



## **Research Exposé**

### THE PATH TOWARDS SLOW FASHION: STUDY AFFILIATED WITH EMPOWERMENT AND MATERIALISM

Submitted by:

Student: Francesco Gioffi

Supervisor: Katrin Zulauf, Ralf Wagner

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## **Abstract**

**Title:** The path towards slow fashion: study affiliated with empowerment and materialism

**Background:** Beside being one of the most polluted industries in the World, the fashion industry is responsible for the exploitation of the workers in developing countries, especially children. In order to fight against the latest trend inside the fashion industry, the so-called fast fashion, a different lifestyle to “slow down” both production and consumption in apparel market has been lunched: slow fashion. The increasing awareness among consumers about environmental issues has pushed them to change previous consumption habits to eco-friendly products for personal well-being, creating a strong sense of empowerment.

**Aim:** This study aims to expand the previous study of Sobreira et al. (2020) to the European continent, in order to have a general comprehension about the empowerment and materialism regarding slow fashion.

**Methodology:** The project is conducted through a questionnaire to be spread online. It is going to take place in the most well-known social media, such as: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The questionnaire will be translate a least four languages: English, German, Italian and French. It will be created a pilot study in order to check possible mistakes.

**Contributions:** This study contributes to enlarge the literature in the slow fashion area. This is done through its association with concepts such as empowerment and materialism, as well as sensibilising the consumer around the topic and providing companies with practical insights into how this instrument can be developed.

**Keywords:** slow fashion; empowerment; materiality; fast fashion; sustainability.

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## List of Abbreviations

FF	(Fast Fashion)
SDG	(Sustainable developing Goals)
GDP	(Gross Domestic Product)
GHG	(Green House Gas)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Around the year of 1885 Oscar Wilde said:

*“Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months”*

(Wilde & Cooper, 2013).

In recent decades, that reference has been the cause of consumerism, which degrades quality of life and promotes environmental damage (Fletcher, 2008). In order to capture the attention of the customers with the latest trends, fast fashion (FF) firms have adopted a strategy to provide a new collection every few weeks at low-price (Gabrielli et al., 2013). By adopting FF strategies, the global brands have augmented their profitability (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2014). As a consequence, fashion markets increased volatility, complexity, and velocity within the supply chain (Sardar & Lee, 2015). Retailers have become more dynamic to avoid losing market share (Evans & Bahrami, 2020; Yadav & Sagar, 2021). Thanks to globalization and e-commerce, fashion firms improved the ability to: look at future trends, identified buying patterns and purchasing attitude; in addition to exploitation outsourcing in order to leverage expenditure (Alizadeh et al., 2016).

Nowadays, The fashion industry has been ranked among the most polluting in the world because it consumes a vast amount of raw materials, produces a lot of pollution, and leaves an enormous carbon footprint (Brewer, 2019). For instance, a kilogram of cotton needs 20,000 liters of water (World Wildlife Fund, 2019). According to new research, the fashion industry has been responsible for some 2.1 billion metric tons of GHGs (greenhouse-gas) emission in 2018, about 4 percent of the global total (Berg et al., 2020). These values are the proof that the industry emits, about the same quantity of GHGs per year as the entire economies of France, Germany and the United Kingdom combined. For the economic perspective, the fashion industry is worth 3% of the global GDP, almost 3,000-billion-dollar value (Statista, 2021).

Fast fashion has generated a slow fashion movement due to concern about the environment and social issues. (Şener et al., 2019).”Sustainability is defined as meeting today’s needs without compromising the capacity for future generations’ needs” (The World Commission on the Environment and Development, 1987). Slow fashion enables consumers to exploit lower resources by purchasing fewer high-quality products (Kaniskan, 2013), valued local resources and distributors (Şener et al., 2019) and offers cooperation between the parties all over the supply chain. In particular, it is an intermediary in the recruitment of local women (Clark, 2008). Nevertheless, slow fashion could create a general comprehensive path in sustainable fashion, given the

disadvantages of fast fashion (Henninger et al, 2016). Moreover and it is also considered to be a concept, a philosophy, a lifestyle, or fashion activism (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). So far slow fashion seem to be very good alternative to fast fashion, in way to increase empowerment of consumers perceptive (Sobreira et al., 2020), as well a path to decelerate fashion from the garments production process by making it more sustainable (Billeson & Klasander, 2015). Rather than materialism, slow fashion encourages consumers to pay more attention to sustainable and ethical practices, including ethical aspects of clothing production and consumption (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2014). In research by Sobreira et al., (2020) it was found that, in general terms, empowerment positively influences slow fashion consumption, argued also from Fletcher's (2008). Although, they have not found a negative comparison between materialism and slow fashion model of Jung and Jin (2004).

The aim of this study is to expand the research from Sobreira et al., (2020), which was only focused on Brazil, to European countries such as Italy, Germany and France. Europe may be a challenging environment, due to the cultural differences. Secondly, consumers in different countries have different orientations in terms of sustainable products that might influence their perception of value in terms of product recognition (Şener et al.,2019). Additionally, consumers have revealed different “preferences” in the slow fashion model. (Jung and Jin 2004; Şener et al.,2019; Jung & Jin, 2016). Another gap that needs further investigation is the difference in perception of slow fashion by age group (Legere & Kang, 2020). The findings show that youngsters, such as Generational Z are more interested in sustainability-related (Pasquarelli, A., 2019). Moreover, from Sobreira et al., (2020) should identify why people with lower income tend to be more favourable to slow fashion?

This study will contribute to expanding literature on slow fashion, both concept and background around it, since the previous studies point out around this theme, still to be approached in depth. Previously studies said the research in this theme is still to be approached in depth (McNeill & Moore, 2015). As well as the study from Sobreira et al., (2020), needs to be tested with larger samples to confirm the results. Although, by addressing important social problems and challenges of modern consumer society and fashion systems, slow fashion may have an important role in shaping the future of business and society. From the point of view of the company, it may be a good tool in order to set up marketing campaigns ( Şener et al.,2019). On the other hand, it could help to meet the SDG (Sustainability standard Goals) established by the United Nation. (*THE 17 GOALS / Sustainable Development*, 2021)

This study will be divided into five parts. Firstly, it will clarify the most important terms such as FF, slow fashion and the affiliation with materialism and empowerment. Furthermore, a summary of the main literature used to write this paper. Thirdly, it will be given a model and the hypothesis and research question. After that, the tools of the methodology will be presented and lastly a paragraph with expected contributions will be developed. Last but not least, a bibliography will follow.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMING

In this section, it will be analyzed in accordance to the literature the following concept: slow fashion, empowerment and materialism

### 2.1 Slow fashion understanding

The term slow fashion comes from the slow food movement. The slow food movement began in Italy in 1980; on this occasion the founder, Carlo Petrini started out protesting the building of a McDonalds (Clark, 2008). In this movement the consumers want to understand what they were buying as well as who made it. (Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013).

From Fletcher, (2010), slow fashion is a concept and production model focused on durable products produced locally and using traditional production techniques through small scale production and classical design. Recently, the fashion industry has been criticised for the “exploitation of workers, damaging the ecosystem, contributing to the depletion of natural resources, and increasing textile waste” (Ozdamar Ertekin, Z., & Atik, D, 2015). Despite to fast fashion the garments are treated to be durable, and by encourage a “collaborative consumption”(Pal & Gander, 2018). By doing that, customers acquired a role of “co-creator”, where they can re-create their clothes in accordance with their preferences and tastes (Langdown, 2014). From Table 1 Watson and Yan (2013) underlined the major differences between fast and slow consumers (Zarley Watson & Yan, 2013).

Figure 1 slow vs fast consumer

	Slow fashion consumer	Fast fashion consumer
Utility	Versatility, fit, quality	Affordability, quality
Style	Classic, timeless	Unique, trendy, variety
Consumer's expectation	Fit, quality, long lifespan, versatility, low maintenance, higher price	Low quality, short lifespan, replaceable, affordability

Watson and Yan,2013



With slow fashion arising as a new concept Jung and Jin, (2014) were the first to operationalize slow fashion through scale development. The following scale will be used for this research as Sobreira et al., (2020) performed. According to them, consumers' slow fashion preferences are achieved through equity, authenticity, functionality, localism and exclusivity. Therefore, the slow fashion consumption trend is a reflection of the consumers' changing sense of freedom and individualism confidence, which arises when they distance themselves from the current fashion trend (Bly et al., 2015).

In contrast Harris, Roby, and Dibb (2015) underlined three main elements as barrier to consumer to choose products coming from slow fashion environment: absence of informations, their ethical concerns, and how they choose clothes based on how they look rather than how they were produced are most common symptoms of consumers' insufficient knowledge and understanding of sustainability. From the perspective of Forsman and Madsen (2017), frequently the slow fashion products as perceived “inaccessible” in the mind of purchaser, given the high costs and limited availability. Following the proposition arise by Şener et al., (2019) slow fashion is able to change consumer perceptions and behaviours regarding value and consumption from the increasing awareness of sustainability, therefore they are willing to accept a premium price to buy the garments (ŠTefko & Steffek, 2018). More benefits derived from slow fashion were given by Cataldi et al., (2010), where emphasise how slowing down the production cycle is fundamental for the regeneration of the environment, as well as for the people to conduct healthier life. In meantime is a vehicle to avoid the exploitation of natural resources (Fletcher, 2007) by producing eco-friendly products and in small batches(Cline, 2012).

## **2.2 Empowerment**

Cutright & Samper, (2014) describe empowerment as the perception that a person is capable of both control and achieving desirable outcomes. By definition empowerment involves an act or a social process (Hur, 2006). This term was most commonly associated with different approaches to social development or psychological, and local concern, movements and initiatives that are community-based (Ivanovska & Ahmeti, 2004b). In the last decade the term has become widely used through community psychology, management, political theory, social work, education, women studies, and sociology (Lincoln et al., 2002).

As a way to categorize empowerment comes from a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy, along with a sense of power (Roger et al.,1997). However there are more variable to define it; this is why, he designed a scale of five variable.. From the research of Sobreira et al., (2020), these are highlighted as follows: “self-esteem and self-efficacy; (2) optimism and control over the future; (3)

power-powerlessness, which would be the absence of empowerment and predominance of the feeling of impotence; (4) community activism and autonomy; and (5)“fair anger.”

In research from Legere and Kang,(2020) consumers are often motivated to purchase products in order to fulfill their value and enhance their self-image. On this purpose they said: “fashion is a symbolic reflection of personality, values, and feelings”.

In the act of wearing certain fashion consumers assemble meaning as it is exchanged through social interactions (Johar et al.,2013). By analysing self-esteem, in relation to clothing, It refers to an individual's belief that the wear of certain clothing can affect the way they see themselves, their self-regard, and their self-respect (Sontag & Lee, 2004). Furthermore through empowerment, it may be possible knowing how consumers make marketplace choices could help us understand how they conduct themselves (Wright et al., 2006). Another way to see empowerment is suggested by Shankaret al. (2006): an empowerment state can be understood as a critical awareness of the reality that may lead one to take action following conceptions. In this research as well as the article of Sobreira et al., (2020) the empowerment will be focused on both views: consumer level emphasized by Roger et al.,(1997) and individual perspective explained Shankaret al., (2006).

Both definitions of empowerment are connected with slow fashion since the former is based on the fact that people feel empowerment by creating a sense of community for all consumers, such as sharing ideas and knowledge (Ertekin, Atik2015). A good example of that is the Progetto Quid. It is cooperative’s ethical fashion brand, 100% made in Italy where the clothes are created from fabrics surplus that are tailored in accordance with clients taste. The cooperative’s aim: is to create social and work inclusion in the female universe. (*ProgettoQuid*, 2021). On the other hand, empowerment at the individual level is activism, as seen in slow fashion, where all people responsible for design, buying and selling garments are increasingly aware of the impact products have on earth and communities. (Fletcher, 2010). Fashion activism look for a challenge the current fashion industry system by offering a viable alternative (Ro & Kim, 2011) and reflect a protest of FF. (Antanavičiūtė & Dobilaitė, 2015). Even Pears, (2006) suggests that empowered individuals are more likely to embrace sustainable consumption, a concept closely tied to slow fashion.

Therefore, by learning about their clothing and gaining new ideas, slow fashion can help consumers feel more empowered about both how they dress and their ability to deal with enormous issues (Legere and Kang,2020).

### **2.3 Materialism**

Materialism is the idea that people attach great importance to worldly possessions because they make an important contribution to their lives and are the source of the greatest degree of satisfaction

or unhappiness (Belk 1985). A definition of materialism is given from Oxford dictionary,(2012): “materialism is associated with a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values”. As well as an indication of strength, status, and notoriety(Kasser,2002). People engage in materialistic behaviour in an effort to attain happiness by obtaining possessions, which appears to be implicit in the current conceptualization of materialism (Richins & Dawson, 1992). This assumption remains of the Aristotelian view, which said "happiness is the whole aim and end of human existence" (Ahuvia, 2008). Richins and Dawson (1992) for a materialistic individual, possessions become the center of their lives, taking precedence over religion, relationship, and achievements. In the context of materialism, they identified three dominant values: acquisition centrality, happiness and success. For acquisition centrality: having possessions and acquiring material goods is a central focus for materialists.. Ownership of the desirable possessions leads to happiness, according to the belief that well-being can be achieved. In the context of success, it is understood to refer to an individual's possession of material items that determines success. Those three variables will be used in the evaluation of materiality dimension as

Sobreira et al.,(2020) did. From Shrumetal,(2013), materialist consumers believe that objects play a major role in many aspects of their lives and that materials assist them in expressing themselves. Materialism has consistently been correlated negatively with happiness and well-being. (Dittmar & Kapur,2011; Kasser et al.,2014). By conducting four case studies Caprariello and Reis, (2013) found materialistic consumers have reported lower levels of happiness. In spite of materialism's negative impact on well-being, a growing body of research has been investigating the positive behavioural outcomes of materialism (Shrum et al., 2014). For example, while a direct negative effect on well-being emerges, consumers of luxury goods experience more positive emotions and report higher levels of life satisfaction (Hudders & Pandelaere, 2012). Recently Donnelly et al., (2016) suggested that the reasons why people seek happiness and satisfaction through possessions are driven by the urge to escape from aversive awareness of their own behavior.. In research by Sirgy et al., (2011) have emerged: individuals increase their status of happiness when they buy goods. Previous studies have observed how fashion trends can positively influence the individuals in clothing consumption, by increasing their behaviour to materialism (Dogan,2015; Rahman et al., 2016). Fashion-oriented consumers believe that trendy fashion clothing is the key point to lead to success(Phuong and Thao,2017). It has also been found that a materialistic lifestyle can lead to overconsumption, which is detrimental to sustainable consumption (Manchiraju, 2013), whilst Scott et al.(2014) verified that materialism also comes without creating overconsumption. The latest would be realized by focusing on the core attributes of slow fashion: quality, durability and

craftsmanship (Juan and Jin, 2014). Since materialistic consumers have lower importance related to the environment, it seems to be a major hindrance for sustainable consumption (Srikant,2013).

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Following, the articles used in this exposé along with the respective contribution will be presented

*Table 1 Literature review*

	TITLE	CONTRIBUTION
1	Sobreira, R. M. C., Silva, C. R. M. D., & Romero, C. B. A. (2020). Do empowerment and materialism influence slow fashion consumption? Evidence from Brazil.	This research focused on the affiliations between empowerment and materialism on slow fashion consumption. Therefore, it has given a contribution to the construction of knowledge around the slow fashion and the association with the empowerment and materialism.
2	Tuğba Şener, Ferdi Bişkin Nurgül Kılınç (2019) Sustainable dressing: Consumers' value perceptions towards slow fashion	The goal of this study is to determine how consumers perceive value in slow fashion on the basis of its dimensions. Moreover, it has been focused on the willingness to pay higher price with the connection to slow fashion dimensions; as well as the perceive value of consumers. Specifically, this study aims to educate fashion designers about the importance of design sustainable styles beyond the trends of the global fashion industry. A key aspect of the study involves designing sustainable styles beyond the style trends of the global fashion industry that are appropriate to reach the target market.

3	<p>Sojin Jung and ByoungHo Jin (2014)</p> <p>A theoretical investigation of slow fashion: sustainable future of the apparel industry</p>	<p>The aim of this study is to define the dimensions of slow fashion following Churchill's paradigm for measurement development. This study attempts to define slow fashion theoretically with underlying dimensions using consumer outlooks on slow fashion as the scale item development.</p> <p>The underlined five dimensions: equity, authenticity, functionality, localism and exclusivity.</p>
4	<p>Sojin Jung and ByoungHo Jin (2016)</p> <p>From quantity to quality: understanding slow fashion consumers for sustainability and consumer education</p>	<p>This research focused on a development a marketing strategy of slow fashion consumers by understating how they behave. Through the surveys, the study found four different group oriented to the slow fashion:" Highly-involved in slow fashion group, Conventional group, Exclusivity oriented group and Low-involved in slow fashion group".</p>
5	<p>Alisha Legere , Jiyun Kang (2020)</p> <p>The role of self-concept in shaping sustainable consumption: A model of slow fashion</p>	<p>This study helped by self-concept theory to emphasise a few variable affect to slow fashion, such as moral self-identity, self-enhancement and proximity of clothing. Therefore, how this constructs shape the slow fashion is provided which given an important implication to underspin how sustainability path could be implemented inside the fashion industry.</p>
6	<p>Donnelly, G. E., Ksendzova, M., Howell, R. T., Vohs, K. D., &amp; Baumeister, R. F. (2016). Buying to Blunt Negative Feelings: Materialistic Escape from the Self</p>	<p>This research focused on the patterns of materialistic people's comporment by using escape theory. Therefore by analysing the behaviour of the people came to the conclusion that materialism cause negative emotion such as maladaptive consumption and irrational thought. All the actions comes from a temporally dissatisfaction of people meanwhile the materialistic people things by acquiring possession to bring success and wealth in their life</p>

7	<p>Gérard P. Cachon and Robert Swinney (2011)  The Value of Fast Fashion: Quick Response, Enhanced Design, and Strategic Consumer Behaviour</p>	<p>This study have created a model with three alternative systems: quick-response-only systems, enhanced-design-only systems, and traditional systems, where it has been used to found correlations between design of fashion products and the strategic consumers behaviour . the research found find that enhanced design helps to mitigate strategic behaviour by offering consumers a product they value more, making them less willing to risk waiting for a clearance sale and possibly experiencing a stock out. Therefore consumers had shown a significant value to the ff system.</p>
8	<p>The environmental price of fast fashion (2020)  Kirsi Niinimäki , Greg Peters , Helena Dahlbo , Patsy Perry , Timo Rissanen and Alison Gwilt</p>	<p>The study aim to analyse the climate impacts of fashion industry. On the basis of these environmental impacts, The authors emphasize fundamental changes within the fashion business model, such as a shift towards sustainable supply chains and a deceleration of manufacturing. These changes are fundamentals of the slow fashion where the trend aim is to decrease the environment impacts and create a more sustainable industry.</p>
9	<p>Rudrajeet Pal, Jonathan Gander, (2018) Modelling environmental value: an examination of sustainable business models within the fashion industry, Journal of Cleaner Production</p>	<p>This research focused on the exploitation of resources from fashion industry and underline the unsustainable practices of the sector. The aim of the paper is to offered a guideline to both organisations and people by acknowledging the sustainable business practices as directly affiliation with customer and firm value.</p>

10	Róbert Štefko, Vladimira Steffek,(2018) Key Issues in Slow Fashion: Current Challenges and Future Perspectives	This research was developed in order to explore the problems in slow fashion. Moreover, the aim of the paper is to identify the current position of slow fashion in market and through its own model define the future position of the movement. Thus, it offered a good set of tools for both designers and manufacturers to have a look at the main variables for the correct path towards sustainability
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#### **4. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES**

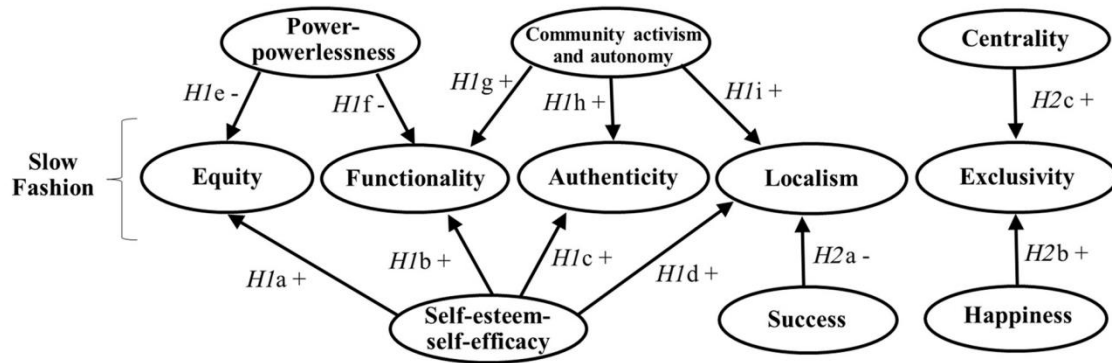
A discussion of the model developed to answer the research question, as well as the theory and constructs employed, follows in the next paragraph.

##### **4.1 General overview and research question**

The model that will be used in this research was made starting from Jung and Jin, (2014) model of slow fashion, featured by five forces: equity, authenticity, functionality, localism and exclusivity. It represented by the middle part of the model, then, in order to measure the level of empowerment Roger et al.,(1997) are highlighted a scale divided into five factors: 1) self-esteem and self-efficacy; (2) optimism and control over the future; (3) power-powerlessness, which would be the absence of empowerment and predominance of the feeling of impotence; (4) community activism and autonomy; and (5) fair anger. Following Sobreira et al., (2020), since the scale has been done for health-care sectors, the factor “fair anger” has been removed from this study. The third part is to analyse the influence of materialism, through the variable comes from Richins and Dawson (1992): acquisition centrality, happiness, and success. The following model has slow fashion as dependent variable and materialism and empowerment as independent variables As I said before this study will be conducted starting from research as Sobreira et al., (2020). The previous study was conducted in Brazil, Fortaleza, the actual study will be covered in Europe. Thank to this, it is formulated the research question:

**R.Q1** How do empowerment and materialism affect slow fashion according to European consumers?

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*Figure 2 research model*

#### 4.1 Slow fashion scale

Slow fashion scale has been emphasised by (Juan, Jin,2014).

More in details is composed of five forces:

- 1) equity: consumers are aware of the importance of fair work practices when purchasing clothing, and they have concerns about fair trade and producers;
- 2) authenticity: it is important to them to value craftwork and other forms of handicraft;
- 3) functionality: clothing versatility and durability are important to them;
- 4) localism: local brands are preferred over global brands, as well as using local suppliers and 5) Exclusivity: related to limited-edition and rare garments are highly valued by consumers.

This scale has been widely used and consistently performed in several studies on the subject (Jung and Jin, 2016a, 2016b; ŞEner et al., 2019).

Equity, as part of slow fashion, found that: there is no sweatshop, which is characterized by poor working conditions, a system that is designed for individuals who value their health, safety, and environment, adheres to fair trade principles (Shen et al.,2013). In terms of authenticity, slow fashion involves artisan base production, despite the effort such a way of production has been weakened due to mass production in terms of cost (ŞEner et al., 2019). Despite this, several entrepreneurs in different industrial sectors, especially in the Florence area, where tradition and craftwork can be harnessed to enhance a product's intrinsic value, which is derived from slow, deliberate work processes (Cimatti et al., 2017). Moreover, they introduced a new taxonomy to

measure the “slowness of the production”, not only thanks to lead time in the manufacturing process but even with skills and creativity of the artisans.

From Juan and Jin, (2014) functionality is a concept to augment the benefit of clothing. For instance, a classic outfit that can be combined with different pieces is also durable (Aakko, 2014). Therefore, consumers find slow fashion products to be valuable despite their high prices because they can be paired with many different things and have a long lifespan and classic designs (Şener et al., 2019).

In contrast to the dominant global trends in fast fashion, slow fashion is viewed by consumers as a way to maintain local identity and resources. Thus, the preference of consumers to produce locally made. (Juan and Jin,2014)

Examples of that are big names in fashion such as Gucci, Bottega Veneta and Salvatore Ferragamo (B2B sourcing platform, 2020). Exclusivity highlight from Slow fashion is characterized by limited production, high quality goods produced mostly by hand (Henninger,2016)

#### **4.2 Developing empowerment**

As discussed, theoretical framework empowerment describes a perception where individuals are capable of both control and achieve desirable outcomes. Cutright & Samper, (2014). As mentioned before, in order to measure empowerment in slow fashion, this research will be conducted with the scale developed by Roger et al (1997). From the research of Sobreira et al., (2020) it has been found a positive affiliation with slow fashion consumption and the empowerment variables. The slow fashion scale(Juan and Jin,2014) has positively influenced self-esteem-self efficacy(H1:a,b,c,d). Consumers are willing to do more conscious consumption of clothes, paying attention to the working conditions of producers and fair trade (equity) (Carrington et al., 2010; Cataldi et al.,2010; Ertekin and Atik,2015).

From Jung and Jin (2014) individuals are strain to give a higher value to the local products, mostly handmade and created following traditions. (authenticity and localism). Again people tend to seek in slow fashion an alternative to capitalism (community and fashion autonomy)(H1:g,h,i) in the fashion industry, which is manifest in fashion activism (Ro and Kim,2011). Moreover the functionality of the products such as high-quality, long-lasting and versatile are attributes that in terms of consumption, fashion trends go beyond (Clark, 2008 ; Watson and Yan,2013). “The power-powerlessness”(H1:e,f) factor had a negative effect on the equity and functionality, since subjects that feeling powerlessness are less oriented to slow fashion.(Rogers et al.,1997), in this sense feeling of powerlessness doesn't involve people to change undesirable situation (Thøgersen, 2005). Within this research context, fast fashion production and consumption and its problems (i.e. exploitation of workers, toxic materials used in the supply chain, consumerism, waste, and

degradation of the environment) are examined. (Fletcher,2008) The degree to which a person feels empowered has implications for how hard he or she will try to solve environmental and ethical problems through his or her own behavioural choice. Thus, less empowered customers means less willingness to be ethically oriented (Shaw et al., 2006; Papaoikonomou & Alarcón, 2016). Therefore, policies that increase empowerment (or self-efficacy) may also have a positive impact on consumers' motivation to make an effort (Geller, 1995). Likewise their sense of belonging fosters a sense of empowerment, for example when undertaking environmental tasks as a team (De Young, 2003; Speer et al., 2001). Even education and gathering information about sustainability issues may drive behavioural changes(Thøgersen, 2005).

Based on the previous analysis, the following hypothesis can be developed:

**H1.** Empowerment positively influences slow fashion consumption

### **4.3 Developing materialism**

The scale taken from Richins and Dawson (1992) is one of the most utilised measures of materialism (Karabati & Cemalcilar, 2010) in the fashion industry (Aydin,2017; Rahman et al.,2016; Handa & Khare, 2011). Concerning the study of ŞEner et al., (2019) only localism was negatively affected through the construct “success”(h2a). Instead a positive affiliation between exclusivity and happiness and centrality (h2:b,c). This confirm what the literature said, Consumers who are materialistic look for products that are different from the rest (Lincoln et al., 2002); as well as Dresses are important possessions that people identify with and wish to be seen wearing. Limited editions, in particular, have become a symbol of status and personal identity for many people (ŞEner et al., 2019). This study is contrasting the study of Caprariello and Reis, (2013).Even from different research point of views it was widely discovered the negative influence of materialism through well-being and happiness (Dittmar & Kapur,2011; Kasser et al., 2014). Anyway, the empirical model raised from ŞEner et al., (2019) did not conform to the following hypothesis, that it will be tested in presence research as well.

Based on the previous analysis, the following hypothesis can be developed:

**H2.** Materialism negatively influences slow fashion consumption

Another point that may raise another research question is the positive affiliation between the construct happiness and exclusivity dimensions, as emphasized by ŞEner et al., (2019). Therefore, since fashion-oriented consumers tend to buy more clothes, increase their expenditure and become more involved in the fashion world, the research investigates whether the positive influence of

materialism results in an increasing engagement towards slow fashion (Dogan, 2015; Gwozdz et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2016).

#### **4.4 Alternative theories**

For instance, using the self-concept theory in order to see how consumers view themselves currently would impact how much self enhancement benefits they see from slow fashion. This study has been developed from (Legere & Kang, 2020). Empowerment as Self-enhancement is an indicator of behavioural intentions toward slow fashion.

Another path that seems appropriate for this research comes from the study of Şener et al.,(2019). This study could be used as a way to expand the current study or use it alone. Thus, mix slow fashion orientation proposed by (Jung & Jin, 2014 with the perceived customer values scale from Sweeney & Soutar, (2001) to measure the perception of consumers to slow fashion, such as: Are the consumer willing to pay higher prices to buy products from slow fashion than other products? As already explained, it may be used even with this study to assess the willingness of consumers to pay a premium price regarding slow fashion products.

### **5. METHODOLOGY**

Chapter 5, provides an overview of the methodology used in this project. The research will be carried out quantitatively. Detailed information about the selection of the sample as well as the methods used to collect and analyse the data can also be found in the sections below.

#### **5.1 Research design and application domain**

Using quantitative methods turned out to be an efficient way to conduct the exploratory quantitative research study, as all scale constructions had data available. In accordance with the sample specification, confidence level, and margin of error, the sample size will be evaluated later .

#### **5.2 Target sample**

The target group that has been selected for the research is Europeans. Europe has been the cradle of the fashion industry, three of the four fashion capitals are situated in Europe (Wikipedia contributors, 2021), the largest listed company with higher market value are based in Europe as

well (fashionunited.com, 2021). Furthermore, notorious brands such as Giorgio Armani, Dior, Gucci declared that they are going to change the way of planning their fashion show (Wurzer, 2021), no more far stage and repetitive fashion gala but more inclusive and eco-friendly events. Even, an online fashion retail giant, Zalando has invested in circular fashion and textile technology group Infinited Fiber Co. (*Fashionnetwork*, 2021).

### **5.3 Data collection procedure**

An online questionnaire will be created in order collect data. In particular will be created by using SphinxDeclin software.. The survey will be available through electronic devices. The same questionnaire will be translated into at least three different languages, German, English, and Italian, since the sample will be composed of people from different countries. Researchers have studied slow fashion from several perspectives, including how it is defined and perceived by consumers in the past (Jung and Jin, 2014; Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013; Watson & Yan, 2013). During the course of previous studies of sustainable fashion, questionnaires have been criticized for discovering both social bias and overinflated positive responses can arise from participants with an unrealistic definition of sustainability. (Barber et al., 2012; Barbarossa & De Pelsmacker, 2016). To address such limitations, it will be interesting to provide respondents with a more realistic setting to answer their perceptions and behaviour intentions regarding unknown specific brands , where the value and mission of the brand has to be related with slow fashion literature (Jung & Jin, 2014). Concerning the structure of the questionnaire it will be divided into four parts. The first section will be composed with the materialism construct by Richins & Dawson (1992). Hence the scale of empowerment(Roger et al., 1997). Thirdly the consumer attitude through slow fashion scale Jung and Jin (2014), already tested in past research (Jung and Jin, 2016a, 2016b; Sener et al., 2019; Sobreira et al., 2020) The fourth and last section of the questionnaire will devote on generality of the respondents, such as: age, status, income... All three scales will be measured following a seven-points Likert type scale, as Sobreira et al., (2020) did by “ ranging from “1 5 strongly disagree” to “7 5 strongly agree””.

To overcome the challenges of online data collection (Granello & Wheaton, 2004), different techniques will be applied. A time limit for respondent completion will be imposed in order to prevent respondents from rushing through the survey. In addition, all the responses with social desirability bias, agreement bias, anchoring bias and satisficing bias will be discarded during the analysis of the data.

#### 5.4 Data analysis procedure

Clearly identifying any vulnerabilities, evaluating the length, and evaluating the understandability of the questionnaire will be accomplished through a pilot study before it is widely distributed. Then, thanks to the help of social media platforms(Facebook, What’s app, Instagram) the survey will be spread. The major element regarding the questionnaire are firstly the anonymity and secondly quick resolution. Moreover a snowball sampling will be used in order to enlarge the spread of the questionnaire. . In the end to compute the data it will be used The Structuring Equation model with Partial least Square(PLS). From the point of view of Barns,(2011) the software Smart-PLS 2.0, is good choice in order to use formative measures and moderating relationship.

The following section will be devoted to the constructs and corresponding items.

*Table 2 constructs*

CONSTRUCTS	ITEMS	Reference
Self-esteem-self- efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have a positive attitude about myself</li> <li>• I am usually confident about the decisions</li> <li>• I make I see myself as a capable person</li> <li>• When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work</li> <li>• I generally accomplish what I set out to do</li> </ul>	Richins and Dawson (1992)
Community activism and autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People working together can have an effect on their community</li> <li>• People have more power if they join together as a group</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very often a problem can be solved by taking action</li> </ul>	
Power-powerlessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experts are in the best position to decide what people should do or learn</li> <li>• When I am unsure about something, I usually go along with the group</li> <li>• You cannot fight government</li> </ul>	
Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My life would be better if I owned certain things I do not have</li> <li>• I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things</li> <li>• It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I cannot afford to buy all the things I'd like</li> <li>• I have all the things I really need to enjoy life</li> <li>• I would not be any happier if I owned nicer things.</li> </ul>	Roger et al.,(1997)
Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life</li> <li>• I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes</li> <li>• Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions</li> <li>• I like to own things that impress people</li> </ul>	
Centrality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I usually buy only the things I need.</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I enjoy spending money on things that are not practical</li> <li>• Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure</li> <li>• I like a lot of luxury in my life</li> </ul>	
Exclusivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am very attracted to rare apparel items</li> <li>• Limited editions hold special appeal for me</li> <li>• I enjoy having clothes that others do not</li> </ul>	Juan & Jin,(2014)
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am concerned about the working conditions of producers when I buy clothes</li> <li>• I am concerned about fair trade when I buy clothes</li> <li>• Fair compensation for apparel producers is important to me when I buy clothes</li> </ul>	
Authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Craftsmanship is very important in clothes</li> <li>• I value clothes made by traditional techniques</li> <li>• Handcrafted clothes are more valuable than mass-produced ones</li> </ul>	
Functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I tend to keep clothes as long as possible rather than discarding quickly</li> <li>• I often enjoy wearing the same clothes in multiple ways</li> <li>• I prefer simple and classic designs</li> </ul>	

Localism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I prefer buying clothes made in “country provenance” to clothes manufactured overseas</li> <li>• We need to support “country of provenance” apparel brands</li> </ul>	
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## 6. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

The expected contribution on this research are both in professional and institutional context, as well as changing the society behaviours through more respectful consumption.

### 6.1 Scholarly Contributions

There will be several contributions in the academic field, for instance past study on this field have focused on establishing formal definition (Jung and Jin, 2014; Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013; Watson and Yan, 2013). However, there is still to involve more customers since its new topic. More in particular the study of Sobreira et al., (2020), needs to be validated with a larger sample in order to test the empowerment and materialism of the model. Although, highlighting the slow fashion model from Jung and Jin, (2014) it will study the different perception of slow fashion compared to different variables such as: age, country. Basically, developing studies to cover different countries will facilitate understanding of fashion consumers and may give an important contribution in slow fashion literature. In this context the literature (McNeill & Moore, 2015).

### 6.2 Implications for Business and Society

In the sense of society, slow fashion provides mutual benefits among workers, designers, suppliers, and customers during the entire process of designing, producing, and selling (Jagel, Keeling, Reppel, & Gruber, 2012)

Thus, FF lessens the power of consumers and reduces them to mere consumers who become increasingly unsatisfied with their purchases, regardless of how many they purchase, while slow fashion seems to bring consumers together. Therefore, consumers are thus able to make a positive contribution in the lives of themselves, society, and the environment through Slow fashion.. Moreover, consumers can be assured that sustainable fashion is produced in a socially-conscious manner such as take care of good working environment. An important issue coming from sustainable fashion is the practice of the companies reporting misleading positive imagine about

the use of sustainable actions in their business, so call: greenwashing. This is why is important define a sustainable fashion criteria as well as the advancement of those is very crucial for small enterprises to be competitive in the business. Last but not least the slow fashion ideals follow the SDG developed by the United nations such as: good health and well- being, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, responsible consumption and production, reduced inequalities, industry innovation and infrastructure climate actions, below water and lastly life on land. (*THE 17 GOALS / Sustainable Development*, 2021). Among the 17 principles, slow fashion is going to have a positive impact on 9. This is to underline a crucial acknowledgement in consumers' minds in order to tackle a choice for a better future.

## **7. CHAPTERS OVERVIEW**

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## 8. WORK PLAN

*Table 3 work plan*

DATES	ACTIVITY	STATUS
1/09 – 2/10	Exposé writing and research	Complete
3/10	Exposé submission	Complete
4/10 – 15/10	Questionnaire design	To follow
16/10 – 24/10	Questionnaire testing and Improvements	To follow
25/10 – 15/11	Data collection	To follow
16/11 – 15/12	Data analysis	To follow
16/12 – 12/01	Thesis writing	To follow
13/01	Thesis submission	To follow
20/01	Thesis defense	To follow

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