



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Fashioning sustainability: Navigating the perceptions and attitudes in fashion design

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### Abstract

Trends, elegance, and rapid consumption have long been connected to the fashion business, creating serious environmental and societal problems. Fashion designers are essential in guiding the industry toward a more sustainable future as the necessity for sustainable practices becomes more and more obvious. The purpose of this research was to investigate more about fashion designers' opinions on sustainable fashion (SF) and the challenges they face when trying to put sustainable design (SD) concepts into practice. Fifty fashion designers were selected to take part in an exploratory study and were interviewed throughout five sessions. The research's major findings show that it's challenging to include SD in the fashion design (FD) process for several internal and external factors. Internal issues include a lack of consensus and knowledge regarding SD, as well as projected trade-offs with other aspects of design goals, including aesthetic styles, budgetary limits, and current trends in fashion. Some examples of such external barriers include the intricacy of sustainability issues, the impression of insufficient customer demand, the existence of deficiencies in customer views and actions regarding the purchase of sustainable collection ranges, and the absence of either monetary or legal incentives for businesses to employ SD methods. The results of this study add to our knowledge of the perspectives and attitudes that fashion designers have regarding sustainability, providing insightful information for those who are involved in the industry, policymakers, and educators. This research aims to enable the incorporation of sustainable practices into fashion design, eventually guiding the industry toward a more responsible and sustainable future by addressing the issues and offering practical solutions.

**Keywords:** Fashion design (FD); Sustainability; Perceptions; Attitude; Consumer demand

### 1. Introduction

Fast fashion is synonymous with low quality, low pricing, frequently changing inventory, and extensive use of chemicals and natural resources. The fashion industry has already shown a major commitment to shifting from quick and unsustainable practices to sustainability and a circular economy [1]. One of the detrimental repercussions of "fast fashion" is overconsumption. Approximately 80 billion clothes are created each year around the world, yet only 25% of those are recycled [2]. Customers are becoming more aware of the environmental harms produced by the fashion industry, so businesses are using social media channels more frequently to talk to them about the sustainability of their products [3]. Climate collapse will become more severe by 2022 as a result of how we are using up the planet's finite resources. In the world, buying habits that are excessive and wasteful are common, and the apparel industry is one of the worst offenders [4]. Communication and thought patterns have evolved as a result of the digital era. The cultural and creative methods of disseminating digital information are more agreeable than conventional storytelling methods [5]. Mobile marketing is becoming a key component of businesses' omnichannel strategies. Customers that use mobile devices as their principal platform for making purchases are becoming more prevalent; now, 60.9% of Americans do so [6]. A development is deemed sustainable if it satisfies present requirements while also ensuring that future generations may meet their own needs [7].

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The study [8] gives a thorough overview of the situation about Danish fashion SME's and their efforts to transition to sustainability in the wake of COVID-19. The chapter expands on the authors' extensive body of knowledge that was amassed through a variety of data-gathering methods and participant observations. The study [9] looks at social companies with a focus on the arts, as well as those associated with textile and fashion, with the stated aim of lowering employment barriers for young creatives affected by migration and displacement, material praxis in the context of migration and displacement is reliant on cultural norms and innate creative abilities. The study [10] presented findings from an investigation into the use of fashion activism and manufacturing to spur beneficial socioeconomic change and reactivate local community legacies.

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## 2. Material and methods

### 2.1. Research techniques

Overall, the research used quantitative and qualitative methods, employing both open-ended and closed-ended questions, to achieve a full and rich understanding of the fundamental challenges surrounding sustainable fashion as well as to comprehend viewpoints and the mindset of the fashion design industry [11].

### 2.2. Gathering and analyzing data

Five in-person semistructured in-depth interviews with professional fashion designers were done before the large-scale survey's distribution [12]. To guarantee the validity of the study, the data were triangulated. Eight respondents left out important information, so their responses were not included in the analysis given in Table 1.

**Table 1** Participants' occupations

Profiles of participants (n = 50)	Percent
Expert fashion designers and design advisors	26 %
Students of fashion and textile design	38 %
Design education in fashion and textiles	16%
Researchers in the fields of sustainable design	8%
Fashion production and manufacturing industries	6%
Managers, marketers, and merchandisers	6%

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## 3. Results

### 3.1. Recognizing levels of consciousness and practice areas

Figure 1 shows that picking eco-materials, recycling, and upcycling and repairing were the three highest degrees of awareness. 'Sustainable product service systems' and 'Socio-cultural human well-being' had the lowest levels of awareness in this area, respectively. It was obvious that the participants knew very little about these categories. Table 2 shows how familiar the participants are with sustainable fashion.

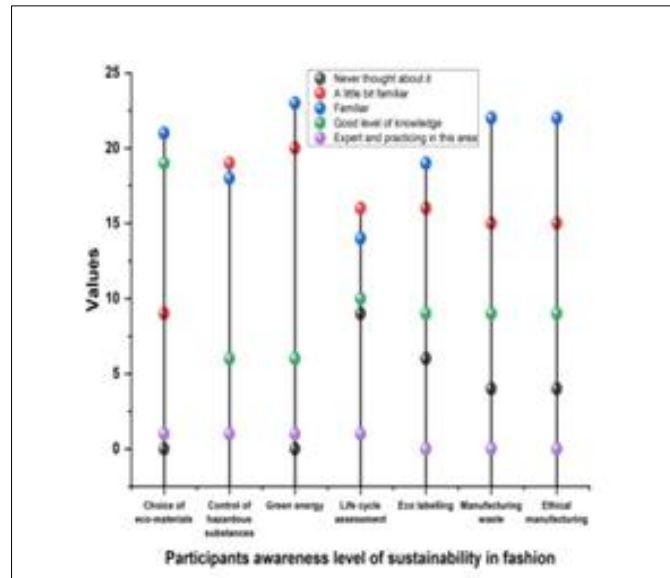


Figure 1 Participants' knowledge of fashion sustainability

Table 2 Participants' level of knowledge regarding fashion sustainability

Participants' level of knowledge of sustainable fashion	Values				
	Never thought	A little bit familiar	Familiar	High degree of knowledge	Expert and practicing in this area
Optional eco-materials	0	9	21	19	1
Hazardous material management	6	19	18	6	1
Green power	0	20	23	6	1
Life cycle analysis	9	16	14	10	1
Ethical labeling	6	16	19	9	0
Production waste	4	15	22	9	0
Ethical production	4	15	22	9	0

### 3.2. Guidelines for wearing eco-friendly apparel

There was a lot of interest in the subject, and everyone in the discussion agreed that sustainability was crucial for clothing and textile design [13]. Contrary to the comparable importance and interest levels revealed in Figure 2, the level of participation and the relevance of design execution were, however, low.

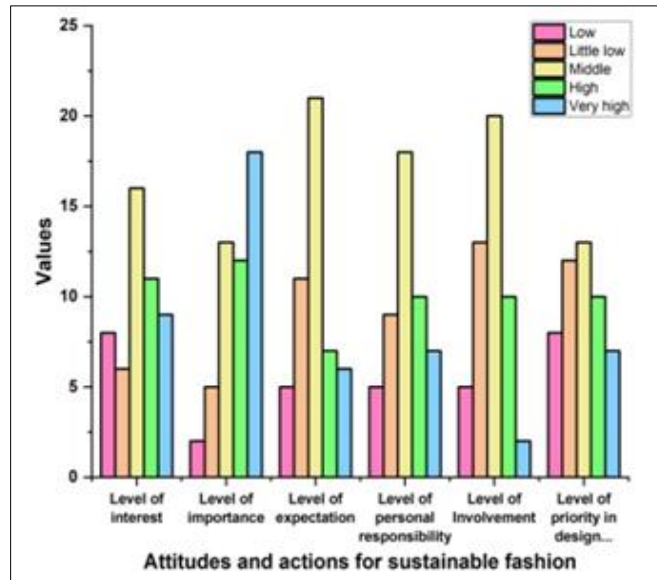


Figure 2 Norms and practices for sustainable clothing

### 3.3. Efforts to improve fashion design's sustainability

The difficulties respondents highlighted while implementing sustainable fashion are shown in Figure 3. Each area's level of difficulty was assessed on a five-point scale, "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," with "strongly agree" being the simplest [14]. Adapting to sustainable fashion brings challenges, as shown in Table 3.

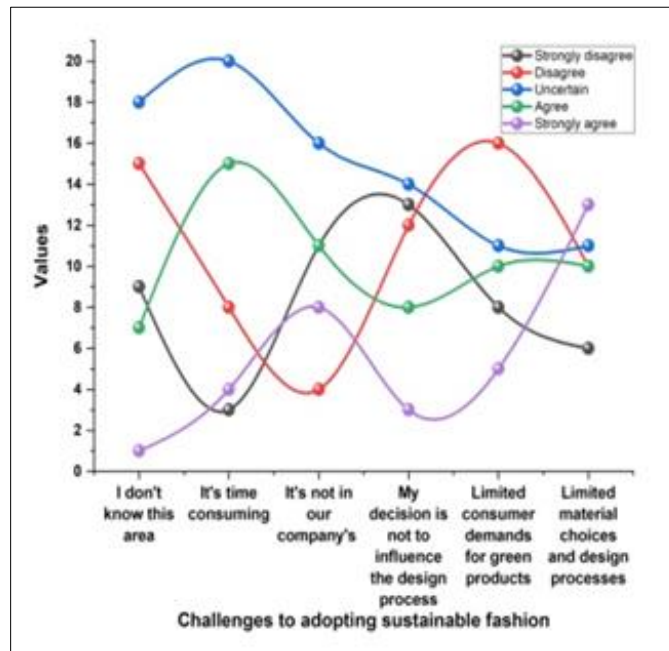


Figure 3 Obstacles to embracing sustainable fashion

**Table 3** Adapting to sustainable fashion presents difficulties

Obstacles to embracing sustainable fashion	Values				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
I'm not familiar with this region	9	15	18	7	1
The process takes time	3	8	20	15	4
It's against our company's	11	4	16	11	8
I have decided not to sway the design process	13	12	14	8	3
Consumer demand for green items isn't very high	8	16	11	10	5
Limited options for materials and design methods	6	10	11	10	13

#### 4. Discussion

Although the design stage and the designer's responsibility are critical to the fashion industry, there is little information available about the perspectives and attitudes of fashion designers toward sustainable fashion and the challenges that can arise when attempting to put sustainable design into practice. The following problems restrict more fashion designers from incorporating sustainability into their work, according to the study's findings: (a) a lack of agreement on what sustainability in fashion design means; (b) the need to balance extra design needs with apparent trade-offs; (c) lack of strategies for designing garments sustainably; and (d) a lack of knowledge of the various techniques available for sustainable design.

#### 5. Conclusion

This study looked into the difficulties related to integrating sustainability in the field. For fashion designers, including sustainability in the process of fashion design is laden with both internal and external challenges. The lack of consensus on how to approach sustainability in fashion design is the first deterrent. Second, there is a perception that other design elements including aesthetic preferences, cost, and fashion trends have been compromised.

#### Compliance with ethical standards

##### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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### Author's short biography



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