the environment and society. Sustainability impacts of the fast-fashion industry have called for the necessity of sustainable fashion consumption and ethical production of fashion-clothes. Despite being concerned about sustainability, consumers usually show reluctant-behavior to adopt ethical changes in their fashion-consumption patterns. This study investigates consumers' attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption, identifies reasons for the gap's existence, and suggests possible ways to bridge the gap.</p> <p>The theoretical framework for this thesis is formed based on the pieces of evidence found in previous researches regarding sustainable consumerism. In order to serve the research purpose, this thesis is conducted based on a qualitative research design. Furthermore, this study adopts an abductive reasoning approach throughout the research process. Interviews and Focus Group Discussions are conducted to collect primary data. Target population mostly consists of female students and the age group is 20-35.</p> <p>The finding of the study reveals that the attitude-behavior gap can never be eliminated completely but the gap can be minimized through taking adequate actions. Several individual, social, and situational factors influence the size of attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption. Another finding suggests possible ways to bridge the gap from four perspectives; companies' side, policymakers' side, consumers' side, and joint efforts by companies, consumers, and policymakers.</p>			
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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the readers to the background and purpose of the study while defining the research gap and research questions. At the end of this chapter, relevant key terms are discussed thoroughly for readers' convenience of understanding.

1.1. Background

The fast fashion market is growing at the rate of a skyrocket by widely selling readymade garments (RMG) products at cheap rates. Today's fashion conscious consumers consider fast fashion as a trend. They like to buy clothes at the lowest prices possible and discard those after wearing a few times (RMG Bangladesh, 2016). The fast fashion industry has been harshly criticized for many controversies including unsustainable conducts and negative externalities to the environment, gender discrimination, low wage rates, violation of human rights, unsafe working conditions, sexual abuse, child labor, and so on (Luz, 2007; Arnold, 2009).

In the past years, well known fast fashion brands H&M, Zara, Gap, Primark faced many controversies regarding sustainability issues. For example, during 2016 a truth came to the light revealing the fact that a supplier factory of H&M used Syrian refugee children as labors for producing H&M fashion products (Pitel, 2016). A recent report by Hales (2018) explains that many of H&M and Gap factory workers are sexually assaulted and abused daily which is a crystal-clear proof of labor injustice. Moreover, few recent events, such as Rana Plaza Collapse, 2013 in Bangladesh, has proved the fact of unsafe working conditions and human rights violation across garment factories in Asia. Another fast fashion brand Zara's clothes are produced in outsourced garment industries. Zara's workers from different territories continuously reported and sent notes claiming that they were unpaid for several months (Curry, 2017). Zara owner Inditex was blamed for unsafe working conditions in Brazilian factories where workers had to work six to seven days in a week, 16 hours a day including over-time (Butler, 2015).

Consumers' insatiable fashion consumption, throwaway culture of fashion clothes, and ethical obscurity of the fast fashion industry have spurred the necessity of sustainable fashion consumption. Today's era is experiencing a rising public concern and awareness in sustainable and ethical consumption of fashion clothes. Consumers are expressing their voices against fast fashion industry's unsustainable conducts. Their concerns for environment-friendly products and sustainable consumption have been reached the peak point. But in reality, their attitude does not translate into actual behavior, especially for fashion products (McNeil and Moore, 2015). This inconsistency between attitude and behavior is expressed as 'attitude-behavior gap' in the literature.

Studying consumer behavior and their consumption patterns would be logical for understanding sustainability in the fashion industry. Because fast fashion market is overgrowing to fulfil consumers' insatiable demand for fashion consumption. After all, consumers are considered as the heart of every business activity. The fast fashion industry is still expanding territories just because consumers still love to buy fashion clothes frequently. In other words, it could be said that consumers' fashion consumption pattern is the dominant driving force urging sustainability in the fashion industry.

Consumers are blaming the fast fashion industry for sustainability issues. Almost half of the population from developed countries have claimed to be concerned about sustainability and sustainable fashion consumption (Doherty 2014, Peattie et al., 2009). Despite the rising concerns about sustainable fashion consumption, there is a visible gap between what consumers are saying and what they are actually doing. This thesis attempts to investigate the reasons behind the attitude-behavior gap and searches for the ways to neutralize the gap.

This thesis uses a blended method of data collection (Both interview and Focus group discussion) from young consumers. According to pew polling and analysis (2011) generation Y is more likely to be concerned about sustainability than older generations. They are more likely to believe the world's viability is getting hampered by human activities (Hymas, 2011). The target population of this thesis comprises young

university students who are either earning through doing part-time jobs or receiving study grants from the government. Young students are more likely to be concerned about sustainable consumption; still, they are regular consumers of the fast fashion industry (Düffelmeyer, 2012). It would be interesting and logical to study why this gap takes place and how this gap could be minimized.

1.2. Research Gap

As described by Carrington et al. (2010) “Despite ethical intentions, consumers rarely walk their talk and make the purchase of sustainable products.” This inconsistency between attitude and behavior is an important phenomenon to be researched, yet poorly understood (Belk et al. 2005). Target population group of this thesis consists of mostly young students who either get education benefit from government or earn through working on a part-time basis. It is believed that young consumers are supposed to be concerned about sustainable fashion consumption. The findings of Friberg (2017) and Düffelmeyer (2012) studies explain the fact that most of the young consumers do not believe that fast fashion industry is maintaining required sustainability standards in terms of economy, environment, and society. Despite rising sustainability concerns, young consumers still frequently buy clothes from the fast fashion industry. This is a clear indication that a visible gap exists between consumers’ attitude and actual behavior. But what could be the possible reasons behind this gap? Why this gap? How could this gap be neutralized? All these questions need extensive research attention. If the footprints of prior researchers in the field of sustainable consumerism are analyzed, it is found that most of the researches tried to find out whether a gap actually exists between attitude and behavior or not. Very few research approaches were made to investigate the reasons behind the gap and ways to bridge the gap. Moreover, research footprints to study sustainable consumerism in the fast fashion industry were also inadequate. According to Belk et al. (2015) “research on the area of sustainable consumerism is a relatively new phenomenon as sustainability is not an age-old concept. Moreover, this attitude-behavior gap is yet poorly understood.” Therefore, there is a room for further study on the topic regarding attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption.

1.3. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This thesis assumes that a visible attitude and behavior inconsistency exists in sustainable fashion consumption. Keeping this assumption in the center, the thesis attempts to present a clear understanding of the possible reasons behind the gap and ways to reduce the gap. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to dig deep into the reasons behind the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption and to investigate possible ways to minimize the gap. This thesis, therefore, aims to understand and explain attitude-behavior gap from consumers' perspectives of fashion consumption. The study incorporates a combined method of qualitative data collection (both Focus Group Discussion and Interview). The thesis will also search for shreds of evidence from previous researches conducted in the field of sustainable fashion consumerism. After studying previous research materials and analyzing respondents' answers from interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), this thesis proposes a model identifying reasons behind attitude-behavior gap and suggesting ways to bridge the gap. 'The Decision-Making Model of Sustainable Consumption' by Terlau and Hirsch (2015) serves as the foundation theory for developing the model.

Based on the research gap and the purpose of the thesis, the major research questions could be outlined as the following:

- *What are the reasons behind the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption?*
- *How could this attitude-behavior gap be neutralized?*

To justify the answers of the research questions, this study investigates into previous literature, collects data through interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD), develops a model, analyzes, and logically interpret the data to provide answers of the research questions.

1.4. Key Terms

Sustainable Fashion - Sustainable fashion is the fashion that has very little or no negative impact on the environment and society throughout its lifecycle, from the very beginning stage of production to the final disposal. Reaching the point of zero negative impact is nearly impossible. However, sustainable fashion maximizes the positive impact and minimizes the negative impact as much as possible socially, environmentally, and economically (Billeon, 2005).

Attitude-Behavior Gap - In ethical consumerism research, the attitude-behavior gap is often characterized by consumers whose ethical thinking do not match with their actual market behavior. For example, when consumers say that they are aware of sustainability but do not express their attitude in their practical actions, it could be termed as ‘attitude-behavior gap’ (Ethical Trading initiative, 2016).

Fast Fashion – When consumers’ demand for latest fashion trends fluctuates so much and rises rapidly, suppliers and retailers head towards shorter lead time and the introduction of new clothes at lower prices in order to keep pace with rising consumer demand. Fast fashion can be defined as a business strategy where consumers’ demand for latest fashion clothes pushes the suppliers to frequent production at a low inventory cost and shorter lead time (Tokatli and Kızılgün, 2009).

Sustainable Fashion consumption – Sustainable Fashion Consumption means modifying fashion consumption pattern in a way that would do very little or no hamper to the environment, society, and economy.

Slow Fashion – This is a new fashion concern with an intention to neutralize the drawbacks of fast fashion. It indicates slowing down the evolution of the fashion process and extending lifecycle or durability of fashion clothes for ensuring sustainable consumption of fashion clothes.

2. THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Fashion industry encompasses collective sectors including clothing, cosmetics, accessory, footwear, bag, and fragrance sectors. All these facets of fashion change with the trends (Anguelov, 2015). Trends get changed now and also used to be changed in the past. But the pinpoint difference is that trends nowadays change at the speed of a skyrocket which is much higher than any time in history. The society and environment are paying high prices because of this constant changing-trends, e.g., environmental pollution, human rights violation, women abuse, and so on. This chapter illustrates the dark side of the fast fashion industry. However, it is worth noting here, this thesis focuses on the clothing facet of the whole fashion industry and does not deal with other aspects, e.g., footwear, cosmetics, accessories, fragrance, and so on.

2.1. Fast Fashion

Anguelov (2015) narrated the story of only two decades ago when fashion industry introduced eight fashion seasons- spring, summer I, summer II, fall, winter I, winter II, trans-seasonal, and holiday. As of late, trends are changing so fast that more than 24 different fashion-seasons exist in the market. Clothes that look fashionable, quality-full, high branded, and high-end; can be sold at a price less than a fast-food sandwich. Sustainable and durable garments are just an allegory now; these clothes are being replaced by cheap, low-end, poor quality, and readily disposable clothes (Anguelov, 2015). Today, most of the consumers are the followers of ‘throwaway fashion culture’ where they are buying clothes very frequently, wearing those only once or twice, and throwing those out of the bins.

In order to meet consumers’ insatiable demand for trendy fashion clothes, the fast fashion industry is lowering their production costs in every way possible and constantly manufacturing clothes. This minimized production cost is causing society to pay high prices that cannot be expressed through countable terms. Society is paying immeasurable fees for hazardous working conditions, child labor, women abuse, violation of human rights, and environmental pollution through emission of greenhouse gasses and industrial production (Anguelov, 2015).

The production and promotion of such cheap, stylish, easily disposable, and low-end clothes that run with fashion trends and reflect young consumers' desire for fashion can be termed as fast fashion (Kaikobad et al., 2015). Popular brands H&M, Zara, Primark, New Look, Topshop, Forever 21, and Peacocks fall under the umbrella of fast fashion. Inspired by the drastic success of fast fashion retailers, other retailers are also taking approaches to offer fast fashion options in their product lines, such as famous luxury brand Versace is also offering inexpensive products that look expensive and prestigious (Anguelov, 2015). As the trends are changing so fast and the fast fashion industry is producing a lot more than before, excessive industrial production is releasing negative externalities in the environment, society, and economy. The agriculture-based economy is taking a shift towards an industrial economy which has multiple alarming aftermaths including child labor, women harassment, unsafe working conditions, global warming, environmental pollution, and so on. It is high time to rethink all these issues.

2.2. Popular Fast Fashion Brands

Throughout this thesis, the terms 'fast-fashion' and 'fast-fashion brands' have been used repeatedly. A question may usually poke in readers' minds, "which brands fall under the umbrella of fast fashion?" In order to illumine readers' concepts about fast fashion brands, few crucial facts about some popular fast fashion brands are presented as follows-

ZARA - Zara is a Spanish fast fashion brand that was founded in 1975 by Amancio Ortega. After the starting journey, Zara continued to the path of success. In 1985 Zara's parent company Inditex was officially founded. Zara's business operations continued to spread across various territories of the world; thus Zara turned into an international fast fashion brand. Zara's business model allows value co-creation both by customers and the company itself. Zara reduced the gap between fashion creation and customer that brought Zara a massive amount of customers' acceptance. Till 2016, Zara has reached 7,000 stores milestone, and nowadays Zara is named as the number one fast fashion brand (Inditex, 2019).

H&M - The first store of H&M was opened in 1947 in Sweden, Västerås. Initially, H&M covered only women's fashion. During the 60s and 70s gradually H&M started to cover fashion products for men, babies, and youth. During 80s and 90s H&M continued to expand its business operations throughout Europe. In the eve of 00's H&M went both east and west, 2500 stores are operating in 44 different countries. Also, several new brands are now included with H&M, e.g., COS, Weekday, H&M home, and so on (H&M, 2019).

Mango - Mango was first founded in Barcelona in 1984. Mango's first website was created in 1995, and its first online store was opened in 2000. As of late, Mango has approximately 2200 stores operating in 109 countries. It covers fashion products for men, women, kids, and youth (Mango Pressroom, 2019).

Primark - Primark's first store was opened in Dublin in 1969. Till today Primark has over 350 stores operating in 11 countries across America and Europe. It offers a wide range of products for fashion lovers at low prices covering fashion for men, women, kids, and youth. The maximum number of Primark stores (about 174) is operated in the UK (Primark, 2019).

Topshop - Topshop is a design-led fashion brand under the Arcadia group, and its first store was founded in 1964. Topshop launches fashion products almost weekly covering fashion for kids, youth, and adults. Topshop's digital website attracts on an average 4.5million weekly visits by customers. It has now over 450 stores. Most of the stores are located in the UK (Topshop Topman, 2019).

Along with the brands above, some other popular fast fashion brands include Forever 21, Gina Tricot, Gap, Uniqlo, Pull and Bear, and so on.

2.3. Current State of Fast Fashion and Rising Public Concern

In this 21st century, our appetite for fashion clothes is much higher than it was two generations ago. People want their wardrobes to be more extensive; simultaneously they are not eager to pay high for getting their fashion clothes. Consumers barely want to know the stories hidden behind every piece of cloth that fast fashion is offering them. But the dirty side of the fast fashion industry started to be revealed when hidden notes were found in the clothes bought from Zara. Zara's workers in Istanbul sewed hidden notes in the clothes. One note stated, "I made this dress you are going to purchase, but I didn't get paid for it." (Nimbhard, 2017). Apart from Zara, popular fast fashion brands such as H&M, Primark, and Gap have faced several scandals, and the fast fashion industry has been blamed for multiple sustainability issues.

The fashion industry has experienced the biggest disaster on 24th of April, 2013, in Bangladesh widely known as 'Rana Plaza Collapse'. About one thousand people were dead, and about 2500 workers were injured by the incident. The day before the Rana Plaza Collapse, a crack was found on the surface of the building and related authority imposed a restriction to use the building. Although other organizations like shops and banks were closed but garment workers were forced to work and they did not get relief from their work. As a result, about a thousand of the workers were dead (Akhter, 2014). In Bangladesh, Just five months earlier than Rana Plaza Collapse, more than 100 workers were trapped and burnt inside Tazreen Fashion (International Labor Organization). These incidents uncovered the dirty facts of the fast fashion industry such as hazardous working environment and forced labor.

In most of the Asian fashion factories, there is a gendered wage system where men employees get higher payment than women. The fear of sexual abuse and lack of collective bargaining power have made the female workers cornered (Akhter, 2014). During 2016 a Panorama report on BBC showed children as young as 11 years' old making clothes for Primark. In response, Primark announced that it had sacked three clothing suppliers in India for subcontracting child workers (The Guardian, 2016). However, the controversies were concealed and hushed with the passage of time. In the meantime, H&M was blamed for using Syrian refugee children as their workers.

A report says that female workers in H&M and Gap are being physically and sexually abused on a daily basis (Hales, 2018). Zara Owner Inditex was accused of ‘slave labor’ and unsafe working conditions. Zara has nearly 30 outsourced factories in Brazil where workers had to work seven days a week, 16 hours a day, and the workers were paid with minimal wages (Antunes, 2011). Lowering production costs often end in cutting the wages of the workers.

The fast fashion industry is constantly leaving its pollution footprints on this earth, where each of the steps is generating environmental hazards. Polyester and traditionally grown cotton are clothing fibers that have been mostly used by the fast fashion industry. Polyester and other synthetic fibers are made from petroleum; the manufacturing process is very energy-intensive and releases toxic chemicals which may cause respiratory diseases. Grown cotton is also a pesticide-dependent crop that leaves negative externalities to the environment (Claudio, 2014). The industrial production process of fashion clothes emits greenhouse gasses and releases toxic chemicals to the atmosphere ultimately causing air, water, and soil pollution. Some predictions elicit that by 2030, garment industry’s water consumption will rise by 50 percent, amount of waste generation will reach about 150 tonnes, and carbon footprints will increase to 2800 tonnes (Samner, 2017). Different processes involved in cloth manufacturing such as spinning, knitting, dyeing, sewing, finishing, and transporting- all of these have detrimental environmental effects. The blue dust emitting from the jeans is highly tormenting to the lungs (Claudio, 2014).

The negative impacts from the consumers’ side are not negligible either. During 2018, fashion consumers spent about £3.5bn during Christmas season, but 8million of those clothes will directly go for landfilling purpose just right after one wear (Butler, 2018). The estimation says that only across the UK around £30bn clothes are stored in people’s wardrobes that have not been used for over 12 months whereas recycling and up-cycling rate is very minimal (Samner, 2017).

Although it is the winning age of the fast fashion industry, the concept of 'sustainable fashion' is also growing as an opposing force. People across the globe have started to realize the fact that it is now high time to pair fashion with ethics; otherwise, the world would no longer remain worthy for living. According to Billeon (2015), sustainable fashion and sustainability are gaining adequate research attention today.

The 21st century is also considered as an 'information age.' People nowadays have access to infinite information on their fingertips through smart technological devices, internet, social media, and other mass media channels. Fast fashion brands cannot hide unsustainable issues from their consumers anymore. This information intensity has made people aware of sustainability. The controversies and scandals against fast-fashion brands are now an open book for fashion consumers. Consumers have already started to push fast-fashion industry for sustainable clothing alternatives. This rising public concerns and 'pushing-effect' created by consumers have made the fast-fashion brands bound to strengthen their sustainability standards.

3. INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR IN SUSTAINABLE FASHION CONSUMPTION

This chapter sheds light on discussion of the ‘attitude-behavior gap’ aspect and discusses why attitude-behavior discrepancy takes place in sustainable fashion consumption. At first, this section presents a clear understanding of the concepts of sustainable consumption and attitude-behavior inconsistency to the readers. Later, possible reasons contributing to this attitude-behavior inconsistency will be studied where the researcher will review the previous literature to investigate those plausible reasons.

3.1. Sustainable Consumption

According to Quoquab and Muhammad (2016) consumption of goods and services enables the human being to satisfy their needs and wants. Although consumerism provides consumers with a platform for meeting their needs, it is often said that consumerism, nowadays, is supporting materialism and is disregarding the future economic, environmental, and social consequences. Furthermore, consumerism is blamed for promoting social inequality, elitism, waste generation, excessive expenditure, limitless purchases, extravagance, and unsustainability (Quoquab and Muhammad, 2016). Thus, the necessity has been called for incorporating ‘sustainability perspective’ prior to the concept of consumption. Sustainable consumption refers to the consumption pattern that takes into account the environmental, and social perspectives. In other words, sustainable consumption does little, minimal or no hamper to environment and society (Alexander, 2002).

Consumption can be seen from two point of views. The first view incorporates a ‘basic need-fulfilment orientation,’ while the second view has a ‘pleasure-seeking orientation’ (Godazgar, 2007). The second view supports over consumption, excessive purchase of fancy or unnecessary products, wastage culture, and other unsustainable consumption patterns. Godazgar (2007) terms this view as ‘consumerism’ that emphasizes the individual consumption and pleasure ignoring the environmental and social aspects. The first view can be termed as ‘sustainable consumption’ that aims at

basic need-fulfilment without desiring for excessive consumption and purchase of products that will leave negative externalities to the environment and society. Consumption can be either ‘constructive’ or ‘destructive’ depending on its nature and motive (Godazgar, 2007). People always should head towards the constructive one that would not hamper the environment and society; would preserve a platform for the well-being of our future generation.

Quoquab and Muhammad’s (2016) work identifies five basic stagnations of sustainable consumption which comprises of following-

- I. Aware attempts of fulfilling basic needs only.
- II. Frugality and control in expenditure
- III. Emphasis on quality life rather than materialism
- IV. Concerns for the future world
- V. Concerns for society and environment

3.2. Consumers’ Attitude-Behavior Gap

Researchers argue that behavior is a function of attitudes. Theory of Planned Behavior (developed by Icek Ajzen in 1985) is one of the most appropriate theories for understanding the attitude-behavior gap. According to Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), consumers’ purchase intention is formed based on attitudes and social norms; consumers are more likely to buy what they have intended to buy (Lam, 2017; Ajzen, 2002). TPB claims that consumers’ attitudes are the predictor of their potential behavior, but in case of sustainable consumption, consumers’ attitudes do not translate into actual behavior. Researchers have termed this inconsistency as ‘attitude-behavior gap’ (Carrington, 2014; Lam, 2017).

Despite bearing positive attitudes towards sustainable products, and willingness to pay more for environment-friendly products, in most of the cases consumers do not purchase those sustainable products. Very few consumers show sustainable consumption patterns although many of them possess a positive attitude towards

sustainability and sustainable consumption (Park and Lin, 2018). According to Park and Lin (2018), consumers' decision-making process for purchasing sustainable products is not clearly understood. The interplay of different behavioral and situational factors may broaden the gap between consumers' attitude and actual behavior (e.g., conflicts between choosing green products over fashionable one, price, availability, information, egoism, and so on). All these possible reasons are discussed later. The size of the gap also depends on knowledge, value, social norms, situational factors, perceived usefulness of the product, and so on (Park and Lin, 2018).

During the 1980s the increasing concern for sustainability led to the uprising of sustainable products and the concept of 'sustainable marketing.' The word 'sustainability' still exists in the market, and it seems, as if, consumers are concerned about sustainable consumption. But the researches have revealed that the actual consumption of sustainable products is much lower than the estimated level of concern from consumers' side (Polianskaia, 2018). The reduced consumption of sustainable products led companies to reduce the investment in producing and promoting sustainable products. Thus, companies lowered the advertising expenditure for eco-friendly products. The lowered advertisement was debated either by diminishing production of eco-friendly products or by fake advertisement known as 'greenwashing.' The true fact brought to the light that a discrepancy existed between consumers' asserted level of concern towards sustainable consumption and their actual buying behavior, the discrepancy can be termed as 'attitude-behavior gap' (Peattie and Crane, 2005). The conceptual framework of Yee and Hassan's (2016) study suggests combining socio-psychological and technical aspects into sustainability studies in order to develop a crystal-clear understanding of consumers' attitude-behavior gap.

For fashion products and clothing items, this attitude-behavior inconsistency might be even higher than other products (Friberg and Tu, 2017). Fashion industry embraces unsustainable issues like child labor, women abuse, human rights violation, environment pollution, and so on. Consumers' attitude towards unethically produced clothing is usually negative while the actual behavior resembles the opposite situation. The target population group of this thesis comprises of young adults who are a part of generation Y. Previous researches have justified that generation Y, especially young

women, are frequent consumers of fast fashion industry despite knowing the unethical issues contributed by this industry. Although generation Y shows their concerns for society, environment, and sustainability, their interests do not translate into actual behavior when they are buying fashion and clothing items (Garodia, 2018; Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Koca and Koc, 2016).

3.3. Reasons for the Gap

Possible reasons that enhance or reduce the attitude-behavior discrepancy are poorly understood. Previous researchers have identified several factors that contribute to this gap. The findings of Jacobs et al.'s (2018) research reveal that fashion consciousness, price, and self-enhancement values hinder sustainable attitude to be translated into sustainable behavior. The study also suggests to change attitudes and values towards sustainability and it is essential to enhance durability rather than fashionability in sustainable clothing. Connel (2010) argues that there are two possible reasons for attitude-behavior inconsistency, firstly, consumers' ability to achieve knowledge and information about the manufacturing process and secondly, consumers' ability to find options for sustainably produced clothing items.

Sisco and Morris (2012) through their research, presented four significant barriers hindering the purchase of eco-friendly fashion clothing. Those barriers include style barriers, price barriers, lack of ability to find sustainable clothes, and lack of adequate knowledge and information. Consumers prefer to purchase three or four fashionable clothes at low prices which are produced unsustainably, rather than buying one or two sustainable clothes which are costly and look unfashionable. Furthermore, consumers do not know much regarding the sustainability of clothing items, manufacturing process, ingredients of the clothes, environmental degradation contributed by the industrial production of the clothes, and so on. Billenson and Klasander (2015) have found that today's consumers are willing to pay a high price for sustainable clothing options. Price and design no longer act as substantial barriers as previous researchers have shown, somewhat consumers are not well informed, and sustainable clothes are not conveniently available (Billenson and Klasander, 2015).

The wealthy consumers usually have care-free consumption patterns, and they do not think about the negative environmental and social consequences brought by the fast fashion industry and the long term effects of excessive cloth purchase. They are mostly habituated in extravagance, throwaway culture, and extravagant cloth purchase. The absence of moral filter from the side of consumers is hindering the fashion consumption patterns from being sustainable (Quoquab and Mohammad, 2016). Pink (2009) argues that the rapid globalization and spread of internet usage also give fuels to this problem. Social media has boosted show-off culture. People nowadays feel pleasure to show off their fashionable lifestyles in social media which pushes them to buy more and more fashionable clothes at a low price without considering the sustainability issues. Quoquab and Mohammad (2016) in their work, have identified five factors that give a boost to care-free consumption culture. The factors are as follows-

- I. Inadequate information and knowledge regarding sustainability.
- II. Don't care attitude
- III. Globalization and spread of the internet.
- IV. Marketers' focused intention for profit maximization
- V. Wanton electronic media aggression

A recent study conducted by Joshi and Rahman (2015) present a review of 53 articles published between 2000 and 2014 on the green purchasing behavior of the consumers. This piece of research considers only environmental aspects and does not take into account the social perspective of sustainability. The study identifies ten factors in total after reviewing all those 53 articles- knowledge, subjective norms, attitude towards the environment, concern for the environment, perceived usefulness, egoism, price, purchase intention, and availability of sustainable options. Polianskaia's (2018) study also reviews the previous literature and identifies related factors that contribute to attitude behavior gap. Among those factors, most mentionable ones are- awareness about environmental and social issues, consumers' socioeconomic background, trust and beliefs, perceived usefulness, fashion tendencies, and styles, price, availability and so on. Lam's (2017) study identifies some factors that contribute to the attitude-

behavior gap in sustainable consumption of products from food, energy and fashion industry. The factors include knowledge, information, perceived usefulness, availability, subjective norms, and willingness to pay a premium price. Table-1 represents possible reasons for attitude-behavior inconsistency along with the correspondent researches.

Table 1: Possible reasons for attitude-behavior inconsistency

Possible reasons	Researches in which reasons were discussed
Price	Jacobs et al.'s (2018), Polianskaia's (2018), Sisco and Morris (2012), Joshi and Rahman (2015), Friberg and Tu (2017), Apell Karlsson et al. (2015), Cronin (2017),
Availability	Cronin (2017), Joshi and Rahman (2015), Connel (2010), Billenson and Klasander (2015), Sisco and Morris (2012), Polianskaia's (2018), Lam's (2017), Friberg and Tu (2017), Schuuning (2018).
Information, knowledge and awareness.	Billenson and Klasander (2015), Quoquab and Mohammad (2016), Connel (2010), Sisco and Morris (2012), Joshi and Rahman (2015), Polianskaia's (2018), Han et, al. (2017), Lam's (2017), Schuuning (2018), Cronin (2017),
Fashion consciousness and lifestyle	Jacobs et al.'s (2018), Sisco and Morris (2012), Polianskaia's (2018), Schuuning (2018).
Fashion and egoism	Joshi and Rahman (2015), Sumner (2017), Friberg and Tu (2017), Tan (2017), Schuuning (2018).
Trust and beliefs	Polianskaia's (2018), Joshi and Rahman (2015), Friberg and Tu (2017), Schuuning (2018).
Perceived usefulness	Joshi and Rahman (2015), Polianskaia's (2018), Han et, al. (2017), Apell Karlsson et al. (2015), Lam's (2017), Cronin (2017), Schuuning (2018).
Socioeconomic characteristics	Terlau and Hirsch (2015), Friberg and Tu (2017), Polianskaia (2018), Lam (2017)
Peer influence	Joshi and Rahman (2015), Friberg and Tu (2017), Cronin (2017), Schuuning (2018).
Spread of internet and social media	Pink (2009), Quoquab and Mohammad (2016), Tan (2017),
Consumers' incredulity and cynicism	Joshi and Rahman (2015), Quoquab and Mohammad (2016), Cronin (2017)
Social desirability bias	Carrington et al. (2010), Cronin (2017),
Manipulation by fashion industry and marketers	Quoquab and Mohammad (2016), Anguelov (2015),
Absence of moral filter and values	Jacobs et al.'s (2018), Quoquab and Mohammad (2016), Friberg and Tu (2017),

Han et al., (2017) attempts to study how young consumers perceive sustainable fashion and how they can be influenced towards sustainable fashion consumption. The study identifies three reasons explaining why consumers are unwilling to buy sustainable fashion clothes. Poor perceptions about the quality of sustainable products, lack of justification for paying a high price for sustainable fashion clothes, and inadequate knowledge, information, and awareness about the value of sustainable fashion. Apell Karlsson et al. (2015) in their study asked the participants to rank the factors based on their importance in a cloth purchase decision. The first-ranked factor was quality and the second one was the price. 'The importance of the fashion clothes to be sustainably produced' was considered as a less significant factor and only 16 percent of the participants ranked the factor as 'important' or 'very important.'

Many people make irrational cloth-purchases being driven by egoistic factors, pleasure, and excitement. People believe in a myth that their fashion clothes represent their social status (Sumner, 2017). Friberg and Tu (2017) conducted four focus group discussions and six interviews of young adults in order to understand the attitude-behavior discrepancy in sustainable fashion consumption. After reviewing the previous literature and analysis participants' responses, Friberg and Tu (2017) identified nine specific factors that contribute to the inconsistency between attitude and behavior in sustainable fashion consumption. The factors include egoism, convenience, lack of control, lack of alternatives, financial risk, social risk, psychological imbalance, and lack of responsible behavior. A recent report by Tan (2017) discusses how social media has boosted the rise of fast fashion. Tan (2017) argues that whenever a consumer is posting pictures related to his/her fashionable lifestyle, others are being influenced so easily. Most people cannot afford high-end sustainable items. So they go for cheap options and wear every cloth items only for few times.

Cronin (2017) conducted eight semi-structured interviews and identified mediating factors that impede sustainable attitudes to be translated into sustainable behavior. The factors include- price, quality, information, consumer cynicism and skepticism, availability, peer group influence, and moralistic response tendency. Schuuning (2018) conducted surveys of 157 respondents and found that egoism and altruism influence

the size of attitude-behavior discrepancy. Erve (2013) identified fashion habits, availability, perceived benefits, awareness, trust, and subjective norms as factors influencing the inconsistency between attitude and behavior.

Anguelov (2015) in his work blames the fast fashion industry as a manipulator that is teaching the consumers to be habituated with throw-away culture rather than spreading sustainability education. Anguelov (2015) argues that the fast fashion industry is based on a complete lie. Fashion industry tries to prove that consumers have an insatiable demand for fashion clothes at low prices; that is why the industry is producing limitless clothes in an unsustainable way. Anguelov pinpoints the fact as a lie. He further argues that consumers are quick adapters of fashion trends and the fashion industry is taking advantage of this. The fast fashion industry has driven consumers demand for fashion clothes at an insatiable level and is still manipulating the consumers through their latest fashion trends.

4. CLOSING THE ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR GAP

This chapter discusses sustainability initiatives of fast-fashion brands and presents a coherent discussion suggesting the possible ways to bridge the attitude-behavior gap through review of prior researches made in this area and analysis of participants' discussion. Furthermore, the research model or conceptual framework for this thesis and its theoretical background are discussed under this chapter.

4.1. Sustainability Initiatives of Fast-Fashion Brands

With the rising public concerns, many fashion brands are starting to take steps towards sustainable fashion. Zara has launched its 2016-2020 'Environmental Strategy Plan' and has introduced an approach described as 'exemplary' that aims to zero discharge of toxic chemicals during industrial production (Inditex, 2019). A recent report reveals that Zara has established collection-points in Spain for collecting used clothes from consumers. Also, Zara is conducting a pilot test for performing at-home collection of used clothes for the purpose of recycling and upcycling those clothes (Ecotextile News, 2019). Moreover, Zara has introduced a new sustainable collection named as 'Join Life.' The clothes of this collection are made out of sustainable, environment-friendly, and forest friendly materials (Ehlers, 2016). Zara's website also claims that 84% energy that Zara's website consumes is renewable and 50% of Zara's shops are already sustainability-friendly (Inditex, 2019).

In the recent sustainability report, H&M publishes the aim of becoming 100% 'climate positive' by the year 2040. H&M's sustainability-pledges also include using 100% recycled and environment-friendly materials by 2030, and converting the first two-tiers of its supply chain into eco-neutral by 2030 (Robertson, 2019). In 2012 H&M launched its 'Conscious Collection' where clothes are made out of sustainable and eco-friendly materials. Furthermore, H&M signed a detox commitment to mitigate hazardous production (Robertson, 2019).

Mango launched 'Committed Collection' in 2017 where the clothes were produced with organic, eco-friendly materials and recycled cotton. Mango's sustainability-aim states that 50% of the cotton used by mango will be generated from sustainable origins by the year 2022 (Orendamtl, 2018).

In 2012 Urban Outfitters took a sustainability initiative named as 'Urban Renewal' which uses surplus textiles and left-over fabrics and convert those into stylish pieces (Orendamtl, 2018). This upcycling initiative pinpoints the growing conscious line of the brand.

Brand consultancy agency Eco-Age is working with brands and businesses to act sustainably. A sophisticated approach taken by Eco-Age is 'Green Carpet Challenge (GCC)' that dresses famous celebrities in sustainable fashion clothes in order to spread awareness about sustainable fashion consumption (Eco-Age, 2019). It is now a matter of concern, how glamour could be paired with sustainability that would leave minimal environmental and occupational hazards.

All these initiatives taken by fast-fashion brands prove the fact that fast-fashion industry is pushing forward the sustainability issue. But all these initiatives failed to convince the consumers. The dominant reason behind this failure is that fast-fashion industry is emphasizing the environmental side while ignoring the human-cost of fast-fashion. According to a recent report by Dalton (2017), fast-fashion brands are not taking satisfactory initiatives to mitigate the human rights issue and unsafe working conditions. Exploitation of labors, violating their human rights, using child labor, and unsafe working conditions are still continuing in some countries. It is still unclear whether or not the conscious line of fast-fashion brands include improved working conditions. It seems they are focusing only on the environmental aspect of sustainability while ignoring the hidden human-cost of cheap and fast fashion (Dalton, 2017).

4.2. Ways to Bridge the Attitude-Behavior Gap

Prior researches investigated the possible reasons for the attitude-behavior discrepancy. But adequate research approaches have not been taken suggesting the possible ways to close the gap (Stern, 2000). As the possible reasons behind the deviation of attitude from actual behavior have been identified, abating or alleviating those reasons can play an important role in closing the gap.

Polianskaia's (2018) study identifies four approaches to promote expected pro-environmental behavior and to close the attitude-behavior gap. The approaches are as follows.

- I. Religious and moral approaches that shake and boost positive values
- II. Education and information regarding sustainability.
- III. Incentives in the form of rewards or penalties
- IV. Community management through shared rules and responsibilities.

Stern (2000) suggests two strategies for reducing the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable consumption- providing adequate information and providing incentives for promoting sustainable consumption patterns. According to Terlau and Hirsch (2015), sustainable fashion consumption can be ensured through joint strategic actions from retailers, consumers, policymakers, and companies. Furthermore, to close the attitude-behavior gap Terlau and Hirsch (2015) recommended the following measures:

- Raising awareness of the consumers through providing adequate sustainability education and information.
- Providing incentives to strengthen the sense of responsibility of companies and consumers.
- The incentives would promote companies' sustainable marketing policies, marketing campaigns, advertising, promotion and motivating consumers towards sustainable consumption patterns.
- Ethical, environmental and social perspectives (3BL) should be incorporated in companies' operations.

- Enhancing the sensory attributes of the sustainable products (e.g., quality, design, price, aesthetics and so on).
- Nudging or the creation of stimuli that would boost sustainable consumption.
- Making attempts to create more transparency and trust.
- Companies should improve the sense of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
- Appropriate communication strategies between company, consumers and policymakers.
- Proactive state to create legal rules, laws, and framework.
- Common efforts and joint responsibility from retailers, companies, consumers, and policymakers.
- Using mass media and other channels to spread awareness.

Thaler and Sunstein (2009) describe the necessity of nudging or creating stimuli that would boost sustainable consumption patterns. Stern (2000) argues that different consumers may get affected by different barriers or reasons in sustainable consumption that is why it is essential to make a correct combination and right decision concerning the factors to be emphasized first. Most importantly, it has to be taken care of that the strict restriction in fashion-cloth purchase does not impede the growth of the fashion industry. After all, the fashion industry is contributing to a significant portion of the world economy. Friberg and Tu (2017) takes four Focus Group discussions and six interviews and asks the participants ‘what could reduce their attitude-behavior gap’. However, Friberg and Tu (2017) make a conclusion saying that probably nothing can completely reduce this gap. The fast fashion industry would keep going on its growth track, and they would keep buying fashion clothes.

Park and Lin (2018) described the importance of recycled and upcycled fashion products in order to extend the life-cycles of fashion clothes by reusing it. Second-hand clothes can reduce environmental pollution by minimizing the amount of cloth-disposal and also these can be used for personal styles (Johansson, 2010). Upcycling could be another option that converts useless and old clothing into new clothes having good quality, and environment friendliness (Park and Lin, 2018). The recycling and upcycling options can reduce the environmental effects of the fast fashion industry,

but these options will not do any help with unsustainable issues like child labor, unsafe working conditions, human rights violation, and women abuse. That is why Johansson (2010) suggests slowing down the fashion to some extent that would balance the limitless production and consumption of fashion clothes and would enhance the safety of work environment and payment options of the workers. Billeson and Klasander (2015) also suggest the same stating that slow fashion would reduce the throwaway culture.

Lewittes's (2019) study illustrates how the fashion-brands can contribute to create a sustainable retail economy through radical transparency and reducing the effects on the environment. Hansen et al. (2012) discuss 'The nice consumer project' which is basically the joint venture between BSR and the Danish Fashion Institute. The project intends to bring positive changes in government policies, fashion companies' operations, and consumers' practices including purchase, use, care for, recycling and disposal of fashion clothes. According to the project, 'nice consumer' can play a role in preserving the sustainability of fashion-industry through:

- Demanding more sustainable alternatives from the fashion industry.
- Improving the moral filter and how they care about the fashion industry.
- Practicing responsible behavior by searching for better choices and doing research before purchase.
- Responsible post-consumption behavior (e.g., recycling, upcycling, reuse)

According to Hansen et al. (2012), 'the nice consumer project' argues that several barriers impede a consumer's transition to a 'nice consumer.' Those barriers can be alleviated through the following ways:

- Sustainable collaboration between fashion companies to boost sustainable fashion consumption.
- Incorporating the sustainability study into primary, secondary and university level education for raising public awareness.
- Transparency in production and distribution of fashion clothes,
- Companies should provide quality and adequate information to consumers.

- Motivating consumers and promoting sustainability-awareness through marketing activities.
- Policymakers should restrict the usage of harmful substances.
- Strict laws, and frameworks within which the fashion companies would be operating.
- Incentives/tariffs.
- Shared commitments by government, industry, and consumers.

Chan and Wong (2012) have conducted a survey consisting of 216 respondents in Hong Kong. They come up with the practical implications that producing fashion-clothes in a sustainable way is not the only thing fashion-companies should work with. They should also improve the store related attributes of sustainable fashion-clothes. Store related attributes refer to the visual qualities, appeal, and aesthetics of products. Beard (2008) also argues that it is not enough that the fashion-clothes are produced in a sustainable way but also these clothes have to be fashionable. Consumers would never go for unappealing but sustainable clothing options. That is why sustainable fashion must embrace good design and fashion to attract today's fashion-loving customers (Bratt, 1999). In most of the cases, sustainability-considerations are less important than price, convenience, and style (Roberts and Bacons, 1997; Speer, 1997). Table-2 represents the possible ways to minimize the gap size along with the corresponding references.

Table 2: Possible ways to bridge the gap.

Possible ways to bridge the gap.	Researches in which ways were discussed
Sustainability education/information/knowledge	Stern (2000), Polianskaia (2018), Terlau and Hirsch (2015), . Hansen et, al. (2012)
Recycling and upcycling	Park and Lin (2018), Hansen et, al. (2012).
Shared sense of responsibility	Hansen et, al. (2012), Terlau and Hirsch (2015), Polianskaia (2018), Speranskaya and Caterbow (2018)
Sustainable marketing Policies	Terlau and Hirsch (2015), Hansen et, al. (2012)
Tariffs/incentives	Polianskaia (2018), Stern (2000), Terlau and Hirsch (2015), Hansen et, al. (2012),

Responsible social behaviour	Polianskaia (2018), Hansen et, al. (2012), Speranskaya and Caterbow (2018)
3BL as driving philosophy	Hansen et, al. (2012), Terlau and Hirsch (2015)
Influential marketing	Identified from FGD
Donating clothes	Identified from FGD
Buying from second-hand shop	Johansson (2010), Speranskaya and Caterbow (2018),
Cutting down excessive purchases	Speranskaya and Caterbow (2018)
Regulatory laws	Terlau and Hirsch (2015), Hansen et, al. (2012)
Improved sense of CSR (by companies)	Terlau and Hirsch (2015), Friberg and Tu
Slowing down fashion	Johansson (2010), Billeon and Klasander (2015),
Improving the store-related attributes of sustainable fashion	Chan and Wong (2012), Beard (2008), Bratt (1999), Speer (1997), Roberts and Bacon (1997).
Production and distribution transparency	Lewittes (2019), Hansen et, al. (2012),
Pushing for alternatives	Hansen et, al. (2012), Speranskaya and Caterbow (2018)

A recent HEJ-support report by Speranskaya and Caterbow (2018) illustrates consumers' roles to support and maintain the sustainability of fashion. The report suggests the following roles for the consumers of fashion-clothes:

- Consumers should do their research before making any cloth purchase; also it is the responsibility of a responsible consumer to check the product sustainability information on the labels.
- Purchasing clothes from second-hand shops would reduce the volume of cloth-disposal and would extend the lifecycle of the fashion-clothes.
- Cutting the frequency of purchase and buying clothes from local stores can also help.
- Radical rethinking or shared sense of responsibility by consumers, industry, and government is a must for preserving the sustainability of fashion.
- Less washing of the clothes would make those long-lasting and durable.
- Consumers are the only boss for every industry. Because they have the ultimate power of pushing a company towards bankruptcy, simply by discontinuing the purchase of the products from that particular company. Consumers can create a 'pushing effect' upon the fashion industry for better and sustainable options.

Härtsiä (2017) argued that some sorts of change are needed to be made for ensuring sustainability in the fashion industry. Although the fashion industry is responsible for employment generation of a lot of people and is contributing to the world economy, limitless production is not the desired thing for the environment and society. The production should be brought to a balanced state, only then sustainability will shape the fashion industry in the future. Jacobs (2018) also suggests to bring production and consumption levels to a sustainable state and to increase the durability and availability of sustainable clothes. Moreover, sustainability-oriented values and attitudes should be boosted through taking joint actions by retailers, consumers, and policymakers.

4.3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the thesis is based on Decision-making model of sustainable consumption (adapted from Terlau and Hirsch, 2015). Terlau and Hirsch (2015) develop a decision-making model of sustainable consumption based on Carrington et al., (2010), Vermeier and Verbeke, (2006) and Balderjahn, (2013) studies. The model proposes that beliefs lead to attitude, which in turn affects intention and intention leads to actual purchase behavior. The model also identifies many individual, social, and situational factors that influence the decision making the process of sustainable consumption. The model argues that when attitude deviates from actual behavior these individual, social, and situational factors play the role of mediating factors.

Figure-1 represents ‘decision-making model of sustainable consumption’ by Terlau and Hirsch (2015). According to Terlau and Hirsch, different individual, social and situational factors influence the attitude-behavior inconsistency in sustainable consumption. The conceptual framework of this thesis uses the basic theme of ‘the decision-making model of sustainable consumption’ developed by Terlau and Hirsch (2015) and extends the model through incorporating the ‘neutralization of the gap’.

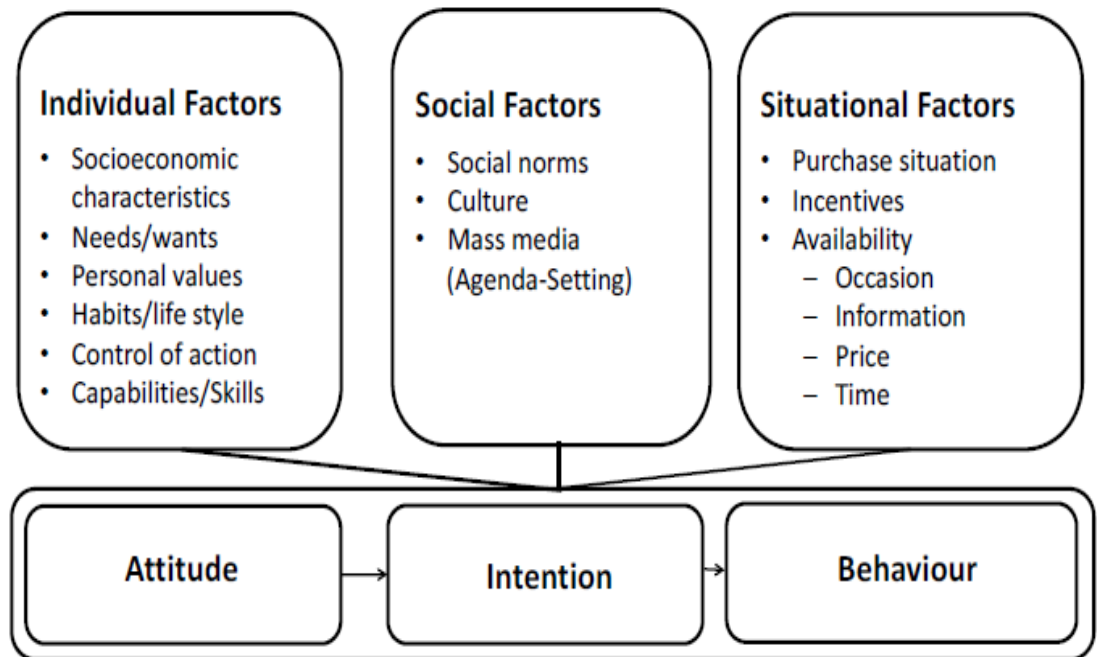


Figure 1: Decision-making process of sustainable consumption (Adapted from Terlau and Hirsch, 2015).

Alike Terlau and Hirsch's (2015) model, the conceptual framework of this thesis proposes that attitude-behavior inconsistency can be caused by different individual, social and situational factors. The framework also suggests that the gap can be neutralized through the efforts, responsibilities and attempts taken from four aspects:

- I. Company's side
- II. Policymakers' side
- III. Consumers' side
- IV. Joint efforts

In order to present a coherent picture of deviation of attitude from actual behavior in sustainable fashion consumption, a conceptual framework is developed for this thesis. Figure-2 represents the complete framework based on Terlau and Hirsch's (2015) study. The model identifies different factors influencing the attitude-behavior gap and suggests possible ways to neutralize the gap.

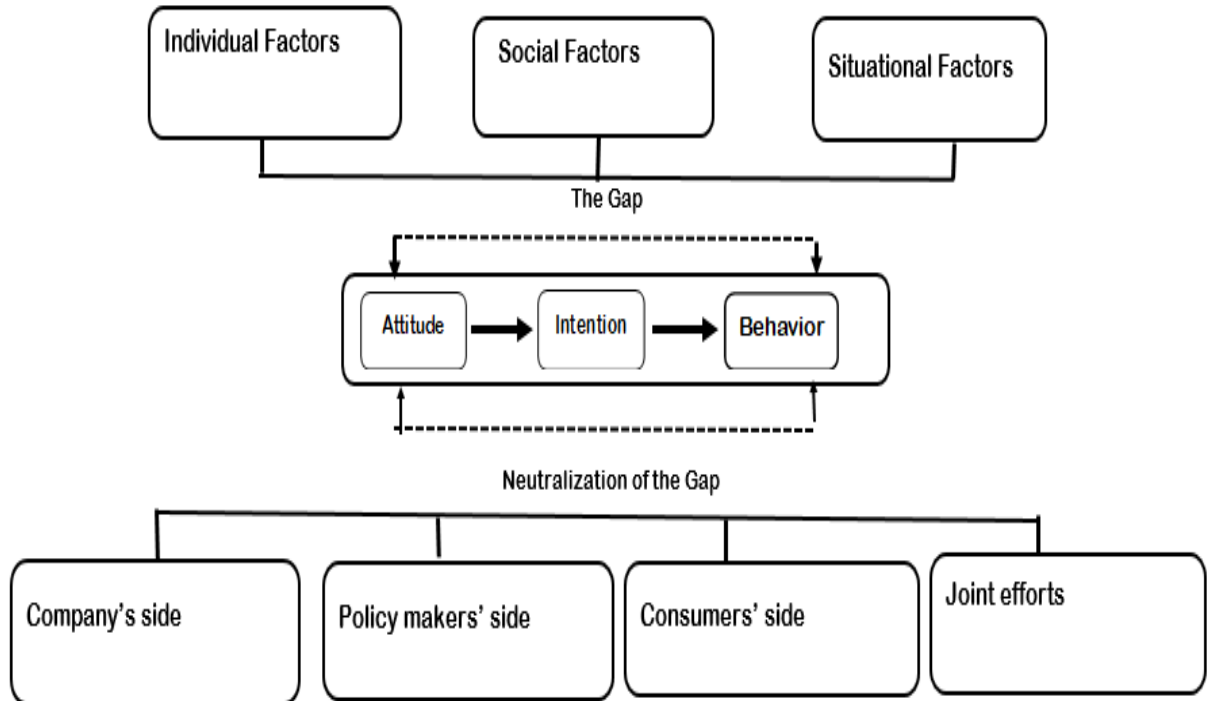


Figure 2: The Conceptual Framework Guiding the Thesis (modified and extended from 'decision-making model of sustainable consumption' by Terlau and Hirsch, 2015).

5. THE RESEARCH

This chapter of the thesis illustrates the research design and research methods to conduct the study, as well as a clear explanation of the data collection and analysis process. This chapter also presents logical explanations behind choosing research philosophy and data collection methods.

5.1. Research Methodology

According to Frankel and Devers (2000), qualitative research can be compared to an empty sketch that the researcher would fill in applying his/her skills throughout the entire research process. This thesis adopts a qualitative method to conduct the study over the quantitative one because the research questions of the thesis do not invite quantitative analysis. The research questions evoke illustration of facts that are mostly qualitative. Qualitative research mainly seeks an answer when, why and how a specific situation appears (Berg and Bruce, 2001). The research questions of this thesis also investigate why and how the attitude-behavior gap takes place in sustainable fashion consumption. Qualitative research analyzes non-numerical data, collects data from direct fieldwork observations through taking open-ended, in-depth interviews to gather naturalistic descriptions about a particular real-life problem (Patton, 2005). The aim of qualitative research may vary a lot. For a deep understanding of human psychology and behavior, qualitative research is widely used (Berg and Bruce, 2001). This thesis also aims to investigate why and how inconsistency between attitude and behavior appear from the consumers' perspectives, which basically encompasses the study of human behavior in the field of sustainable consumerism.

5.2. Philosophy and Research Approach

According to Myers (2008), a qualitative study may embrace positivist, critical or interpretive philosophical perspectives. This thesis embraces an interpretive research philosophy to create a logical flow of the facts. Interpretive research requires the researchers to interpret the elements, data, and results of the study. This type of

research philosophy promotes the infusion of the researcher's interest in the actual study. Furthermore, interpretivism supports qualitative research over quantitative one and requires in-depth data collection through interviews or observations (research methodology.net, 2018).

Critical research is a less common research philosophy which believes that real-world situation is the sum of social, economic, cultural, historical, and political domination and people have very little to do here. Although people can consciously change their surroundings and circumstances, their ability to do so is also influenced by culture, society, politics, and so on (Myers, 2008). On the other hand, positivism is a widely adopted research philosophy which assumes that reality is given and can be explained in a measurable manner and the researcher has nothing to do with it. Positivism requires a quantitative research approach over the qualitative one for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data (Atkinson and Delamont, 2010; Myers, 2008). Therefore, both critical and positivism research philosophies do not serve the purpose of the thesis. Thus interpretivism has been adopted as the research philosophy.

Research Approach can be defined as a holistic plan of the research consisting of broad assumptions to data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and reasoning. A research may adopt an inductive, deductive or abductive approaches based on the problem and purpose of the research (Chetty, 2016). An abductive research approach has been applied for this thesis based on the defined problem statement of the thesis.

An inductive research approach aims to generate new theory. On the other hand, a deductive approach heads to test a theory. Deductive approaches are mostly adopted for quantitative research, while inductive approaches are more common in qualitative studies (Gabriel, 2013). Tuunainen (2018) has described the deductive approach as a 'waterfall' and inductive approach as a 'hill climbing.' He defined the abductive research approach as a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning.

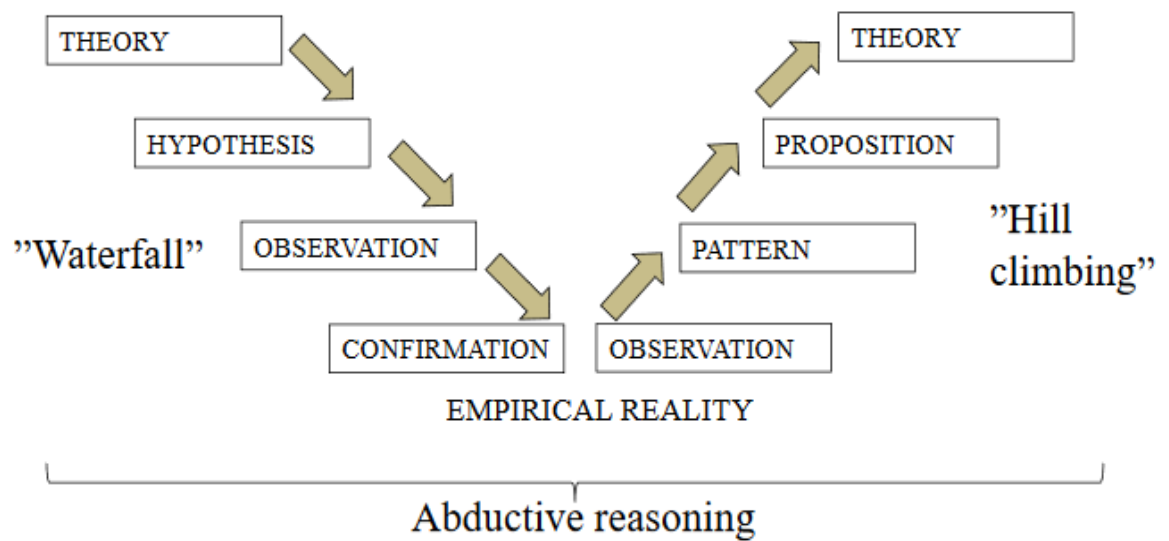


Figure 3: Deductive, inductive and abductive research process (adapted from Tuunainen, 2018)

An abductive research approach fits to a qualitative research and starts with theoretical understanding for data collection and observations. The aim here is both theory generation and transformation of theories. After the data collection, analysis and interpretation the researcher may again come back to theory and may contribute to the generation of a new theory or transformation of the old theories. Basically, an abductive research approach enables a researcher to act flexibly if it becomes necessary to bring changes throughout the research process, while deductive or inductive approach may narrow down the scope of the study (Saunders, 2011).

This thesis is qualitative in nature, starts with reading prior literature, collects data through interviews and FGDs, analyzes data, and develops a conceptual framework/model through combining previous theories in this particular research area. All these facts about the thesis prove it logical to adopt an abductive research approach.

5.3. Data Collection

In this thesis, primary data is collected through interviews and Focus Group discussion (FGD) sessions. Under this sub-section, detailed data collection process and decided measures for data collection have been discussed thoroughly.

In qualitative research, data is usually collected through written or spoken words rather than in the forms of measurable terms or numbers. Under the umbrella of qualitative research, data can be collected through interviews, observations or Focus group discussion (FGD). Sometimes a combined method could be used for data collection (Polkinghorne, 2005). Primary data could be collected in the forms of images, written words, recorded audios and so on, but data should be converted into written documents for the sake of analysis and understanding. For collecting well-documented primary data sets, the researcher should be free of biases and should keep detailed notes of his/her direct fieldwork (Hox and Boeije, 2005).

This thesis has adopted a combination of interviews and FGDs for collecting primary data. The main reason behind choosing both interviews and FGDs is to get a wide range of data for serving the research purpose. These data collection methods would support the researcher to investigate consumer behavior in a particular field ('sustainable consumerism' for this thesis) and to explain why consumers behave in a certain way (Kitzinger, 1995).

5.3.1. Interviews

Interviews and FGD are the most common methods of collecting primary data for qualitative research both of which have been adopted in this thesis. Interviews are mostly used for exploring the views, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, perceptions, experiences, and motivations from the individual perspective of the participants. Focus Group Discussion has also been used as a complementary method of data collection. Interviews would collect data from participants' point of views, while FGD would use group dynamics to generate data (Gill et al. 2008). The maximum number of interviews should be 30 (Thirty) in a qualitative research (Adler and Adler, 2012). As

interviews have been complemented by FGD, this thesis has conducted eight in-depth semi-structured interviews for data collection purpose which is enough for serving the research purpose.

Gill et al.'s (2008) study demonstrates three types of in-depth interviews for collecting primary data in qualitative research: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The structured interview is so much rigid and interview questions are prefixed. On the other hand, the unstructured interview has no prior organization; in some cases, this type of interview is very time-consuming. A semi-structured interview method uses open-ended questions which allows the participants to respond more flexibly and enables the researcher to modify the interview questions, as per situational demand (Gill et al. 2008). In order to ensure a smooth and flexible data collection process, in-depth semi-structured interviews have been adopted for this thesis.

The names of the interviewees have been kept anonymous as this confirms that interviews are free from social-desirability bias (Malhotra et al. 2012). The necessary details about the interviewees have been presented in the following table.

Table 3: Details about interviewees

Interviewees (expressed as 'I')	Interviewees' country of origin	Age	Gender	Location/ Remarks	Interview Date	Duration of Interview (in minutes)
I1	Bangladesh	29	Female	Over phone	3.04.19	29.22
I2	Pakistan	31	Female	University	04.04.19	22.37
I3	Finland	26	Female	University	04.04.19	27.13
I4	India	26	Female	Private apartment	20.04.19	18.43
I5	Bangladesh	30	Male	University	03.04.19	24.46
I6	India	27	Female	Over Phone	03.04.19	16.12
I7	Slovakia	24	Female	Private apartment	02.04.19	32.48
I8	Bangladesh	25	Female	University	02.04.19	33.02

Six interviews were taken face-to-face, and two interviews were taken over the phone. Before starting the interview session, the research purpose and clear knowledge about the research topic were presented to interviewees. When the interviewee thoroughly

understood the research topic and the purpose of the thesis, the main interview session started functioning. Thus, the researcher spent the first few minutes of the interviews to accelerate participants' motivation on the research topic and to explain the research topic to them as the topic might seem difficult to understand to some participants.

Gill et al. (2008) have suggested that before conducting the interview, the participants should be informed about every detail and should be assured about anonymity and confidentiality and these are also essential parts of an interview. The interviews were recorded in the form of audio recordings with the cell phone. Therefore, it is worth noting here, the informal parts (motivating the participant for the interview, the explanation of research questions, topic, and research purpose by the interviewer to the interviewee etc.) of the interviews were not audio-recorded. Thus, durations presented in the Table-3 represent the durations of question-answer sessions of the interviews.

While recording the interviews, it was ascertained that the recording process did not distract interviewees' attention. Considering the suggestions of Carson et al. (2001), it was ensured that interviewees were comfortable while giving the interviews. Once the interviews were successfully conducted and audio recorded, it was time to convert those audio recordings into written interview-transcripts. The written notes and audio-recordings were rigorously reviewed and thus, were translated into written transcripts. These written transcripts were used for further analysis and interpretation purpose.

5.3.2. Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method of primary data collection that informally interviews people in a group of 5-10 people (Neumann, 2003). Focus Group Discussion has been used as a secondary method of data collection in conjunction with interviews. As described earlier, both interviews and FGD have been used to add a two-fold perspective in the data collection process and to ensure that important information is not missed out. Furthermore, FGD is useful when the researcher needs a deeper understanding of the facts that he/she cannot access through

interviews (Socialcops, 2018). FGD can be a rich source of generating complex experiences including beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, ideas and so on (Powell and Single, 1996).

The number of FGD sessions may vary from one to ten sessions, depending on the complexity and nature of the research topic (Powell and Single, 1996). As FGD was used as a secondary technique in this thesis, only two productive FGD sessions composing of five participants (for each session) had been conducted for this study which generated sufficient information. The success or failure of an FGD session depends on the capability of the moderator. Therefore, an FGD session should be carefully planned, scheduled, documented and moderated through the moderator. Choosing the appropriate participants and formulating the guide questions are key risk areas for the moderator. Unclear, prejudiced, incoherent, and poorly-worded guide questions may restrain the FGD session to achieve desired outcomes (Socialcops, 2018). The sampling technique and question selection process are thoroughly discussed later. The details of the participants are presented in Table-4 and Table-5. The guide questions for FGD sessions are provided in the appendix section.

Table 4: Details about participants (FGD session- 01)

Participants (Expressed as 'P')	Age	Gender	Location and date	Duration (in minutes)
P1.1	28	Female	Private apartment. 26.03.19	42.32
P2.1	33	Female		
P3.1	27	Female		
P4.1	29	Female		
P5.1	25	Female		

Table 5: Details about participants (FGD session- 02)

Participants (Expressed as 'P')	Age	Gender	Location and date	Duration (in minutes)
P1.2	28	Female	Private apartment. 04.04.19	79.18
P2.2	27	Female		
P3.2	27	Female		
P4.2	26	Female		
P5.2	28	Female		

A focus group can be composed of five to ten participants in order to generate a candid, enthusiastic, and expansive conversation, although a focus group can function with as less as three members and maximum fourteen members (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). The guide questions should move from general to more specific questions in order to create a free-flowing discussion session (Gill et al. 2008). For exploring the facts, the moderator could ask three types of questions during an FGD session: probe questions, follow-up questions and exit questions (Socialcops, 2018).

Before starting the FGD sessions, participants' amenities, comfort, and easement were ensured. Participants were invited a few days ahead of the time, and the sessions were planned and scheduled by the moderator in accordance with the convenience of participants. Considering the suggestion of Gill et al. (2008) participants were informed about every detail before the actual FGD session and they were ensured about the anonymity of their identities. Kreuger (2015) suggested to take a pilot testing session before the actual conduction of the FGD session and to place dominant or talkative participants close to the moderator. Following the suggestions, the moderator conducted pilot-testing sessions before both of the FGD sessions. FGD sessions were audio recorded with participants' consent. Similar to interviews session, after successful conduction of the FGD session, the audio-recordings were converted into written transcripts which were further used for data analysis purpose.

5.4. Sample

This study applies a ‘purposive’ sampling technique. Purposive sampling varies a lot with random sampling technique. In case of random sampling, population/respondents for data collection are picked on a random basis, while purposive sampling selects the target population which is ‘information rich,’ in other words, which would provide the greatest acumen in the research purpose and questions (Devers and Frankel, 2000). Most of the participants in the interviews and FGDs are students (who are either working on a part-time basis or receiving grants from the government), females and their age group is 20-35. The age-group and gender of the participants have been chosen with the purpose of achieving the most peerless insights from the research questions. All the selected participants belong to generation Y or millennial group as generation Y involves people whose birth years fall between 1978 to early 2000 (Petroulas et al., 2010; Lyons, 2016). Thus, it is logical to implement a purposive sampling technique for this thesis.

According to a recent report by Garoia (2018) millennials (generation Y) more frequently buy apparels and fashion clothes than other generations, also they always search for cheap options for making their purchases. The research by Sullivan and Heitmeyer (2008) states that generation Y is concerned about society, environment, and sustainability but simultaneously, meeting their own choices and preferences are very important for them. The findings of Koca and Koc (2016) study revealed that male and female consumers have different perceptions and approaches in their cloth-purchasing behavior. Male consumers are more likely to be influenced by brand names, while female consumers are influenced by fashion and/or trends. Moreover, in comparison to men, women make frequent attempts to purchase fashion-clothes (Koca and Koc, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews take a lot of moderator’s efforts and time as the interviews are usually conducted manually, after that transcribed and codified by hand. But a moderator should not spend several weeks or months to gather, analyze, and interpret the data (Ramesden, 2006). Thus, the moderator should aim at reaching ‘point of saturation’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). A point of saturation refers to the point where

enough information has already been gathered and further interviews and FGDs would not reveal new data. In most of the cases, the point of saturation is usually reached after 7 to 10 interviews. This thesis has conducted eight semi-structured in-depth interviews as the point of saturation has been reached after eight interviews.

According to Powell and Single (1996), one to ten focus group sessions might be conducted as per the nature and requirements of the research topic. As this study has undertaken FGD as a secondary method, only two FGD sessions have been conducted. Each of the session consists of 05 (Five) participants excluding the moderator.

5.5. Data Analysis Process

As described earlier, after successful conduction of semi-structured interviews and FGDs, the audio recordings of the conducted sessions were transcribed for further interpretation. Thus, the researcher ended up with eight interview transcripts and two FGD transcripts for further analysis and interpretation of data.

For the analysis purpose, this thesis used the ‘codification technique’ to best possibly serve the research objectives. Few researchers have criticized the qualitative data analysis as a non-scientific technique, but ‘coding’ has proved it all wrong. Chowdhury’s (2015) research has argued that data analysis techniques including coding, sorting, and organizing of qualitative data actually enhance the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of qualitative research.

Coding is the process of categorizing the texts in order to identify thematic ideas and develop a conceptual framework consisting of those ideas (Gill, 2007). Coding refers to the process of identifying the most relevant passages from the main transcript, analyzing those passages in accordance with research purpose and finding out the relevancy and relations between them (Gill, 2007; Cessda Training, 2018). This thesis performed a concept-driven coding which indicates the process of identifying relevant

passages and looking for particular concepts or ideas in the text (Cessda Training, 2018).

At first, the moderator thoroughly read the transcripts to identify the relevant passages from the interview and FGD transcripts. The codes/quotes that were not relevant to the research topic were ignored while the pertinent and relevant quotations that were repeated several times by the participants were further used for analysis purpose. By this way, data were assembled, reduced and prepared to be used for further analysis and interpretation.

6. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter presents the findings from the empirical research. The researcher divided the questions of interviews and Focus group Discussions (FGD) into three different segments; attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption, reasons behind the gap, and ways to bridge the gap. Under each segment, several questions were asked to participants. Based on the answers derived from the participants, this chapter draws the findings of this thesis. The results of this chapter serve as the foundation for further analysis of this research. The terms ‘interviewer’ and ‘moderator’ have been addressed by the single term ‘interviewer’ for the ease of explanation. The term ‘participants’ addresses both the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and interview participants.

6.1. Attitude-Behavior Gap in Sustainable Fashion Consumption

After conducting the introductory conversation and ensuring the fact participants were comfortable enough to enter the main part of the discussion, the interviewer asked the participants to share their general knowledge about fast fashion and sustainable fashion. Most of the participants confidently shared what they knew about these two terms without any hesitation which proved the clarity of their foundation knowledge regarding fast fashion and sustainable fashion. They were quite familiar with the terms which were visible in their answers.

II “I think, sustainable fashion is a kind of fashion which is usually made out of handmade stuffs, or things that are locally produced, and can be used for a long period of time. More specifically, sustainable fashion takes a long time, and the processes imply more than just a few steps of producing the fashion, I guess.”

PI.1 “I think that sustainable fashion include the clothes which I can use for a long time, also considering my environment and my surrounding people. [...].”

I3 *“Fast fashion is something that goes hand-in-hand with the latest trends, which we get readily available at cheap prices, and which changes very fast with the changing trends.”*

The interviewer then followed up by asking the participants to describe the things that came in their minds when they heard the term ‘fast fashion industry’. Most of the participants talked about exciting offerings and discounts from fast fashion industry, their cheap prices, and attractive fashion clothes. The responses from the participants proved their general attraction-tendency towards the lucrative features of the fast fashion industry, but simultaneously their conscious line regarding the ethical issues of this industry was also visible.

P4.2 *“To me fast fashion is the only way to get cheap, fashionable, exclusive clothes. Should I say it honestly? Do not laugh at me, hehehe. Okay, whenever I hear the word ‘fast fashion’ I imagine of getting a lot of discounts, and buying a lot of clothes within my budgets. And, I would be looking so damn fashionable and stylish. How cool!”*

P3.1 *“[...] They always give us a logic to buy from them. I mean low prices, discounts, good looking clothes and some other facilities. As we are not very rich, we are just students, we generally feel greedy about it. But inside us, we also know, we are doing something wrong. All these things come to mind.”*

Gradually, the interviewer asked the participants’ general attitude towards the fast fashion industry. Most of the participants expressed their negative attitudes through their answers. However, I1 and P5.2 showed their positive attitudes towards fast fashion but they also criticized the ethical-issues of this industry at the later stages of the discussion.

P5.2 *“I take it more positively rather taking it negatively. Because this is a life saver for a poor girl like me [laughing]. The clothes are cheap and they look really good.”*

I1 “From my perspective I take it very positively. Because at this moment, I am not having an income level that is adequate for me. Based on my earning, I cannot afford anything other than fast fashion.”

P3.2 “I think, fast fashion is something that changes continuously, may be within a month, or within a week. These continuous changes increase the amount of clothes disposal and create a negative impact on our environment. Also, we get these clothes at a cheap price which indicates that production cost is also low. Lower production cost is responsible for lower living standards of the labor. I mean, ultimately we consumers are getting those clothes at low prices, which is making us happy. But..... The whole chain of fast fashion is not a thing to be happy with!”

I7 “Not very much positive actually! I think, they are only focusing on ‘profit’ pillar while ignoring the other two pillars of sustainability (people and planet). They are trying to attract us and may be, being succeed to some extent. But all that glitters is not gold!”

When the participants were asked if they purchased fast-fashion clothes and which were their favourite brands, all of them named H&M as their first brand preference. Their frequencies and amount spent for buying clothes differed from one another.

I4 “Not very specific, it happens at least two or three times a month! I spend nearly 100 euros and H&M is my favourite.”

P3.2 “No one can say they do not purchase fast fashion clothes. I cannot say like this either. H&M is my favourite brand.”

I7 “I don't buy clothes really often. I am buying clothes only when it's really necessary. When I buy, I buy mostly from H&M.”

I2 “I buy whenever I have some occasions to attend, or may be some holidays ahead. Sometimes, if I feel bored and my mood is not that much good, I go for shopping without a reason and buying clothes turns my mood on.”

The interviewer then took a shift by asking which factors were considered by the participants while buying clothes. Most of the participants did not mention the ‘sustainability issue’ as an important factor to consider. Only P1.2 claimed that along with considering other factors, she also looked for sustainable options. All the participants mentioned a few factors as common, e.g., price and design.

P4.2 “Price, quality, design, size, comfort. Emm.. I check the material also. Im allergic to synthetic clothes. I prefer wearing cottons.”

P1.2 “[...] Im similar like them. But I do search for sustainable options also. But as I said earlier, I do not get any within my budget.”

I1 “As Im a modest-fashion follower, the first think I look for is a long sleeve and moderate length. May be it sounds weird, but that is the thing I look for. And, I also look at the materials.”

I7 “[...] I also consider the size. I am not interested to waste my time returning the clothes to the shop or tailoring it according to my size. Rather, I become cautious about the size from the beginning so that I need not to tailor the dress or return it to the shop again.”

The interviewer probed the participants by asking whether they were knowledgeable about the controversies, scandals and unethical behavior of fast fashion industry or not. Few participants could not pinpoint the particular scandals, but all of them were well-known about the unsustainable issues of this industry. While describing the controversies, the participants devastatingly scrutinized all the unethical issues about fast fashion industry. The effervescence and hatred of participants’ responses clearly indicated their negative attitudes towards fast fashion industry. Participant P2.1

described how her country's sustainability issues are getting hampered by this fashion industry.

I3 *“Ya, I know. Especially the human rights issues. [...]”*

P1.2 *“While doing my school assignment, I learned many deep things about this industry. I mean, workers are being deprived of their proper wages and working condition. This industry is using child labor. Environmental pollution knows no bound nowadays because of the toxic production process of this industry. And don't you guys know about Rana Plaza Collapse in Bangladesh?”*

P2.1 *“You know, there is a big river in Dhaka city, Bangladesh named ‘Buriganga’ and the pathetic fact is that the total river is now completely black because of all these shits. [...] Developed countries outsource these harmful processes from my country. Well, don't think I'm blaming those countries, but why things are going like this, I don't understand! The labors of my country suffer a lot. Haven't you heard about ‘Rana Plaza Collapse’ or ‘Fire in Tajreen Garments’?[.....] Personally, I would not say, it was an accident. It was a killing, completely a killing!”*

The interviewer then placed a question which was expected to be answered with either ‘yes’ or ‘no’. The interviewer asked the participants whether or not they agreed to the statement that even after knowing the bad sides of the fast-fashion industry, participants were regular consumer of this industry. Every participant said ‘yes’ to the question which was a crystal-clear proof of their attitude-behavior gap. Simultaneously, the participants told that they felt a pang of guilt inside them whenever they were buying clothes from this industry. Participant I5 claimed that he did not purchase from fast fashion too often because he cared about sustainability.

I1 *“Ya, ya, I agree to this statement and I’m guilty of that. Because when I’m buying, I’m not showing responsible behavior as a consumer. But actually I do purchase and it’s an impulse, and I’m really guilty of that.”*

P2.1 *“I feel very guilty when I think about these things. I mean, I will spend 30-40 euros per month for my clothes, but those workers are not getting 30-40 euros as their monthly salary.”*

I5 *“Yes, I buy from fast fashion. But I do not buy too often. And it is not because, I am not concerned about fashion, it is because I care about my surrounding. However, I should not justify my side because I’m still buying from fast fashion.”*

I3 *“[...] I do not want to agree, but....”*

6.2. Reasons behind the Gap

Since all the participants were aware of unsustainable issues of the fast-fashion industry but still were buying clothes from this industry, their attitude-behavior gap was quite visible. It was logical to start the second segment of questioning. The interviewer approached to ask the participants the reasons behind their purchase from fast fashion, more specifically, to name and describe the factors that made them buy from this fast-fashion industry. The participants mentioned about price, availability, quality, time, discounts, and sales as important factors.

I3 *“In our hometown Oulu, we don’t have much clothing-stores other than fast fashion ones. I even don’t know where to get clothes which are free from ethical issues. [...]”*

I5 *“Price, quality and availability, of course. [...] I would also mention the discounts and sales.”*

I7 *“Honestly, I don't have so much time for shopping nowadays. Probably, I'm an exception as a woman and I don't like really to spend too much time in the shops. I go straight to H&M and buy whatever I need. It saves my time.”*

I6 *“They have nice clothes available in all size. Moreover, my wallet is not so much fat that I could afford something else. You know, a trench-coat from ‘Burberry’ is about 2000 euro, But I bought a similar-looking coat from H&M.”*

Few participants agreed that they bought out of irresistible impulse and because of their strong addiction towards buying clothes. Most of the participants tried to justify their reasons behind their purchases. Participant I4 thought that she could not change anything that is why she continued to buy fast-fashion clothes.

I1 *“[.....] It's an impulse buying.”*

P5. *“I just love new clothes! Even if my wardrobe is full of clothes, I do not get anything to wear when I need to go for a hangout, for an occasion or maybe for outing. I cannot restrain myself from buying new clothes. Maybe that is the main reason I buy from this industry without judging the ethical issues.”*

P2.2 *“[....] I don't feel bad when I am shopping there.”*

I4 *“[...] If these clothes are not available anymore I wouldn't buy anymore. If you think deep you will get my point, I'm nothing but a tiny dot in this whole chain.”*

The interviewer furthermore asked the participants' opinions on how being consumers they were contributing to make the gap bigger. Some participants argued that people have a usual moralistic response tendency, they like to say ethical words in front of other people but actually they do not behave ethically. This type of hide and seek behavior is termed as ‘social desirability bias’ in literature. Participants also discussed

the care-free attitudes of consumers. Some pinpointed the dam-care attitude and excessive consumption habits by wealthy consumers reflect their attitude-behavior discrepancy.

I5 “Sometimes, people show that, okay, they are super-concerned about all these sustainability issues, but whenever they are consuming some sorts of product, they are forgetting everything behind. Just look at me! A living example! Im a marketing student, I had 3-4 sustainability courses. But still I cannot do everything sustainable.”

P4.1 “We should not think like ‘why me?’ We cannot think- why I would cut my excessive consumption? Nothing is going to change if I do so! Sustainability is not a matter of consideration anymore, rather it has become our necessity and we have to take this into account. It’s not upon my consideration, I mean if I consider to destroy the world, am I allowed to do so? Similarly, nobody should be allowed to show care-free behavior. [...]”

II “[...] If you notice, you would get, most of the wealthy people buy a lot of clothes without thinking much about the consequences. They have money, they are happy with their lives, what is the point to think about others and the world!?”

Also, participants argued that as consumers, our moral-power is weakening day by day which in turn, driving the gap size to be bigger. Participant I7 pinpointed public cynicisms and incredulity about sustainability and sustainable fashion consumption as a major reason influencing the gap size to be broader. She argued that all the people in the society would not become ethical-minded altogether that is why unsustainable issues would never abolish from the surface of this earth.

I7 “[.....] Do you think, even if all the consumers become well-informed, they would change their behavior altogether at a time? I don’t think so because it’s not possible that all the people in the society would become ethically

responsible. Society-people would not place their belief in sustainability altogether.”

I8 “[...] *Running too much fast with fashion is making us blind. Yes, we are completely blind. We just see clothes, and fashion. We do not see how our environment is losing its balance, and how the workers are suffering in the fashion industry. I think, gradually we are losing our rational judgmental power and ethical considerations. Our morality is getting faded day by day.*”

The interviewer probed the participants to recapitulate their arguments and to discuss the societal or situational influences that increase the size of attitude-behavior gap. Almost all the participants mentioned social media influence as a major societal factor that influences the attitude-behavior gap. Also, participants claimed that they did not have adequate information to make proper buying decisions. Some participants also explained that the overflow of information usually made them confused to choose sustainable clothing options. Overflow/lack of information was a new factor identified by the participants. Few participants also talked about influence from friends, family and closed groups.

P2.1 *“Social media, of course! It seems, everyone wants to be a model or celebrity! If you already posted a picture wearing a particular cloth, O my god! You cannot wear the cloth anymore and cannot post pictures again wearing the same cloth! Everyone would think then, you do not have enough clothes...!”*

I4 “[...] *My sixth sense pushes me, I feel a kind of psychological pressure whenever I see my friends wearing beautiful clothes. I feel like, let’s buy this, your friends have already bought it!”*

P3.2 *“Consumers are not served with adequate information. They are ignorant and they do careless purchase because they don’t have enough knowledge. They are hungry about cloth consumption. But I think they would think twice if*

they get to know all the bad things that the fast fashion industry is doing to the environment and society.”

I5 “[...] Sometimes it is an overflow of information, I would say. In internet you would get to know everything, but you don’t know the proper ways to escape from this situation. And of course, you would get confused! The most confusing point is when you’ll see millions of praises about H&M in one website whilst at the same time, you’ll see billions of criticisms about the same brand in some other websites.”

The interviewer followed up by asking the participants to mention some factors that motivate them to buy more clothes. The participants again claimed that social media and peer group influences motivated them the most to buy fashion clothes. While, few participants also claimed that other mass media channels like newspaper, magazines, advertisements, television also boosted their motivation. In some cases, participants were motivated by celebrities and familiar figures (e.g., footballers, politicians etc.).

P4.2 “Motivation comes from different sources. Like, when I see my friends are wearing nice clothes and posting their pictures on Facebook, I feel an urge to buy clothes and look good too.”

I4 “Whenever I’m surfing the internet, reading the magazines or newspaper, I get advertisements regarding fashion clothes. Offers are going on! Sales! Discounts! Come soon and buy blab la bla. Even if I don’t have a need of buying, that time I feel like I need to buy it now.”

I2 “My motivation comes from the celebrities whom I like the most. [...]”

The interviewer further asked the participants whether or not egoism and social status influence attitude-behavior gap. The participants claimed to believe that their clothes represent their social-status. Participant P1.1 said that people wear fashionable clothes in occasions and social events because they believe their clothes bear their social status.

PI.1 *“Who does not feel like this? Whenever you are going to an occasion, let’s guess to a birthday party, why do you wear beautiful clothes then? Why do you style your hair, wear nice shoes? I would say, you do so because you believe inside you that your clothes represent your social status. You feel uncomfortable if you wear a less fashionable cloth in an occasion. It’s because of your ego.”*

I6 *“I feel so. And I think everyone feels so. Because nobody wear fashionable clothes when they are staying at home. They wear those when they are going outside in front of other people!”*

The interviewer then asked the participants whether or not they searched for sustainable clothing options while buying clothes and if not, what were the reasons behind doing so. The participants claimed that they used to search for sustainable options but these types of clothes were high priced, not available everywhere and were out of their buying power. Participant I1 said that she never purchased fast fashion back to her home country. But after shifting in Europe, she could not do so anymore because of the high price and unavailability of sustainable options.

I1 *“When I was in my home country, we never used to go for fast fashion because sustainable clothing-options were very much available there. We used to buy one cloth and used that cloth for years and years. [...] After coming here in Europe, all of my previous good habits of sustainable consumption went in the water.”*

PI.2 *“I always do search for sustainable options. Can you please suggest me some sustainable clothing brands here in Oulu? Of course, I have not the capability of paying three times higher than the fast fashion clothes! I know, you cannot suggest such a single option because I already have searched and already failed. There are few options, but buying those clothes are out of my buying-capability.”*

The interviewer asked the participants after knowing all the unethical issues whether or not they would boycott the fast fashion industry. The participants said ‘no’. None of the participants were interested to boycott the fast-fashion.

I8 “I would rather try to cut the frequency of my cloth-purchase.”

P1.2 “I surely would have boycotted if I had another good options. As I don’t have, I cannot boycott.”

I6 “Even if I boycott, others would not do so. [.....]”

The interviewer followed by asking if the participants got any physical harms from using the fast fashion clothes (e.g., rash, allergies etc.), whether or not they would boycott the fast fashion. If yes, how much extra they would pay to buy clothes and to avoid physical harms. The participants said that they would boycott this industry if they got any physical harms. They were also ready to pay more in that case. Even after knowing all the unethical issues (e.g., poor working condition, child labor, women abuse, low wages etc.) of fast fashion industry, the participants were not agreed to boycott this industry. But they agreed to boycott if they personally got any hampers or physical harms. Thus a new reason was identified from participants’ responses ‘Little/No concerns about other people’.

I8 “Yes, I will boycott then. Probably, that is the human nature. We cannot be concerned to the other people as much as we are concerned about ourselves! We are self-centred.”

P5 “I yes, I will boycott, even if I need to pay double, I would do so. I would cut my purchase to half, and would buy 5 clothes in the place of 10 to avoid this kind of physical harms.”

I2 “If it does any harm to my body, I would stop wearing those clothes.”

6.3. Possible Ways to Bridge the Gap

As the second segment of questioning was ended up, the interviewer gradually headed towards investigating the possible ways to bridge the gap. The interviewer started the third segment of questioning by asking the participants what could be done from companies' side to reduce the gap size. This part of the discussion took a long time as all the participants were responsive to this question. According to the participants, companies can make the situation far better if they want to do so. It seemed from the participants' responses that they considered fast-fashion industry as the responsible one behind all the unsustainable issues like child labor, low wages, environment pollution, human rights violation and so on. The participants opined that companies could improve their marketing strategies and could devote themselves more in sustainable marketing policies. Furthermore, the participants said that giving consumers proper access to enough information is in the hand of companies. They can also spread sustainability education among the people in the society through their official websites, advertisements, marketing campaigns, billboards, posters, and so on.

P1.2 “I would say, Aladdin’s magic lamp is in the hands of fashion companies. You better ask me what they cannot do? They can change their marketing strategies, they can invest more in their sustainable-marketing sector, they can spread sustainability knowledge among the consumers, they can devote more to perform corporate social responsibility. Ummm.. They can do anything and everything, but of course, if they actually want to do it.”

I8 “[.....] First and foremost, giving consumers access to adequate information. The labelling and packaging should be done accordingly.”

P2.1 “All we expect from them is transparency! Transparency in production, distribution, I mean, in whole manufacturing and supply chain system. Clear information on the tags. That’s it.”

I5 “As a marketing student, it is kind of my duty to mention about sustainable marketing what companies can obviously do. [...] Although it becomes a little

bit messy as the matter is between different countries but I believe companies can take care of these issues if they have a strong will.”

The participants also argued that fast fashion companies are not implementing the labor laws properly. Their code of conducts are pretty much transparent but their actual operations say something else. Child labor, low wages, unsafe working conditions, forced labors, and violation of human rights all these matters should be stopped immediately and companies can do so if they take proper actions. The participants also opined that companies should incorporate the 3BL concept in their operations as much as possible. Moreover, the carbon footprints by the fashion industry are increasing drastically. The participants also said that companies should take actions regarding waste management and reducing the emission of greenhouse gasses. As fast fashion companies outsource their operations in different countries, few participants opined that it might seem hard to maintain everything when it involves multiple nationalities. But consumers also believed that a strong-will from companies’ side can neutralize the exacerbation of unsustainable issues of fast-fashion industry.

I3 *“Companies should start by considering the labor, I mean labor should be paid and should get a safe environment to work. They have the rights to get proper health care and all other facilities. They have a right to be happy in their workplace. Also, no child labor! Labor laws must be strictly followed.”*

P5.2 *“In one sentence, what companies are saying in their code of conducts, must be reflected through their practical operations. I mean, their code of conduct should reflect Triple Bottom Line (3BL) concept of sustainability.”*

I8 *“[.....] They are pretending like it’s not possible to take care of all the things when the operations involve multiple nationalities. But what about the amount of shits they are releasing to environment? They obviously can improve the waste management system if they want. They also can reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses through using carbon-filters or using digital technologies, whatsoever, I don’t know much about technical side.”*

The interviewer asked what the consumers could do to reduce the attitude-behavior gap. The participants seemed a bit hesitated and unready to answer this question as they previously agreed about their irresistible desire for fast-fashion clothes. Some participants agreed on the fact that they were feeling a pang of guilt inside them while responding to this question. However, participant P2.2 argued that this guilt is a good sign of positive change. Gradually, the participants were found comfortable and they started to provide honest responses about themselves and about the possible ways to bridge the gap from the consumers' side. The participants argued that they already realized their attitude-behavior gap and they started to cut their purchases of fashion-clothes. They suggested to go slow with fashion through cutting excessive cloth-purchases. Also, they felt the necessity of practicing responsible behavior by searching for information regarding sustainability.

***I8** “Self-evaluation is always a tough job, you know. [...] Im trying from my side. Even though I am still buying, but I already cut my purchases and I try to shop from local brands. I also try to buy from second hand shop.”*

***II** “You know, we have a bad habit, if we see a beautiful piece of cloth, we die to have it but we barely try to know the past history of the cloth-piece. As a responsible citizen, we should look for good options, we should use our rational thinking power to make better choices.”*

***P2.2** “I think, it is changing to a better way. Almost everyone knows the unethical issues of this industry. Yes, we are still buying, but at the same time we are feeling guilt inside us for not boycotting unethical industries. This guilt is a good sign of change! We need to promote this guilt inside everyone to the highest extent possible.”*

***P1.1** “I think, we do not try to realize the value of others' lives. [...] We actually should try to go a bit more slowly with fashion. Yea. I mean, not too much slow like a tortoise, hehehe. But not that fast also.”*

Moreover, the participants claimed that the attitude-behavior gap from the consumers' side is reducing day by day. The reduced gap is clearly reflected through the conscious operations by fast-fashion industry. The fashion companies' conscious line regarding sustainability is being visible nowadays, and it has made possible only because of the rising public concerns. The respondents also agreed that the quality and visual aesthetics of the clothes attract them first. Consumers have a general tendency to get attracted by visual qualities (packaging, design, color, price, size etc.) rather than thinking too far. They can realize the fact that the world's overall sustainability is getting triggered by the fast-fashion industry in many ways. But while buying clothes, they are usually not very calculative about future consequences. That is why the participants expressed their expectation of getting sustainable fashion-clothes with desirable quality, design, packaging, and of course, within their buying power.

I3 “If you look at those fast fashion brands, they have now set a conscious line. That means they are acknowledging some good things themselves. What we can do as consumers, make them more acknowledged, push them more for providing sustainable clothing options.”

P2.1 “[...] We become easily attracted by the styles, price, packaging, and price of the fashion clothes. If you provide us ethical fashion clothes with maximum visual qualities, styles and within justified price range, we wouldn't go for unsustainable options. If we get better options but with fashion and styles, the gap would be reduced, I believe”

The participants also claimed that they are eager to extend their willingness to spend more in buying sustainable clothes if they get any options within their buying capability. Few respondents discussed their increased recycling and upcycling practices and they suggested the way for every consumer of fashion-clothes. The respondents discussed how influential marketing can play an important role to reduce the gap size. None of the participants except I4 tried to ignore their responsibilities at this point of questioning. Only respondent I4 claimed that consumers cannot do much things to reduce the gap, companies themselves and the government can turn the

situation, if they want. She also argued that charity and donating clothes to the needy people or second-hand shops would, at least, reduce the amount of clothes-disposal.

I7 “[...] Journalists can turn this issue into the most readable news, online bloggers can also pull the general consumers, social media influencers and celebrities can influence our dressing habits positively.”

I4 “As a consumer, I don't have much to do. Companies are producing clothes in an unsustainable way, countries are importing those clothes and I'm simply buying these. [...] What I do personally, I donate my clothes to the needy people of my country. I know it's not a complete solution, but.”

I8 “[.....] Seriously, if you buy a t-shirt for let's say two euros. What could be the sustainability behind it? Two euros and sustainability? A joke actually! If you actually support to correct all these things, you have to be willing to pay a little bit more.”

I1 “I can remember, I had a jean's pant and that was not fitting my size. What I did I made a jumpsuit from that pant following the YouTube tutorials and it was really amazing to look at! When I was done using the jumpsuit I converted it into a stylish ladies-bag, a beautiful-trendy-stylish jean's bag. So we can keep trying.”

The participants were further asked to point-out dos and don'ts to reduce the attitude-behavior gap from policymakers' side. The respondents gave their fluent responses for this part of questioning too. Respondent I3 illustrated that European Union should be more caution in this concern. When the fast-fashion clothes are being imported to European Countries, the sustainability issues should be deeply monitored. Tariffs and incentives are also powerful devices used by the government to restrict/promote the consumption of any particular type of product. Moreover, the respondents continued to expound their interesting arguments and they opined that governments can play

significant role by imposing regulatory laws restricting the use of toxic chemicals and hazardous production.

I3 *“I think, European Union can do something here. Before we import the clothes to EU and to our home country Finland, or when we are outsourcing the operations to other countries, it should be made sure that these clothes are produced in a sustainable way, at least in some stages. [...]”*

P1.2 *“[...] Using incentives either in the form of rewards or punishment to promote good standards and to restrict the unsustainable actions. I mean, governments can use tariffs for restricting the consumption of international products that do not adhere to certain sustainability standards.”*

I8 *“I do not understand, how the companies are freely violating the labor laws? Why the governmental body is not paying attention? If the central government of every country imposes regulatory laws restricting hazardous production and use of toxic chemicals, the world would obviously be better.”*

The participants illustrated that sustainability-education should be included in the course curriculum in primary, secondary and university level, only then people would get to know profoundly about sustainability and sustainable fashion. Thus, public awareness would reach the peak-point. Furthermore, the respondents felt that unethical actions e.g., green-washing should be penalized. Only then, no companies would dare to cheat the general and ethical-minded consumers. Ensuring that labors are getting proper treatments and the strict maintenance of labor laws should also be the matter of concerns for the government.

P3.1 *“I think, sustainable fashion should be included in our course-curriculum. I mean, in primary, secondary and university level education, if we get a chance to acquire sustainability education, it would be really great to boost the awareness.”*

II “Thing like green-washing should be penalized. Another point is, labor laws should be implemented words by words.”

Before ending the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions, the interviewer loudly read some statements regarding the possible ways to bridge the attitude-behavior discrepancy. In response to every statement, the participants expressed their opinions through showing their thumbs in particular ways pre-explained by the interviewer. Their responses were recorded through a 5 scale rating technique, ranging from Agree to Strongly Disagree. Table-6 shows the participants’ responses.

Table 6: Responses from rating-task (in FGD sessions)

Statements	Responses from FGD 1	Responses from FGD 2
Consumers should be provided with adequate information regarding sustainable fashion.	Agree (2), Strongly Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (5)
Sustainable marketing techniques can promote sustainable fashion consumption.	Agree (1), Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (1), Strongly Agree (4)
Giving used clothes away to the poor people is a temporary solution to the problem.	Neutral (2), Agree (2), Strongly Agree (1).	Disagree (2), Neutral (3).
Consumer should practice responsible social behavior	Neutral (2), Agree (3).	Neutral (3), Agree (2)
Laws, rules, regulations and frameworks for guiding the production and supply chains of fast-fashion industry are not strictly followed.	Strongly Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (5)
Consumers should take a shift towards slow-fashion.	Disagree (2), Neutral (2), Agree (1)	Disagree (2), Neutral (3).
Joint effort by governments, companies, retailers, and consumers is a must to reduce the gap.	Agree (2), Strongly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Consumers need to cut cloth-purchases.	Neutral (2), Agree (3).	Disagree (2), Neutral (2), Agree (1)

Production and distribution transparency by fast-fashion companies would reduce the carbon footprints of the fast-fashion industry.	Agree (2), Strongly Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (5).
Sustainability reporting should be mandatory for fast-fashion companies.	Strongly Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (5)

When the statements were pointing out consumers' do's and don'ts to reduce the attitude-behavior gap, the participants did not agree much with those statements e.g., none of the participants strongly agreed with the statements of adopting slow fashion and cutting cloth-purchases by the consumers. Also, none of the participants strongly agreed to the fact that consumers should practice responsible social behavior. But when the statements represented the responsibilities and duties from companies' and policymakers' sides, the participants were mostly agreed with those sentences. This is a clear indication of the fact that the participants do not fully recognize consumers' role to reduce the gap. They believe that rather than consumers, government and fast-fashion companies have much role to play here to reduce the gap. Thus, sustainability education and public awareness have become an exigent necessity to reduce consumers' skepticisms and incredulity. Consumers lack proper knowledge and that is why they do not know how they can play a major role to reduce the attitude-behavior gap. If they are properly educated, this kind of skepticisms and confusions would be reduced.

At the end of the interviews and FGD sessions, the interviewer invited the participants' opinions and asked them if they had something to add in the end. Most of the participants opined that the gap size cannot be minimized by any single entity. Companies, consumers and policymakers- all of these entities are responsible behind the gap, thus the gap can be bridge through joint-efforts and a shared sense of responsibility by companies, government and consumers.

PI.2 *“No single entity can purify the functioning of a whole chain, as we discussed earlier! The whole chain can be positively changed through the joint collaboration and efforts by the all the key players of the chain.”*

II “Let me know the outcomes of your research. Especially, I will be waiting to know how I can reduce my attitude-behavior inconsistency!”

Throughout the discussion sessions, some participants argued that the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption would never be eliminated completely. Participants claimed that it would not be possible to slow down the fashion cycle. People will never agree to boycott the fast-fashion industry and boycotting an industry is not ethical also. Fast fashion industry contributes to a significant portion of the world economy. This industry has generated employment for a significant portion of the world population. Participant I8 argued that boycotting fast-fashion industry would be synonymous as ignoring industrialization, modernization, and urbanization.

Participant I4 mentioned one interesting point. She argued that nothing is completely sustainable in this world; if we want to make the world completely sustainable we have to stop breathing, as we are realizing carbon-dioxide (a greenhouse gas) when we breathe out. At the same time, participants also pinpointed the necessity of balancing out the unsustainable issues regarding fast-fashion industry. They said that fast-fashion industry should not be boycotted; this fact not necessarily means that this industry would be free from the responsibility of maintaining sustainability standards. According to the participants, policy makers and consumers have the responsibilities to make the fast-fashion brands bound to reduce their waste generation, carbon footprints, and other unsustainable issues in the workplace. In summary, closing the attitude-behavior gap in ethical fashion consumption is a continuous and never-ending process. Continuous efforts and a shared sense of responsibility by consumers, companies, and policymakers are needed to bridge the gap.

I8 “I think, it wouldn’t be logical to say we should boycott fast-fashion industry. I mean, seriously! Would you like to go back to the ancient time when there were no industrial improvements, no digitalization, and no urbanization?”

I4 “Don’t take me wrong. I support sustainability, but not every bit of it. I mean, if you say, breathing process is unsustainable as it pollutes environment, would anyone stop breathing then? All these industries exist for our own well-being, they are a part of us. We cannot ignore them. But, yea, we should work together for the betterment. No doubt for that.”

P1.2 “It is a life time process actually and there is no perfect solution for it. But we should not sit unproductively thinking that this problem has no absolute solution! I will repeat, joint collaboration is needed. And we should keep the betterment-process continuing forever and ever!”

7. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the findings from primary research would be connected to the theoretical discussion, and the theoretical synthesizing model (the amended conceptual framework of the thesis) presented in the literature review section of this thesis. The structure of this chapter and all the subheadings are identical to the findings chapter of this thesis.

7.1. Attitude-Behavior Gap in Sustainable Fashion Consumption

The participants' responses in the first segment of the questioning session proved that they are well-known with the terms sustainable fashion and fast fashion. They opined that they are so much attached to the fast fashion and they consider fast fashion as a means of achieving fashionable, and cheap clothes. At the same time, they showed their negative attitudes towards the fast-fashion industry and criticized the industry while discussing controversies and unethical issues about this industry. The participants also agreed that they consume fast-fashion clothes, but they do not like the fast-fashion industry (Park and Lin, 2018). They showed their concerns for the environment, but they also agreed that their concerns did not translate into actual action due to several reasons and circumstances (Garodia, 2018; Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Koca and Koc, 2016).

Most of the participants agreed that they buy fashion clothes even if they do not need those and they buy out of their irresistible impulses and for seeking pleasure (Godazgar, 2007). When the participants' were asked to mention dominant considerations while buying fashion-clothes, only one participant mentioned 'sustainability of the clothes' as an essential factor to be considered while buying clothes which was a visible proof of their attitude-behavior inconsistency (Apell Karlsson et al., 2015).

7.2. Reasons for the Gap

In accordance with previous researchers, the consumers would buy sustainable-clothes if they find these within their buying capability and if they get these clothes at similar prices like fast-fashion clothes (Jacobs et al., 2018; Connel, 2010; Sisco and Morris, 2012). When the participants were asked to discuss the factors that make them purchase from the fast-fashion industry, they claimed that sustainable clothing options are not available conveniently. Sisco and Morris (2012) termed this issue as ‘ability to find sustainable options’ while Connel (2010) pinpointed this as ‘consumers’ ability to find sustainably produced items.’

The participants also argued that they are very much concerned about their fashions, and they hate to wear the same clothes again and again. Researchers also identified ‘fashion consciousness and lifestyle’ as a dominant reason for the discrepancy between attitude and behavior (Jacobs et al., 2018; Sisco and Morris, 2012; Polianskaia, 2018; Schuuning, 2018). Some participants also said that they perceive the fast-fashion brands as useful because of several attractive offerings, discounts and sales, designs and quality of the clothes; which was identified as ‘perceived usefulness’ by Polianskaia’s (2018), Lam (2017), and Joshi and Rahman (2015). The participants also pinpointed that the labels and tags of the fashion-clothes do not reveal much information about sustainability which makes them confused to take proper buying decision (Billenson and Klasander, 2015; Quoquab and Mohammad, 2016; Sisco and Morris, 2012).

The respondents were asked to discuss consumers’ conscious and unconscious roles behind broadening the attitude-behavior gap size. They illustrated their moralistic response tendency which is presented as ‘social-desirability bias’ in the researches by Carrington et al. (2016) and Cronin (2017). Moreover, the participants argued that people usually do not use their moral judgmental power while purchasing clothes and they are usually skeptic about sustainable consumption and they do not feel the necessity of changing their actions (Quoquab and Mohammad, 2016).

When the respondents were probed to mention societal or situational influences behind the gap, they mentioned about strong influence by social media and mass media like television advertisements, newspapers, magazines, and so on (Pink, 2009; Quoquab and Mohammad, 2016; Tan, 2017). When they were asked which things motivate them to buy clothes, they pinpointed the influence from friends, family members, celebrities, and the closed group which is termed as ‘peer influence’ in some researches (Cronin 2017; Schuuning, 2018). As described by Sumner (2017), consumers make excessive purchases to meet their egoistic demands and they believe that their clothes represent their social-statuses, the participants also agreed to the fact. The participants also claimed that they get manipulated by the enchanting offerings from fast-fashion brands (Anguelov, 2015).

According to previous studies, consumers’ trust and beliefs also contribute to the attitude-behavior gap (Polianskaia, 2015; Joshi and Rahman, 2015). Lam (2017) and Terlau (2015) illustrate that consumers’ socioeconomic characteristics have a bearing to the gap size. Although these two reasons (trust and beliefs, and socioeconomic characteristics) were presented in the theoretical discussion section of the thesis, the participants’ discussion did not cover these two reasons properly. None of the participants discussed, whether or not, their socioeconomic characteristics, and their trust and beliefs influence the gap size. However, consumers also argued that the overflow of information and excessive information regarding the fashion-brands often make them confused to take a decision regarding purchasing. This ‘overflow of information’ was not discussed in the literature review. But, participants’ discussion logically covered this issue.

7.3. Possible Ways to Bridge the Gap

Stern’s (2000) study suggested two strategies to reduce the gap; providing adequate information and providing incentives. These two strategies were covered by the participants’ discussion. While discussing fashion companies’ roles to bridge the gap, they opined that the labels and tags of the fast-fashion clothes are unclear. Fashion companies should disclose adequate information to consumers. The participants’

claimed that fashion companies should tailor their marketing activities sustainably (Terlau and Hirsch, 2015; Hansen et al., 2012), should promote sustainability awareness through marketing activities, campaigns, advertisements (Polianskaia, 2018) and should incorporate Triple Bottom Line (3BL) concept of sustainability into companies' operations (Hansen et al., 2012; Terlau and Hirsch, 2015).

Lewittes (2019) argues that fashion-brands can help to create sustainable retail economy through ensuring radical transparency of production and distribution chain, through proper waste management and reduced carbon footprints. The participants also suggested the same; they claimed that transparency in production and supply chain would cut the negative environmental externalities of the fast-fashion industry. Moreover, previous researches have revealed that sustainable clothes need to be fashionable, good looking, stylish, and logically priced to capture consumers' buying-attention (Roberts and Bacons, 1997; Speer, 1997). The participants also argued that while buying clothes, they are not very much concerned with sustainability, rather they get attracted by the visual attributes of the clothes. Therefore, the visual attributes of sustainable products should be tailored and developed to capture the consumers (Chang and Wong, 2012; Beard, 2008).

While discussing consumers' role, some participants claimed that consumers are gradually becoming aware and pushing the fashion-industry for sustainable clothing options (Hansen et al., 2012; Speranskaya and Caterbow, 2018). They also argued that companies are nowadays paying attention in tailoring the sustainability standards because of the growing public concerns. However, some respondents also said that consumers should do a small research before every purchase for adequate information, should use their rational judgmental power and ethical filters while buying clothes; which has been identified as 'responsible social behavior' in some literature (Hansen et al., 2012; Speranskaya and Caterbow, 2018). Johansson (2010), and Speranskaya and Caterbow (2018) suggested the consumers to 'buy less and buy from second-hand.' The participants also agreed that cutting down excessive purchases and buying from second-hand stores can be helpful. Furthermore, some participants illustrated their recycling, reusing and up-cycling habits; and suggested that as a dominant-way to reduce the attitude-behavior inconsistency (Park and Lin, 2018; Hansen et al., 2012).

In every country, there are proper laws and framework guiding the operations of fashion-industry, but these are not implemented properly. The participants pinpointed policymakers' failure in this regard. They opined that policymakers should ensure that labor laws and other laws guiding the fast-fashion industry are being followed properly. Their reasoning supports the reasoning by Terlau and Hirsch (2015) and Hansen et al., (2012). Moreover, the participants suggested that sustainability knowledge should be incorporated into the course curriculum; which matches the proposition of Hansen et al. (2012).

The participants' claimed that the situation cannot be improved through the efforts of a single entity. Rather, all the key players in the whole chain (e.g., consumers, retailers, companies, and policymakers) should step forward; which is termed as 'shared sense of responsibility' by Hansen et al. (2012), Terlau and Hirsch (2015), and Speranskaya and Caterbow (2018). According to the participants, the tasks of slowing down the fashion-cycle and influencing the consumers towards sustainable fashion through creating stimuli can also be done by putting efforts jointly by the fashion brands, consumers and policymakers (Johansson, 2010; Billeson and Klasander, 2015). It is worth noting here, the point of influential marketing was not identified in the literature review section of the thesis but was covered in the participants' discussion session. Another new way identified by the participants is 'donating clothes.'

7.4. The Amended Model

The following model extends and enhances the conceptual framework presented previously by incorporating all the possible constructs and sub-components. The model builds on the theoretical discussion of this thesis and has been further developed based on the participants' responses in interviews and FGD sessions. The model represents reasoning as to what causes the discrepancy between attitude and behavior in sustainable fashion consumption and how the gap can be bridged. The model identifies the reasons for the gap and suggests possible ways to minimize the gap. Figure-4 represents the complete research model including all constructs and sub-headings.

As discussed earlier, the model considers both the theoretical discussion and participants' responses in interviews and FGDs. The plus marked (+) factors refer to those factors that were not properly discussed in the literature review section but had been thoroughly covered in the participants' discussion. Thus, the green-marked factors were the new reasonings generated by the participants. However, the minus marked (-) phrases indicate the factors that were illustrated in the literature review, but none of the participants discussed regarding those factors. Thus, the red-marked factors were not covered by participants' discussion sessions. The remaining unmarked factors were found common both in literature review and in participants' discussion sessions.

The reasons behind the gap have been categorized into three segments; individual, social and situational. The possible ways to neutralize the gap size have been categorized into four aspects; companies' side, consumers' side, policymakers' side, and joint aspects. It is worth noting here, a consumer may not find all the factors as true. The factors may vary from person to person. Thus, the reasons behind the gap and possible ways to reduce the gap size may differ from one consumer to another.

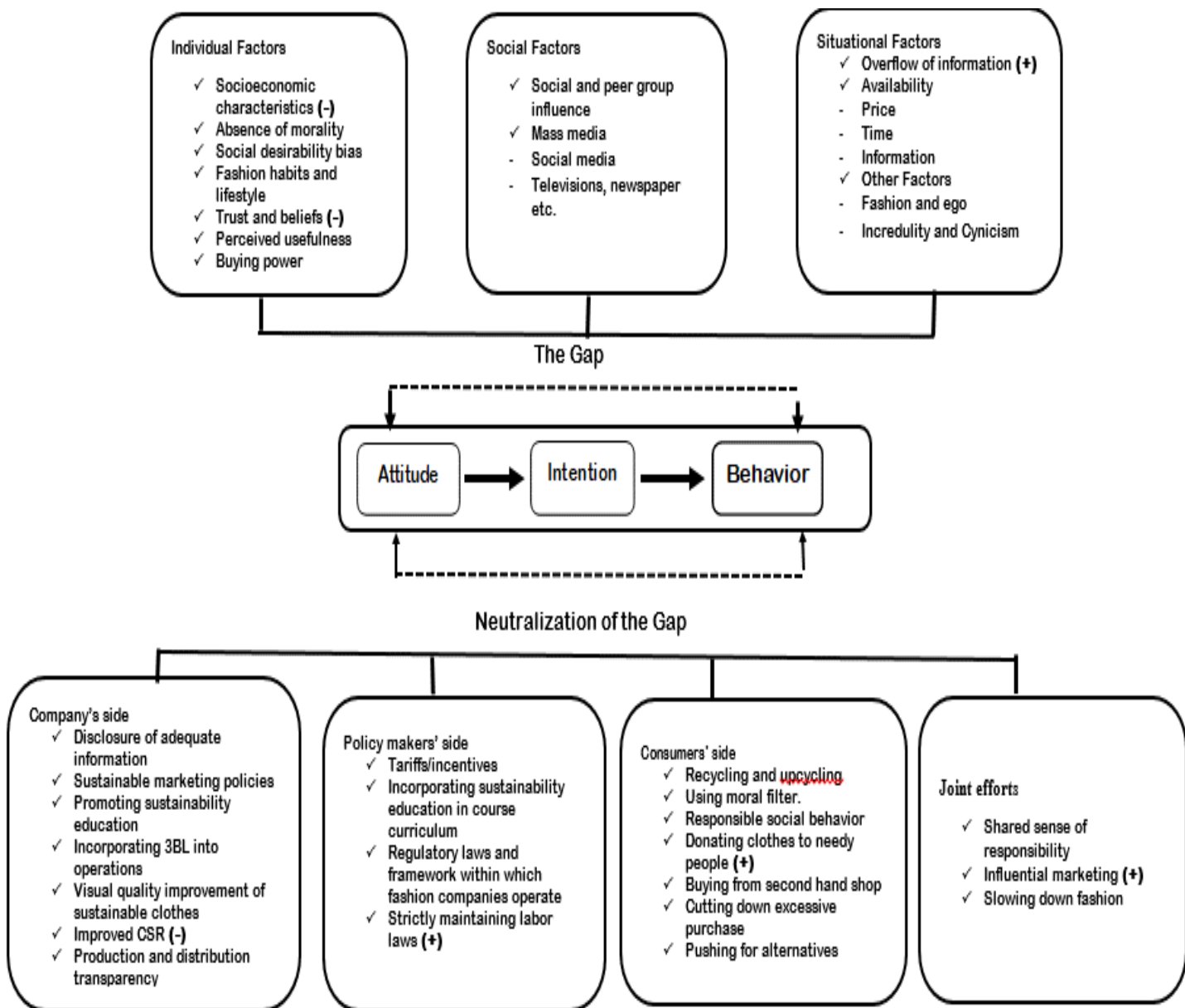


Figure 4: The complete research model including all constructs and sub-headings.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the summarized answers of the two research questions based on the findings of the study. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss managerial implications and theoretical contributions of the thesis. Readers can also know about the limitations and evaluation of the research. Finally, suggestions for the future research avenues are presented.

8.1. Summary of Results

8.1.1. RQ-1: What are the reasons behind the gap?

Understanding consumer behavior and philosophy is a complex phenomenon. Why consumers resemble attitude-behavior inconsistency in sustainable fashion consumption is not an easy matter to explore. Hence, this complex question requires ongoing research attention and continuous efforts from the researchers' side. Different individual, social and situational factors may influence the size of the attitude-behavior gap. However, the reasons behind the gap's existence may vary from consumer to consumer. The dominant reasons that were identified in the literature and participants' discussion include consumers' buying power, fashion habits, absence of a moral filter, perceived usefulness, moralistic response tendency, price, information, time, consumers' egoism and cynicism, media influence and peer group influence.

8.1.2. RQ-2: How could this gap be neutralized?

Analyzing the participants' responses and reviewing the prior literature, it seems that nothing could bring the gap size to zero. Something that seems sustainable from one viewpoint might look unsustainable from another perspective. Hence, there are no absolute and sustainable solutions to reduce the gap size. The attitude-behavior gap cannot be completely eliminated but can be brought to a balanced level through proper actions taken by consumers, companies, and policymakers. The possible actions from the fashion-companies' side include radical transparency, disclosure of adequate information, sustainable marketing policies, improved CSR, 3BL as a driving philosophy and creating stimuli to promote sustainable fashion consumption. Actions

that should be taken from policymakers' side include tariffs and incentives, strict maintenance of labor laws and other regulatory laws, and promoting sustainability education. The effective steps from consumers' side include pushing for sustainable options, recycling and upcycling, using ethical judgmental power, buying less and buying from second-hand shops, donating clothes and practicing responsible social behavior. The tasks of slowing down fashion and influencing consumers towards sustainable fashion consumption have to be performed through joint efforts and collaboration by all the key players.

8.2. Limitations

Looking at the research topic, it is quite broad and aims to cover two-fold objectives; the reasons for the gap and possible ways to bridge the gap. As the research topic is broad and extensive, the findings and analyzes do not cover each identified factor deeply and thoroughly which is obviously a limitation of the study. Considering the research model, it determines so many reasons for the gap and possible ways to reduce the gap; still, there is a possibility that there may exist additional factors. Furthermore, the results of this research are drawn based on the target population and cannot be generalized to other consumers because consumer behavior and psychology vary a lot person to person.

Focusing on discussion sessions, most of the participants were students of Oulu Business School, and they were well-known to each other which might have increased the possibility of 'social desirability bias' to be taken place during discussion sessions. Moreover, all the participants' are highly educated. The education level of the participants' may generate biased outcomes since Davis (2013) argues that education level influences consumers' sustainable consumption pattern. As the topic was not well-known to many of the participants, the interviewer had to give adequate explanations and examples time to time which may increase the risk of biased results. There is a possibility that the explanations given by the interviewer may affect the participants' responses.

The participants are not experts, and they are not much knowledgeable about many technical issues, technological terms, bureaucratic procedures, structures, laws, and operating procedures of fashion companies and policymakers. Hence, they could not generate profound, and knowledge-based discussions.

8.3. Managerial Implications

As the research model of this thesis identifies different reasons for the gap and suggests possible solutions to reduce the gap size, the managers of fast-fashion brands may use this model in tailoring their marketing activities and business operations in a sustainable way. Moreover, through digging deep into this model, the managers of fast-fashion brands would understand the growing public concerns against unethical issues of fast-fashion industry and would understand what factors would sustain the consumers' consumption of fast-fashion clothes. A thorough understanding of the facts would enable the managers to strengthen the sustainability standards of the fast-fashion industry in an improved way. Not only managers but also policymakers and consumers can use this model to understand why the attitude-behavior gap takes place and how this gap could be minimized. The joint understanding, in turn, would raise awareness and would encourage the joint efforts to reduce the gap size.

Adequate efforts from fast-fashion managers, consumers, and policy makers are needed to balance out the unsustainable issues regarding fast-fashion industry. The research model of this thesis would help the consumers to strengthen their ethical foundation while they are purchasing fashion-clothes. The study may help the consumers to realize their attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption and may help them to practice responsible behavior while making purchase-decision. The consumers would learn to push the fast-fashion managers for sustainable clothing options. This 'pushing effect' created by consumers, in turn, will drive the fast-fashion managers to strengthen their conscious lines regarding the maintenance of sustainability standards. Policy makers may consider to incorporate the sustainability education in the course curriculum at secondary, higher secondary, and university levels. In summary, this study would help both the fast-fashion managers and

consumers in understanding and reducing attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption.

8.4. Theoretical Contribution

This research provides the readers with a clear understanding of why attitude-behavior gap takes place and how this gap could be minimized. This thesis has contributed to the prior research from several perspectives. The findings of the study reveal that several individual, social, and situational factors contribute to the gap size. The finding supports Terlau and Hirsch's (2015) research. The conceptual model of this thesis also contributed to the Terlau and Hirsch's (2015) 'decision-making process of sustainable consumption' through incorporating the 'neutralization of gap.'

This thesis reveals that Generation Y has improved knowledge base and higher concerns regarding sustainability and sustainable consumption; simultaneously, they are unready to sacrifice their concerns for fashionable-clothes. This finding is consistent with prior researches (Garoia, 2008; Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008).

Another finding illustrates that the gap cannot be eliminated entirely but can be neutralized through putting efforts from four aspects companies' side, consumers' side, policymakers' side, and shared responsibility. This result could be served as a basis for further researches with different sample-sets and in the different academic-research environment.

8.5. Evaluation of the Study

Generalizability indicates if the outcomes of a research can be generalized based on the target sample to the other people in society (Smith, 2018). Qualitative research usually aims to provide in-depth explanation of the facts rather than generalizing the findings (Carminati, 2018). The results of this study have been drawn based on the target population and the outcomes of this thesis are not generalizable. This thesis

adopts a qualitative method, the sample size is too small, and the target-sample consists of people from multiple nationalities; all these facts restrict this thesis to generalize the results to the rest of the population. Moreover, the results were drawn based on the fast-fashion industry. The outcomes cannot be generalized when facing other industries or other facets of fashion industry e.g. cosmetics, footwear, bag, fragrance, etc.

The reliability of a research indicates the fact that the research would generate consistent outcomes each time if conducted again by other researchers (Golafshani, 2003). In a straight forward way, reliability indicates the repeatability of a research. The target population of this thesis consists of students from multiple nationalities, they are mostly female students, and all of them are highly educated. If the research would be conducted with different sample sets, it might come up with different outcomes. For instance, if the same research is performed with male students, the outcomes would be completely different. Similarly, the same results would not be achieved if the target population is selected from a particular country. Thus, the reliability of this research is questionable.

Validity indicates the accuracy of research and realities of participants' responses in a social context (Creswell and Miller, 2000). According to Golafshani (2003), validity evaluates if the results are accurate and if the research measures the exact thing what it intended to measure. This thesis adopts valid methods for collecting, analyzing and interpreting data in a real-life setting. The readers can notice a bridge between literature reviews, conceptual framework, analyses, and results of the study. The outcomes of the thesis have been justified by literature review and participants' real-responses which also indicates that the thesis have justified the research-aim. Thus, it can be said that the research is valid.

8.6. Future Research Suggestions

As illustrated earlier, the prior researches put much focus on investigating whether or not a gap exists between attitude and behavior in sustainable fashion consumption; the further research approaches should search for possible ways to bridge the gap. This thesis identifies multiple reasons for the gap and suggests several ways to bridge the gap. Future researches should devote their research-attention in studying the effects of every factor individually. This study has categorized ‘reasons for the gap’ into three aspects and ‘possible ways to bridge the gap’ into four aspects. Further research approach should be made considering every single aspect, for instance investigating the possible ways from the company’s, consumers’ and policymakers’ sides individually.

To generalize the finding of this thesis, future research attempts could be made to quantify each factor identified in the research model of this thesis. Another interesting approach would be to test the model developed in this thesis with different target population and in different research-setting. This study takes into account consumers’ perspective, and the target population comprises of consumers of fast-fashion clothes. A research-door is still open for the future researchers to consider fast-fashion companies’ perspective or policymakers’ perspective individually and to select the target population from the fashion industry’s professionals or the professionals of the governmental body.

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APPENDICES

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption:

Question-1: How many of you are familiar with the terms sustainable fashion and fast fashion? You can just raise your hands if you are familiar, or keep your hands down if you do not know anything about these two terms.

Question-2: (To people who raised hands in the previous question). Could you please tell us what do you know about sustainable fashion and fast fashion?

Question-3: Which things come to your mind when you hear the terms fast fashion industry or ready-made garments' industry?

Question-4: What is your attitude towards fast fashion industry?

Question-5: Do you purchase fast fashion clothes? If yes how often and from which brands?

Question-6: Which factors do you consider while buying clothes?

Question-7: Are you knowledgeable about some scandals against this industry? I mean some controversies about this sector. Can you please mention some?

Question-8: You are knowledgeable about bad sides of fashion industry, but still you are buying clothes. Do you agree, even after not liking fast fashion you are a regular consumer of this industry? You can simply raise your hands or keep your hands down.

Reasons behind the gap:

Question- 9: (To people who raised hands in the previous question). So you agreed that, you do not have positive attitude towards this industry, but still you are buying from it. There is a visible gap between attitude and behavior. What are the factors that make you purchase from fast fashion?

Question-10: Being consumers, how are we contributing to make the gap bigger?

Question-11: Is there any other influences, may be societal or situational influences that increase the size of this gap?

Question-12: What motivates you to buy clothes?

Question-13: Do you ever feel that your clothes represent your social-status? More specifically, do egoism and social status influence your attitude-behavior gap?

Question-14: Do you ever search for sustainable clothing options? If not, please explain your reasons.

Question-15: After knowing all the unethical issues of fast-fashion industry, are you ready to boycott this industry?

Question-16: If you get any physical harms (e.g., rashes and allergies from fast-fashion clothes), would you then boycott this industry? If yes, how much extra would you pay to avoid the physical harms?

Extra Task: [*This task will be done for those participants who are more comfortable in writing their opinions rather than speaking in a group environment*]: Moderator will provide small papers to everyone in the group and will give the participants 2-3 minutes time for an extra task. Moderator will ask the participants to note down on the piece of papers if they can remember or want to say about more possible reasons that they have not mentioned during discussion.

Ways to bridge the gap:

Question-17: What companies can do to reduce this attitude-behavior gap? Please give your own suggestions.

Question-18: Now, from the side of consumers, how this gap could be minimized?

Question-19: What policymakers, I mean local governments or the central governmental body can do here to reduce the gap?

Rating [*This task will be done for ensuring the fact that participants do not skip any important piece of information*]: One by one, moderator will read out (loudly and slowly) some statements about the possible solutions to minimize the attitude-behavior gap. If the participants agree to the statement, they will show a thumbs up. If they

disagree, they will show a thumbs down. If they remain neutral, they will show a neutral sign (a particular sign that the moderator will tell the participants to show). If they are strongly agree, they will shake their thumbs up. If strongly disagree, they will show shaking thumbs down.

Statement-1: Influential people in the society can promote consumers' awareness about sustainable fashion. Strongly agree.

Statement-2: Consumers should be provided with adequate information regarding sustainable fashion.

Statement-3: Sustainable marketing techniques can promote sustainable fashion consumption

Statement-4: Giving used clothes away to the poor people is a solution to the problem. Agree-neutral-strongly agree.

Statement-5: Laws, rules, regulations and frameworks for guiding the production and supply chains of fast-fashion industry are not strictly followed.

Statement-6: Consumers should take a shift towards slow-fashion.

Statement-7: Joint effort by governments, companies, retailers, and consumers is a must to reduce the gap.

Statement-8: Consumers need to cut cloth-purchases.

Statement-9: Production and distribution transparency by fast-fashion companies would reduce the carbon footprints of the fast-fashion industry

Statement-10: Sustainability report should be mandatory for fast-fashion companies.

Question-20: Do you want to add something?

Interview Questions

Attitude-behavior gap in sustainable fashion consumption:

Question-1: What do you know about ‘sustainable fashion’ and fast fashion?

Question-2: Which things come to your mind when you hear the terms fast fashion industry or ready-made garments’ industry?

Question-3: What is your attitude towards fast fashion industry?

Question-4: Do you purchase fast fashion clothes? If yes how often and from which brands?

Question-5: Which factors do you consider while buying clothes?

Question-6: Are you knowledgeable about some scandals against this industry? I mean some controversies about this sector. Can you please mention some?

Question-7: You are knowledgeable about bad sides of fashion industry, but still you are buying clothes. Do you agree, even after not liking fast fashion you are a regular consumer of this industry?

Reasons behind the gap:

Question-8: So, you agreed that there is a gap between your attitude and behavior. What are the factors that make you purchase from fast fashion?

Question-9: Being consumers, how are we contributing to make the gap bigger?

Question-10: Is there any other influences, may be societal or situational influences that increase the size of this gap?

Question-11: What motivates you to buy clothes?

Question-12: Do you ever feel that your clothes represent your social-status? More specifically, do egoism and social status influence your attitude-behavior gap?

Question-13: Do you ever search for sustainable clothing options? If not, please explain your reasons.

Question-14: After knowing all the unethical issues of fast-fashion industry, are you ready to boycott this industry?

Question-15: If you get any physical harms (e.g., rashes and allergies from fast-fashion clothes), would you then boycott this industry? If yes, how much extra would you pay to avoid the physical harms?

Ways to bridge the gap:

Question-16: What companies can do to reduce this attitude-behavior gap? Please give your own suggestions.

Question-17: Now, from the side of consumers, how this gap could be minimized?

Question-18: What policymakers, I mean local governments or the central governmental body, do here to reduce the gap?

Question-19: Do you want to add something in the end?