RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE TEXTILE CHAIN: CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE AND BEHAVIOR

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Although many media outlets are currently addressing the impact of the textile fashion chain, there is a way through which outlets consumers find out about it. In this context, a questionnaire of knowledge and consumer behavior about clothing products. The results show that more than 50% of the consumers answered off of many impacts related to the fashion chain no of the origin of the products they buy; However, they consider it important to obtain more knowledge to deal with the problem described, it is suggested that communication and environmental education policies be expanded.

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1. Introduction:

1.1 Objective:

This study aims to investigate the gap between consumer awareness and behavior regarding the environmental impacts of the textile fashion supply chain. By examining consumer knowledge and behavior, we intend to provide data that can support the formulation of environmental communication policies within the fashion value chain.

1.2 Historical context:

The concept of transparency in fashion is central to significant movements related to the production chain, such as the Fashion Revolution (Fashion Revolution, 2024). This global movement emerged in response to the tragic collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh on April 24,

2013. The incident involved a textile factory operating under precarious conditions, resulting in the deaths of thousands of workers, primarily women (Fashion Revolution, 2024). This catastrophe highlighted the severe lack of transparency in the fashion industry, generating widespread calls for change (Fashion Revolution, 2024).

Movements like the Fashion Revolution emphasize the crucial importance of communication and transparency in raising consumer awareness about working conditions and the environmental impacts associated with fashion production (Fashion Revolution, 2024). Effective communication is fundamental to articulating environmental policies that promote more sustainable and responsible consumption practices (Fashion Revolution, 2024).

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives:

In his study "Representações do Consumo" ("Representations of Consumption"), Everardo Rocha (2008) conducts a detailed analysis of consumer behavior in contemporary society, emphasizing how women are often targeted by social pressures that equate feminine identity with fashion consumption. According to Rocha (2008), "advertising and media construct and reinforce stereotypes of femininity that impose standards of beauty and behavior" (Rocha, 2008, p. 45). These impositions not only socially control women but also tie their value to the constant consumption of fashion and beauty products, exacerbating an unsustainable consumption cycle (Rocha, 2008).

Rocha's analysis becomes even more relevant when considering the environmental impact of the fashion industry, given that it is one of the largest polluters on the planet (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). A report from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) states that the fashion industry is the second-largest consumer of water globally and is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions. The relentless pursuit of fashion trends results in rampant consumption and a significant increase in textile waste (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Rocha notes that "social pressure and the pursuit of fashion trends not only generate a cycle of planned obsolescence but also lead to a considerable increase in textile waste" (Rocha, 2008, p. 102). This scenario highlights the urgent need to reassess our consumption practices, especially in fashion, to build a more sustainable and equitable future.

1.4 Life Cycle Pedagogy (LCP) Approach:

For a more holistic understanding, this study employs the Life Cycle Pedagogy (LCP) approach developed by Martirani and Bonzanini (2015). LCP emphasizes understanding the full lifecycle of clothing products—from production to disposal—and highlights the interconnection of the various stages of the fashion production chain and their collective environmental impacts (Martirani & Bonzanini, 2015). This approach is essential for building communication and education policies that promote sustainable consumption and more informed consumer behavior (Martirani & Bonzanini, 2015).

1.5 Research Questions:

While topics such as sustainability and the environment are gaining significant attention in journalism, mainstream media, and movements like the Fashion Revolution (Fashion Revolution, 2024), important questions still arise. What is the connection between environmental communication and consumer behavior? Is there enough transparency regarding the impacts of the fashion industry? How does consumer understanding of these environmental impacts shape their choices when it comes to purchasing, using, and discarding clothing?

This research aims to tackle these questions by examining consumers' awareness of the socio-environmental consequences linked to the fashion supply chain and exploring potential connections to their consumption, usage, and disposal habits (Fashion Revolution, 2024). Ultimately, the goal is to

provide insights that can help develop effective environmental communication strategies within the fashion value chain (Fashion Revolution, 2024).

2. Material And Methods:

This research employs a mixed-methods framework, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gain a nuanced understanding of consumer attitudes toward the socio-environmental impacts associated with the textile fashion supply chain (Fairclough, 1995).

2.1 Data Collection:

This exploratory research aimed to gather the opinions of female fashion consumers through the following steps:

a) A survey questionnaire was developed, incorporating both open and closed questions.
b) Data was collected via a Google Forms survey shared on Instagram and Facebook, targeting women over 18 years old who are followers of department stores.
c) The results from the closed-ended questions were compiled.
d) Word clouds, a tool that analyzes text, were utilized to identify the most common words in the open-ended survey responses. This tool highlights frequently used words in larger sizes, which assists in content analysis (Fairclough, 1995).
e) The open-ended responses were collected, and content analysis was conducted to present the results (Fairclough, 1995).

2.2 Justification of Methods:

The rationale for utilizing social media platforms for data collection lies in their extensive reach, enabling access to a large and diverse consumer population (Fairclough, 1995). Additionally, Google Forms is chosen for its accessibility and user-friendly design, which enhances the research methodology (Zhou, 2019).

2.3 Data Analysis:

Quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using Google Forms software, which helped identify patterns and correlations between consumer awareness and behavior. For the qualitative aspect of the study, we employed a coding process for open-ended responses, followed by thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to better understand consumer perceptions and motivations. Additionally, we conducted discourse analysis to examine how consumers express their views and behaviors regarding the environmental implications of textile fashion (Fairclough, 1995).

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, we will first present the obtained results and provide a brief analysis. Subsequently, we will discuss the implications of the responses found, incorporating authors who support and enhance the discussion.

3.1 Sample Profile

This survey concerned women over the age of 18 whose sample profile was made up of the 18-65 group (Figure 1). 114 questionnaires were answered, with the following results.

Figure 1: Number of Individuals by Age Group.
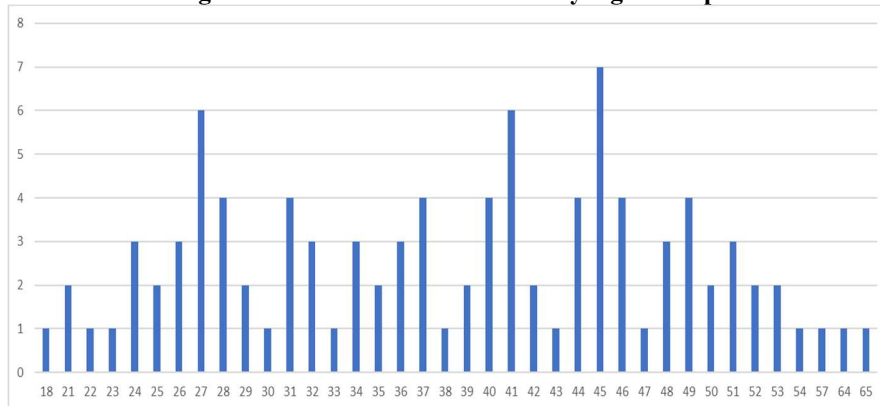
Source: prepared by the authors.

Analyzing the participation rates of women across different age groups in textile fashion consumption reveals distinct trends that require further investigation. The data shows a singular response from women aged 18 and 19, suggesting either a lack of engagement or a limited sample population within this demographic. In contrast, the 20 to 29 age group demonstrated significant interest, yielding 24 responses. This cohort typically includes individuals in the early stages of their careers, which may influence their consumption patterns and priorities in textile fashion.

Equally notable is the response rate from women aged 30 to 39, which also reached 24, underscoring a sustained interest in textile fashion among this group. However, the demographic that stands out most prominently is the 40 to 49 age group, which garnered 36 responses. This suggests a heightened engagement with textile fashion consumption, potentially reflecting financial stability or a greater emphasis on personal expression through fashion that often characterizes this segment.

In stark contrast, participation rates declined significantly in the 50 to 59 age bracket, which received only 11 responses, and further decreased among women aged 60 to 69, who contributed merely 2 responses. This decline may imply diminished interest in textile fashion consumption within these older demographics, or it could indicate a methodological limitation in the data collection process—particularly the reliance on online questionnaires, which may not effectively reach individuals in these age groups.

The analysis highlights a pronounced interest in textile fashion consumption among women aged 20 to 49, peaking in the 40 to 49 range. These insights prompt further exploration into the factors influencing these trends, including economic, social, and cultural variables that may inform consumer behavior across different age demographics in the realm of textile fashion. The issue of knowledge and behavior will be addressed in the following sections, detailing the factors influencing consumption decisions, including the impact of education and social behaviors on women's fashion preferences. Fletcher (2024) argues that "sustainable fashion is not just about styles and trends; it involves a deep commitment to ecological practices that minimize environmental impact and promote conscious consumption."

Table 1: Responses Counted by Age Group

Age Group	Number of Responses	Observations
18-19	1	Limited participation, possible lack of engagement or small sample size.
20-29	24	Significant interest, possibly due to early career stages and exploration of personal identity.
30-39	24	Sustained interest, reflecting personal and professional aspirations.
40-49	36	Higher engagement, possibly reflecting financial stability and personal expression.
50-59	11	Reduced participation, possibly less interest or limitation in online data collection reach.
60-69	2	Lower participation, possibly due to data collection methodologies or different priorities.

Source: prepared by the authors.

The following section presents the questions and the results obtained. A qualitative analysis will be conducted according to our methodology.

3.1 Survey Findings

Question 1: How many pieces of clothing do you purchase each month?
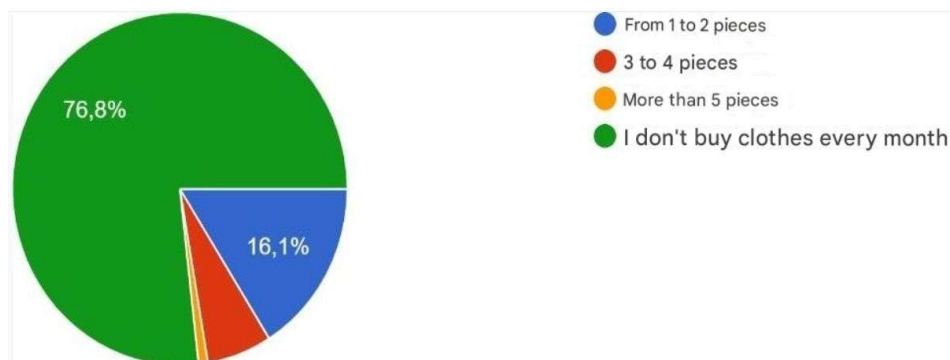
Source: prepared by the author.

The analysis of responses regarding monthly clothing purchases among women across various age groups indicates that clothing consumption habits are not directly correlated with age. The collected data reveals a diverse range of purchasing patterns, with many participants reporting that they do not engage in monthly clothing purchases, regardless of their age. This observation suggests that factors beyond age—such as individual preferences, lifestyle choices, and financial circumstances significantly influence fashion consumption behaviors.

Furthermore, the findings illustrate that women from different age demographics reported purchasing between one to two items of clothing per month, reflecting a moderate and intentional

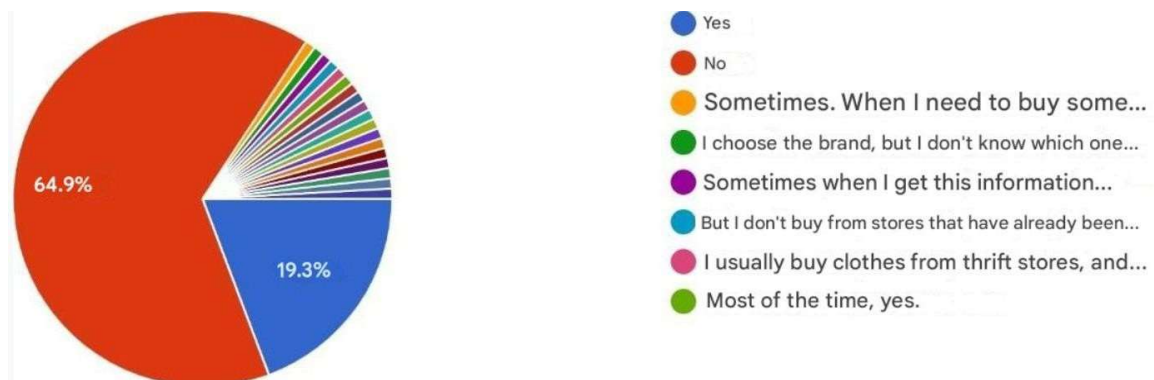approach to consumption. Conversely, some participants indicated a higher level of consumption, acquiring more than five items monthly. It is also noteworthy that a considerable number of women, regardless of age, do not engage in monthly clothing purchases. This trend may be attributed to various factors, including having a sufficiently filled wardrobe, prioritizing investments in other areas, or adhering to a timeless style that does not necessitate frequent updates.

Overall, these findings suggest that textile fashion consumption patterns cannot be generalized solely based on age. Instead, a myriad of individual factors and personal preferences play a crucial role in shaping purchasing decisions.

Question 2: What is most important to you when deciding to buy clothes?

Source: Prepared by the authors using the website wordclouds.com.

When considering what is most important in clothing purchases, various factors come into play that reflect individual preferences and needs. An analysis of responses reveals that fit and versatility are predominant concerns among participants, indicating a strong desire for practicality. Buyers prefer garments that can seamlessly integrate into their existing wardrobes and be suitable for multiple occasions.

Comfort and quality are also pivotal; respondents emphasized the need for clothing that ensures ease of wear without discomfort. Durable, well-made items are highly valued, suggesting that consumers are looking for longevity and quality in their purchases. Another significant factor is the alignment of clothing with personal style. Participants expressed the importance of selecting garments that resonate with their fashion sense, allowing for self-expression and confidence in their appearance.

Price emerged as a considerable factor as well. Some individuals focused on finding affordable options, while others sought a balance between price and quality. There seems to be a collective understanding that while affordability is essential, it should not come at the cost of quality. Ethical considerations are also gaining importance. Many participants mentioned awareness of clothing origin and the conditions under which they are produced. This reflects a deeper consciousness of fashion's impact on global supply chains and a strong desire to engage in responsible consumerism.

Table 2: Main Factors Influencing Clothing Purchase Decisions

Key Word	Description
Fit and Versatility	The need for the garment to fit well and be versatile, allowing it to be worn with different outfits and occasions.
Comfort	The importance of feeling comfortable in the clothes, avoiding discomfort or restriction of movement.
Quality	A strong preference for well-made and durable garments that ensure longevity and high product quality.
Personal Style	The need for clothing that aligns with one's own sense of fashion, enabling personal expression and confidence.
Price	Considerations regarding affordability, with a focus on balancing price with quality and value.
Practicality	The desire for practical clothing that can be easily incorporated into an existing wardrobe.
Ethical Considerations	Awareness of the origin of clothes and whether they are produced under fair working conditions.

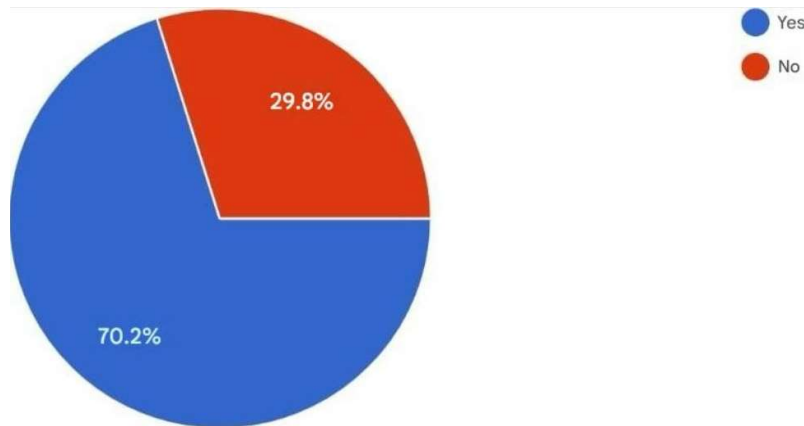Source: prepared by the authors using the wordclouds.com website.

Table 2 summarizes the key factors influencing clothing purchase decisions, highlighting the important themes identified in the analysis, such as fit, versatility, comfort, quality, price sensitivity, personal style alignment, and ethical considerations.

Question 3: Do you know who makes the clothes you buy?

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- Sometimes. When I need to buy some...
- I choose the brand, but I don't know which one...
- Sometimes when I get this information...
- But I don't buy from stores that have already been...
- I usually buy clothes from thrift stores, and...
- Most of the time, yes.

64.9%
19.3%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Question 4: Do you think it's important to know who produces your clothing?
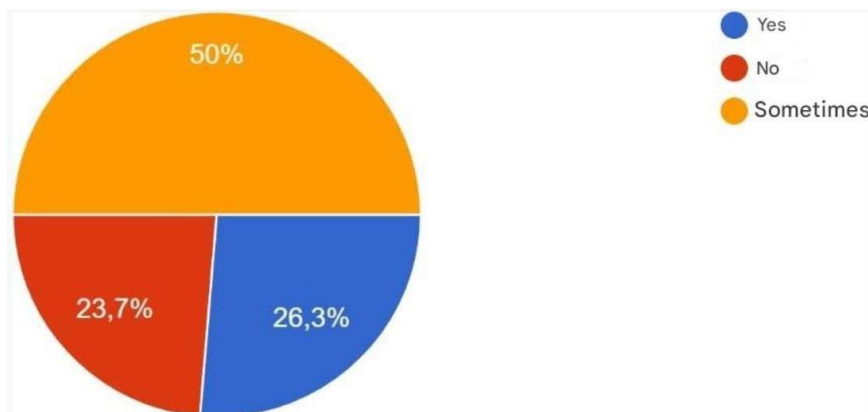

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The analysis of the data from questions three and four reveals a concerning trend in consumer awareness of the fashion industry. A significant 64.9% of participants indicated that they do not know who produces their clothing, while 70.2% believe it is important to understand the origins of their garments. This notable discrepancy highlights a critical issue in the global fashion sector: there is a disconnect between consumers' interests and their understanding of the production process and the origins of their products.

The fashion industry is characterized by a complex supply chain that often spans multiple continents. Many brands choose to outsource production to countries with lower labor costs, resulting in a considerable lack of transparency in the manufacturing process. Consequently, consumers frequently find themselves uninformed about who creates their clothing.

In response to this gap in knowledge and the demand for greater accountability, several initiatives have been launched to provide clearer information about product origins. One such initiative is the report titled "Traceability in the Clothing and Footwear Sector," published by the International Labour Organization (ILO). This report examines the concept of traceability within the context of labor rights and supply chain transparency, emphasizing its importance in the clothing and footwear industries.

Question 5: Do you know where the clothes you buy are made (city, country)?
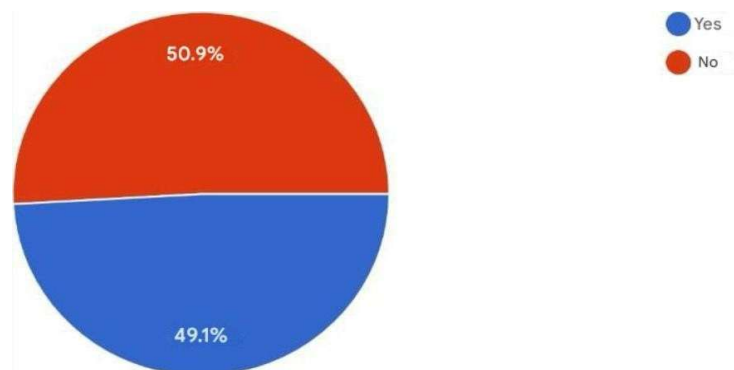

Source: prepared by the authors.

Question five, about knowing where the clothes are made, corroborates the previous finding, since the participants said they didn't know who made the clothes. On the other hand, they consider it important to acquire this knowledge.

Question 6: In your opinion, what are the most significant social, economic, and environmental impacts caused by the textile and clothing industry?"

Source: prepared by the author using wordclouds.com

For this question, 114 responses were collected. One of the most frequently mentioned concerns was environmental pollution. Many participants highlighted the textile industry's significant contribution to water and air pollution, as well as waste generation. They expressed apprehension regarding the improper disposal of dyeing chemicals, which can contaminate rivers and soils. Additionally, the environmental impact of textile and clothing waste was noted, often disposed of without responsible recycling or reuse practices. Several participants emphasized the importance of valuing natural fibers in Brazil and fostering a more sustainable market.

Another major concern raised was the exploitation of human labor. Participants reported issues related to inadequate wages, poor working conditions, and the lack of proper training and recognition for workers. The use of forced and child labor in the industry also posed serious social challenges. Furthermore, the existing pay gap between men and women highlighted the need for improved regulations and the enforcement of both existing and overlooked laws. Despite these challenges, participants acknowledged some positive aspects of the industry, such as job creation opportunities, particularly for women, and contributions to economic growth. However, the drawbacks—including the prevalence of low-quality products, low wages, and substantial waste—diminished these benefits. Notably, participants identified the rapid and constant changes in fashion trends as a primary factor contributing to the negative impacts discussed. This trend drives excessive consumption and waste. Moreover, the influence of market values perpetuates a cycle of unnecessary consumption, further exacerbating the negative social effects.

Table 3: Main Concerns

Main Concerns	Description
Environmental Pollution	Significant contribution of the textile industry to water and air pollution, as well as waste generation.
Disposal of Chemical Products	Improper disposal of dyeing chemicals, contaminating rivers and soils.
Textile and Clothing Waste	Environmental impact of textile and clothing waste, often disposed of without responsible recycling practices.
Labor Exploitation	Inadequate wages, poor working conditions, lack of proper training and recognition for workers.
Forced and Child Labor	Use of forced and child labor in the industry, presenting serious social challenges.
Wage Disparity	Existing pay gap between men and women, highlighting the need for better regulations and law enforcement.
Valuing Natural Fibers	Importance of valuing natural fibers in Brazil and fostering a more sustainable market.
Industry Benefits	Job creation opportunities, particularly for women, and contributions to economic growth.
Low-Quality Products	Prevalence of low-quality products in the industry.
Rapid Fashion Trend Changes	Rapid and constant changes in fashion trends, leading to excessive consumption and waste.
Market Values and Consumption	Influence of market values perpetuating a cycle of unnecessary consumption, exacerbating negative social effects.

Source: prepared by the authors using the wordclouds.com website.

Table 3 synthesizes the primary concerns of participants regarding the textile and apparel industry. Notable environmental issues such as pollution and improper disposal of chemicals, alongside labor exploitation, are highlighted. Concerns also extend to gender wage disparity and the need to value natural fibers to foster a more sustainable market. While the industry has positive contributions to employment and economic growth, rapid changes in fashion trends and excessive consumption exacerbate social and environmental impacts.

Question 7: Are you looking for information on the good social and environmental practices of fashion companies?

Source: prepared by the authors.

The inquiry concerning the quest for information on effective social and environmental practices within the fashion industry indicates that 50.9% of respondents do not actively seek such information, while only 41.1% express an interest in doing so. This result highlights a lack of active search for information related to sustainability by a significant portion of consumers, indicating a gap in engagement with effective social and environmental practices.

The analysis of the data reveals that many consumers are not actively engaging in seeking information about sustainable practices in fashion. This behavior can have important implications for the industry, as companies investing in social and environmental practices may not be receiving due recognition. Additionally, the lack of active search suggests a need to increase awareness and education about the importance of sustainability.

Question 8: Through which media do you learn about the good social and environmental practices of fashion companies?

Source: prepared by the authors using wordclouds.com.

For this open question, most of the female consumers who participated in the study identified internet platforms as their primary source of information. They reported searching the internet, browsing websites, and seeking news and publications about companies and their production practices. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, were also recognized as significant sources of information. The participants indicated that they follow the brands' social media accounts to stay updated on the companies' practices. For example, Interviewee A remarked, "I follow several brands on Instagram to see how they are behaving in terms of sustainability."

While some participants mentioned obtaining information about social and environmental practices directly from the brands, it is essential to approach this information with a critical mindset. Companies can portray themselves as socially and environmentally responsible without truly implementing sustainable practices throughout their supply chains. Interviewee B emphasized this concern by stating, "I usually look for information on the brands' websites, but I'm always a bit skeptical about the truthfulness."

Traditional media channels, such as newspapers and news programs, continue to play an important role in generating information and providing credibility for some participants. However, these sources were cited by a smaller portion of the sample compared to those who referenced the

internet and social networks. Interviewee C noted, "I trust newspaper reports and TV shows more to get more impartial information."

Another notable response came from participants who expressed limited interest or knowledge about the practices of the fashion industry. Some questioned the effectiveness of their actions as consumers in combating the negative environmental and social impacts of the industry. For instance, Interviewee D stated, "None, because for me this is all a big hypocrisy... It won't be my choices as a consumer that will end capitalism." A further response illustrated a lack of understanding regarding her potential for transformative action, as Interviewee E replied, "Unfortunately, I still don't do this kind of research. I don't know how to do it. Only when there's news in the media do I try to find out more? This usually happens in digital newspapers." These last two patterns of opinion suggest that there is still much work to be done in environmental communication to raise awareness, sensitize consumers, and promote more conscious consumption practices.

A smaller subset of participants indicated that they actively seek information from alternative sources. The following media were mentioned: blogs, documentaries, and organizations focused on promoting ethical and sustainable fashion. These consumers demonstrate a strong commitment to informed consumption, as they are willing to venture beyond traditional and official media channels to acquire information.

Table 4: Media Sources for Learning About Social and Environmental Practices in Fashion

Media Source	Percentage of Participants	Comments from Participants
Internet Platforms	Majority	"I follow several brands on Instagram to see how they are behaving in terms of sustainability."
Social Media (e.g., Instagram)	Significant Portion	"I usually look for information on the brands' own websites, but I'm always a bit skeptical about the truthfulness."
Traditional Media	Smaller Portion	"I trust newspaper reports and TV shows more to get more impartial information."
Limited Interest/Knowledge	Not Specified	"None, because for me this is all a big hypocrisy... It won't be my choices as a consumer that will end capitalism."
Limited Interest/Knowledge	Not Specified	"Unfortunately, I still don't do this kind of research. I don't know how to do it. Only when there's news in the media do I try to find out more. This usually happens in digital newspapers."
Alternative Sources	Smaller Subset	"Blogs, documentaries, and organizations focused on promoting ethical and sustainable fashion."

Source: prepared by the authors using wordclouds.

Question 9: What type of dissemination do you think is most effective for learning about the social and environmental impacts of the fashion industry?
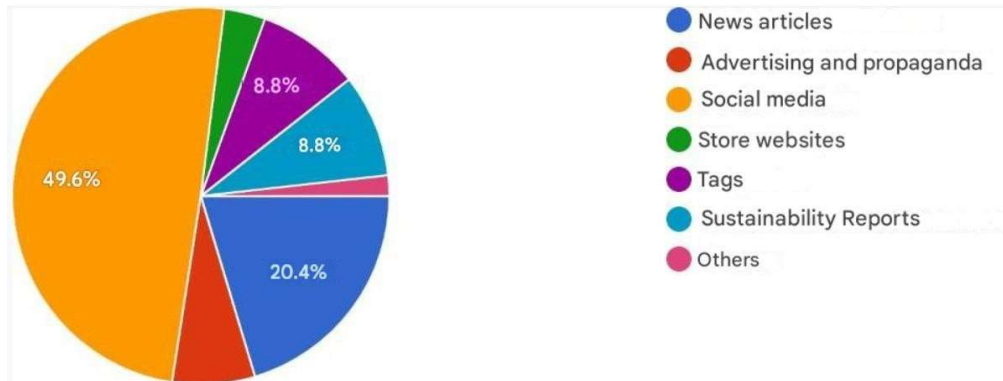
Source: prepared by the author.

The findings from question 9 reveal that 49.6% of consumers deem social networks as the most effective means of acquiring information regarding the social and environmental impacts of the fashion industry. Following this, journalistic materials, which are traditionally perceived as reliable sources, account for 20.4%, while sustainability reports and labels each hold an 8.8% preference.

This significant trend in consumer information-seeking behavior emphasizes the predominance of social media as a channel for disseminating information about sustainability in fashion. The immediate accessibility and broad reach of these platforms facilitate rapid information sharing, appealing to consumers' desire for timely updates. However, this reliance raises critical concerns regarding the quality and accuracy of the information disseminated. The nature of social media algorithms often prioritizes engagement over factual correctness, potentially leading to the spread of superficial, biased, or misleading content. This can overshadow crucial and nuanced discussions about the socio-environmental ramifications of the fashion industry, as users may become ensconced in "information bubbles" that reinforce their pre-existing beliefs and limit exposure to diverse perspectives.

In contrast, the lower preference for journalistic materials—despite their depth and reliability—signals a notable shift in media consumption habits favoring immediate and digital content. This trend poses a potential risk, as journalistic sources typically engage in comprehensive fact-checking and provide a more rigorous exploration of complex issues, which could enhance consumer understanding. The reliance on social media may inadvertently constrict the diversity of information available to consumers. The monopolistic nature of these platforms could result in a homogenized and potentially manipulated representation of sustainability issues, diminishing critical analysis. Additionally, the rising prevalence of greenwashing—where companies misleadingly communicate their sustainability efforts—highlights the necessity for consumers to differentiate between genuine and illusory sustainable practices.

The limited attention given to sustainability reports and labels, each preferred by only 8.8% of consumers, underscores a significant opportunity for raising awareness regarding the importance of these documents. Such reports provide detailed, verifiable insights into corporate practices and can empower consumers to make informed decisions. Enhancing the visibility and accessibility of sustainability reports is essential for building consumer trust and promoting more responsible business conduct within the fashion industry.

Questin 10: Have you ever stopped buying a piece of clothing in response (or protest) to a negative environmental attitude on the part of the manufacturer or store? If so, please tell us: what was it?
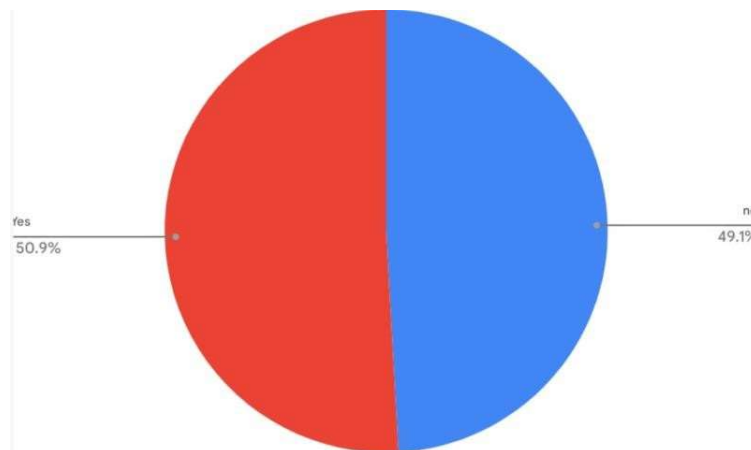
Source: prepared by the author.

This final question aimed to evaluate consumers' stances regarding negative events they had heard about from stores or manufacturers. The findings revealed that 50.9% of respondents had already refrained from purchasing clothing in response to negative environmental actions by a manufacturer or store, while 49.1% had not. Among those who affirmed their decision to boycott, just over 50% shared their experiences and reasons for their actions.

A recurring case mentioned was the boycott of Riachuelo due to allegations of slave labor. Participants acknowledged that such exploitation is not exclusive to a single department store, but rather a systemic issue. They expressed frustration over the lack of information regarding the extensive textile and fashion industry, as well as the absence of accessible alternatives. Another frequently cited brand was Zara; reports of slave labor within Zara's supply chain led a significant number of individuals to cease purchasing from the brand. The association of Zara with contemporary slave practices significantly influenced individuals' purchasing decisions.

Political affiliations also played a crucial role, prompting some participants to assert that they avoided buying from companies that take positions contrary to their own beliefs. Additionally, accusations of worker exploitation resulted in the avoidance of specific brands, such as Havan and C&A, which had faced similar allegations. Some participants acknowledged a degree of hypocrisy, admitting that inexpensive clothing often comes at the expense of workers who earn low wages and experience hunger. However, they emphasized the need for information and alternatives that better align with their values.

Furthermore, some participants indicated that they deliberately avoided purchasing from brands associated with particular political groups, citing concerns about the impact of these companies' policies on the environment, minority rights, and democracy. One participant even mentioned encouraging friends to engage in not only the clothing boycott but also to avoid other establishments linked to far-right politicians. Participant Z stated:

> I don't consume anything from companies that openly support politicians who are against the environment, against minorities, and essentially against democracy. I stopped buying from numerous department stores, such as Riachuelo, for example. And I still tell friends and close people to boycott as well, not only clothes but also restaurants, and gyms, if they know they support fascism. (Z, Participant. 2024)

Although not all participants personally engaged in boycott practices, a common trait among those who did was the belief in the importance of these actions. They were motivated by concerns regarding the environment, workers' rights, and political ideologies, particularly within the textile and fashion industry, as well as the lack of affordable alternatives. Zara was another frequently cited brand; reports of slave labor within its supply chain led a significant number of individuals to decide to stop purchasing from the brand. Zara's association with contemporary slave practices influenced individuals' purchasing decisions.

3.1 Discussion and Implications

The analysis of the results reveals that the alignment of clothing with personal style is a crucial factor for consumers. This finding corroborates Lipovetsky's (1987) assertion that fashion serves as a key medium for personal expression and individuality within society. As Lipovetsky argues, fashion transcends mere aesthetics and becomes an integral part of an individual's identity and self-representation.

Kasser (2022) suggests that the pursuit of cheaper products may stem from materialistic values, which can potentially affect overall life satisfaction. While Kasser's work does not directly address low-priced products, his broader analysis of materialism implies that an excessive emphasis on material possessions can lead to diminished life satisfaction. This perspective is critical for understanding consumer behavior in the fashion industry, where the allure of affordable clothing often overshadows considerations of ethical production and sustainability.

Question 7 indicates that a significant portion of consumers is not actively seeking information about social and environmental practices in the fashion industry. This phenomenon can be contextualized within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior, as articulated by Icek Ajzen (1985). This theory posits that an individual's behavior is shaped by three primary constructs: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of sustainable fashion, positive attitudes toward sustainability, recognition of social norms that promote these practices, and perceived capacity to engage in sustainable actions significantly influence the pursuit of relevant information.

Research conducted by Kang and Hustvedt (2014), published in the Journal of Cleaner Production, supports this analysis by demonstrating that consumers with greater environmental and social awareness value and actively seek information about companies' sustainable practices in the fashion sector. This underscores the importance of educational and awareness initiatives to increase the proportion of individuals actively seeking information about commendable social and environmental practices.

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3.2.1 Social Media

The preference for social media raises important questions about the influence and power of these platforms in shaping opinions and behaviors. Social networks, with their vast accessibility and reach, possess the ability to disseminate information quickly and effectively. However, the near-monopolistic dominance of social media in communication presents significant challenges.

Noam Chomsky, one of the most prominent critics of the media, argues that "the medium is the message" (Chomsky, 1999). According to this perspective, how information is transmitted can be just as important, if not more so, than the content itself. Social networks, with their complex algorithms, often prioritize content that generates the most engagement, regardless of the veracity or importance of the information. This can result in the dissemination of biased or superficial information, while crucial and complex issues, such as the socio-environmental impacts of the fashion industry, may not receive due attention.

Furthermore, the monopoly of social networks can limit the diversity of information sources, leading to a homogeneous and potentially manipulated view of the issues at hand. Dependence on these platforms for information can undermine the role of journalistic materials, which have traditionally been viewed as the most reliable and detailed sources.

The practice of greenwashing—where companies employ misleading marketing tactics to create a false impression of sustainability—is a growing concern. Greenpeace's "The Dirty Fashion Report" (2020) reveals unsustainable practices in fashion supply chains and exposes the prevalent greenwashing by certain brands. This report highlights how some companies utilize green marketing strategies to create an illusion of sustainability while neglecting true environmental responsibility.

Criticism of the social media monopoly is also addressed by other authors, such as Shoshana Zuboff in her book "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism" (2019). Zuboff explores how large tech companies use user data to shape behavior and maximize profits, often at the expense of privacy and public welfare.

Mário Kaplún offers an important perspective on communication, emphasizing the need for participatory and dialogical approaches. According to Kaplún (1998), "Communication must be a process of collective exchange and construction of knowledge and not a mere unilateral transmission of information." This view reinforces the importance of diversifying communication methods, ensuring that information is accessible and relevant to all audiences.

Therefore, although social media is regarded as the most efficient way to learn about the impacts of the fashion industry, it is crucial to promote a more balanced and diverse approach. Environmental communication and education policies should incorporate multiple platforms while also valuing journalistic materials, sustainability reports, and labels to ensure a more comprehensive and contextualized dissemination of information (Vicentini & Queiroz, 2024).

3.2.2 Life Cycle Pedagogy for Communication and Environmental Education Policies

To address the identified challenges, Life Cycle Pedagogy (LCP) Applied to environmental communication emerges as an effective approach. LCP aims to provide individuals with resources that enable them to "learn about natural, human, financial, and material resources related to production, marketing, consumption, and disposal" (Martirani&Bonzanini, 2016, p. 112). This approach gives individuals a comprehensive understanding of the socio-environmental impacts generated throughout a product, thereby promoting a more informed and responsible consumption pattern.

> The Life Cycle Pedagogy that we are proposing here, or LCP, is identified with critical and emancipatory environmental education approaches aimed at the problem of consumption and consumer education, to develop evaluative capacities for conscious consumption (MARTIRANI; BONZANINI, 2016, p. 112).

In this context, Law 13.186, known as the Environmental Education Law, was enacted in November 2015 and establishes communication policies for sustainable consumption. It is essential to highlight that this law mandates the promotion of "broad dissemination of the cycle of life of products, appropriate techniques for managing natural resources, and business production and management" (Brasil, 2015).

Understanding the life cycle of products and the impacts at each stage is crucial for promoting more conscious and responsible consumption. Knowledge of the product life cycle enables consumers to make informed decisions, considering not only price and quality but also the environmental and social impacts associated with the production, distribution, use, and disposal of products. This holistic approach is fundamental for reducing the negative impacts of the fashion industry and promoting more sustainable business practices. By empowering consumers with this knowledge, we can foster a culture of consumption that values transparency, responsibility, and sustainability, thereby contributing to a more balanced and just future for all.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations:

4.1 Conclusion

The responses provided a range of evidence, demonstrating that female consumers consider a combination of factors when making decisions about purchasing clothing. Functionality, personal style, comfort, quality, price, and ethical considerations all play a role in their decision-making process and influence consumption. It is important to note that individual priorities and preferences can vary; even when trends and verified repetitions are taken into account, the decision-making process can be unique to each person.

There is also a significant proportion of consumers who are unaware of the origin of their clothes. This lack of knowledge often results from cultural and geographical distancing, as well as the absence of information regarding the origin of their garments, since not all companies within the textile fashion chain adopt transparent communication policies. Generally, consumers are primarily concerned with the end product—such as style, fit, and affordability—rather than the intricate network that brings these garments to them. Nonetheless, understanding where clothes come from is fundamental to making informed purchasing decisions. By learning about who makes them and under what circumstances, consumers can actively support brands that prioritize fair working conditions, sustainable practices, and responsible sourcing. This knowledge empowers individuals to contribute to positive changes for the planet, allowing their fashion choices to align with their ethical values.

Regarding the subject of communication addressed in this research, the internet, social networks, and brand communications by companies play significant roles in informing individuals about social and environmental practices in the textile fashion industry. However, some participants expressed limited interest in or knowledge of such issues, highlighting the need for ongoing environmental education and awareness campaigns linked to environmental communication policies. In conclusion, the participants emphasize the necessity for more information, transparency, and accessible alternatives to enable them to make more sustainable and ethical purchasing choices.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several actionable recommendations can be proposed for stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and companies in the fashion industry.
4.2.1 Policymakers:
  - Implement regulations that mandate transparency in the fashion industry, requiring companies to disclose detailed information about their social and environmental practices.
  - Strengthen laws to prevent and penalize greenwashing, ensuring that marketing claims accurately reflect a company's sustainability efforts.
 - Promote initiatives that support the development and dissemination of sustainability reports and labels, making them more accessible and understandable to consumers.
4.2.2 Educators:
 - Incorporate sustainability and ethical consumption topics into educational curricula to raise awareness and foster critical thinking among students.
  - Develop and disseminate educational materials that explain the life cycle of fashion products, highlighting the socio-environmental impacts at each stage.
- Partner with industry professionals to provide real-world insights and case studies that illustrate the importance of sustainable practices in the fashion sector.
4.2.3 Companies in the Fashion Industry:
 - Adopt and communicate transparent practices, providing consumers with accurate and comprehensive information about the social and environmental impacts of their products.
- Engage in third-party certifications and audits to validate sustainability claims and build consumer trust.
- Invest in sustainable technologies and practices throughout the supply chain, prioritizing ethical labor practices and environmentally friendly materials.

4.3 Call to Action

To address transparency and education gaps, all stakeholders must collaborate and take proactive measures. Policymakers must enact and enforce regulations that promote transparency and prevent greenwashing. Educators should integrate sustainability into their curricula, empowering future generations with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed choices. Companies must commit to ethical and sustainable practices, ensuring that their marketing reflects their genuine efforts.

By working together, we can bridge the information gap, foster a culture of conscious consumption, and drive the fashion industry toward a more sustainable and equitable future. Understanding the life cycle of products and the impacts at each stage is essential to promote more conscious and responsible consumption. Knowledge of the product life cycle allows consumers to make informed decisions, considering not only price and quality but also the environmental and social impacts associated with the production, distribution, use, and disposal of products. This holistic approach is fundamental to reducing the negative impacts of the fashion industry and promoting more sustainable business practices. By empowering consumers with this knowledge, we can foster a consumption culture that values transparency, responsibility, and sustainability, contributing to a more balanced and just future for all.

4.4 Study Contributions

This study offers significant contributions to understanding consumer behavior in the fashion industry and highlights the importance of transparent communication and continuous education. The findings underscore the need for policies that promote transparency and combat greenwashing, as well as the inclusion of sustainability topics in educational curricula. Additionally, the proposed recommendations provide a roadmap for policymakers, educators, and companies in the fashion industry, aiming to promote more sustainable and ethical practices. By addressing the identified gaps, this study contributes to advancing knowledge and practices that can lead to a more sustainable and equitable fashion industry.

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