



‘An investigation into how corporate social responsibility influences
consumer behaviour regarding fast fashion ‘

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to analyse if corporate social responsibility (CSR) influences consumer behaviour in regards to fast fashion. This research topic aims to discover if multinational fast fashion corporations are influencing consumers through their use of social responsibility or if consumers are focused on only the products they sell. To establish what truly influences consumers, it is essential to review previous literature to gain an insight into how fast fashion has developed through the years. Throughout this research paper, there will be extensive knowledge explained through the literature review about the research topic. There are 4 main topics in which this literature review contains that contributed to the remainder of the research paper. These topics are the fast fashion supply chain, CSR in the clothing industry, ethics in fashion and consumer behaviour influences in fashion. These topics helped to form a basis on which this research paper can collaborate each topic to construct multiple hypothesis on the research question.

The methodological approach to this research paper involved qualitative and quantitative research methods. The main quantitative research method conducted in this research was a survey. The sample in which this survey was distributed to was a wide demographic of people mainly from a residential area. The data was collected using a Facebook area group page as this was the most suitable method to reach out to people. The survey consists of 10 questions with multiple choice answering. The data from the survey was tested using Cronbachs Alpha which measures the reliability of the answers of the respondents.

The key findings of this research paper found that consumers are not influenced by CSR. It was found that consumers impatience and financial position outweighed their moral compass regarding caring about how their favourite fast fashion brands produce their clothing. This was found and proven using previous literature and the data collected through the survey. These findings will have an impact on future generations of consumers as adopting the ways of older generations consumer behaviour will lead to an increase in pollution and dismaying unethical ways of production. This will lead on to further investigating younger generations to see if they have been influenced by their elders or influenced by their favourite fast fashion brands. Further research into fast fashion corporations CSR can be conducted to gain a perspective from both sides of the retail sector.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study aims to analyse how corporate social responsibility (CSR) influences consumer behaviour in today's fast fashion market. It is important for people to understand the term 'fast fashion' as many people think it is garments that can be worn for a short period of time and discarded because they are of a low cost and quality. Therefore, the term fast fashion creates different images in the minds of the consumer. Fast Fashion is seen as a trend mostly by consumers. As explained by (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2009) they state that due to the fast fashions responsiveness and its low maintaining costs, the business model of fast fashion became a trend to the apparel industry and a trend to consumers demonstrated by the quick turnaround of fashionable items for a low price. Consumers can keep up with ever changing fashion styles and trends for a fraction of the price, in a quick amount of time. Supply chains tend to be extremely responsive in satisfying the market with the clothing apparel desired by the customer. Fast fashion production is one of the biggest industries worldwide. As it is one of the biggest industries, it is also one of the highest polluting. The Inditex group, who own some of the biggest fast fashion brands worldwide such as Zara, Pull & Bear, Stradivarius name a few, possess the highest levels of greenhouse gas emissions (Statista.com, 2022).

This is where this paper aims to analyse if the consumers are influenced by how the company provides the apparel, or if they are solely interested in their financial wellbeing and trendiness. As seen in lower priced retail stores, the turnaround of the design of clothing is done in a very short period. When a new, up to date, fashionable designer brand is seen being worn by a celebrity or influencer, fast fashion brands will tend to replicate them within legal requirements at a cheap cost. The consumer will then wear them for a very short period and more than likely discard it without any consideration. As seen in the United States, around 85% of clothing ends up in a form of landfill, with each average American discarding around 80 pounds of textile waste annually to these landfills (Tabishat, 2022). This is a prime demonstration of the hyper-speed fast fashion model. To gain an understanding of how fast fashion differs from traditional, designer – led fashion outlets, we will look at how fast fashion became an ever – growing fashion phenomenon. It is important to gain a background understanding of the fast fashion industry as it will help consumers to gain an understanding if the fast fashion clothing companies, they love are attracting them due to their up-to-date fashion trends, or if the customer

cares about the company's CSR. This will identify if consumers morals outweigh have an impact on their purchasing intention.

Corporate social responsibility has become increasingly important in recent times and research on this topic is important to discuss. The aim of this research paper is to get an understanding from a consumer's point of view if the idea or understanding of fast fashion has an influence on their purchasing intent. While CSR can be defined under numerous aspects such as ethical, social, economic, and legal responsibility, this research paper will aim to analyse each topic to see if they have an impact on the consumers view of the fast fashion industry. Fast fashion has evolved very quickly since the 1970's and 1980's as companies in Europe realized that it is quicker and more cost effective to produce garments in foreign countries such as China and Indonesia as it is closer to where to materials for the garments are sourced. One of the first companies to introduce the fast fashion method of supply was Zara. Zara-Inditex originally began trading in the 1960's by Spanish entrepreneur Amancio Ortega Gaona.

Amancio changed the fashion industry with sales of \$8 billion per year as of 2006 which signalled that the new fast fashion model has made major development while influencing other companies to replicate its technique. The Zara company describes the fast fashion model as *"creativity and quality design together with a rapid response to market demands* (Crofton, 2007). As the garments are being produced it's not only the production of the garments that speeds up, but also the trend of what is being seen as 'stylized' being produced a lot quicker. This can lead to us asking questions about CSR. Do consumers purchase because its cheap stylish and affordable, or do they purchase it based off the belief of the company's social responsibility? CSR is not focused just on how organizations have that responsibility; it is also the way consumers interact with these corporations to influence their socially responsible marketing and production methods.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will explain 4 key elements which help to break down multiple theories which will enable a view on various aspects which surround fast fashion company's structure. As the fast fashion model is generally a new concept it is an ever-evolving business model which is only increasing in size and speed.

2.1 FAST FASHION SUPPLY CHAIN MODEL

Fast fashion is an ever accelerating and expanding business model in which most people would describe as clothing which they purchase for a low price, and wear for a very short period. The main theory of fast fashion is a business model that shortens the purchasing cycle and the time it takes to bring new fashion products into stores to meet peak consumer demand. As explained by (Barnes & Greenwood, 2006) 'Out with the old, in with the new, as quick as possible'. Due to the ever-changing demand by consumers, this then leads to an increase of pressure on the suppliers to deliver the products within a very short lead time. However, fast fashion is an extensive supply chain model which retailers acquire the latest styles and promptly sell them as soon as possible. World renowned fashion retailers such as Zara, H&M, BooHoo.com and Primark to name a few, have adopted the strategy of fast fashion successfully while also persistently reviewing their product lines to keep up to date with the latest fashion trends. Within the retail environment, it is essential that the supply chain is actively moving as the supply chains can be seen as the competitor, and not the companies. (Jacobs, 2020) makes an interesting point in explaining that major companies such as H&M and Primark used to be concentrated on slashing prices to push sales, now it is identified as who has the better supply chain.

While the supply chain is a highly important piece to the puzzle in fast fashion, it is also important to recognize the companies' designers and branding. If a brand is known for more fashionable items but had a slightly slower or altered supply chain, then some consumers might tend to purchase from them due to the overall appearance. An example being comparing Primark and BooHoo.com's garments. Primark may have a better supply chain, but BooHoo might procure more fashionable items. While agreeing with (Jacobs, 2020) it is paramount to identify the overall

brand image instead of focusing on the supply chain, however saying this, the supply chain must be as fast paced and up to date as possible.

As fast fashion revolves around getting the current trending garments from production to shelf as quick as possible, it is important to compare traditional supply chains, to fast fashion supply chains to openly examine just how different they are. The traditional supply chain strategy was developed in Europe throughout the 1960's and is the method of sourcing the production of the clothing garments from countries which possess a low wage which then leads to lower labour costs (Backs, Jahnke, Lupke, Stucken, & Stummer, 2020) The downfall to this procurement strategy of garments is the transport times are extended which then effects the flexibility of the logistical processes of the company. There is an extreme complexity in shortening the production cycle while also adjusting to the rapid changing fashion trends. Corporations must take into consideration their markets before they pursue their selected supply chain model.

2.2 CSR IN THE CLOTHING SECTOR

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concept has been studied since the 1930's and 1940's. It is only since the 1970's that it has been debated to highlight its two main positions which are that CSR is used to increase a company's profits. The other being that a company has both economic and social responsibilities in order to satisfy the stakeholders by promoting corporate development through the use of CSR (Arrigo, 2013). Upon further reading, the (Arrigo, 2013) references that CSR is identified in a hierarchical order being:

1. Economic responsibility: Relating to the corporation producing value and employment
2. Legal Responsibility: Legal regulations and sanctions
3. Ethical Responsibility: This is what the broader society will see
4. Philanthropic Responsibility: Corporations seeking to make the world a better place

As the author identifies the hierarchical order of CSR, there is room to pay more attention to ethical and philanthropic responsibility in which this paper aims to analyse its influence on consumers.

In recent years, Ireland had become the second country in the world to declare a climate and biodiversity emergency. This was seen in 2019 when Ireland's report on climate action was accepted by both the Government and opposition parties without a vote (Cunningham, 2019). This is illustrated by (Clancy, 2022) of Oxfam Ireland stating that half a tonne of clothing is being dumped every minute into a landfill in Ireland. He goes on to state that this produces over 12 tonnes of carbon emissions, the same as driving 65,000 km in a car. This harsh reality does fall back onto the consumer as to why they do not up-cycle or donate unused clothing? However, it also sheds light on why the multi-national clothing companies are not taking any blame for these mass amounts of clothing being dumped? It is clear that companies will not do this, however this has to change at some point in time. (Arrigo, 2013) conveys that while multinational firms possess economical and sustainable responsibilities, their stakeholders are most interested in corporate development. The use of the famous clothing company GAP clearly identifies if they value their economical and legal responsibilities over their ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. While practicing CSR can increase corporate identification, it is vital to understand what makes up that corporate identification with consumers. Positive consumer reactions are the main focal point regarding CSR.

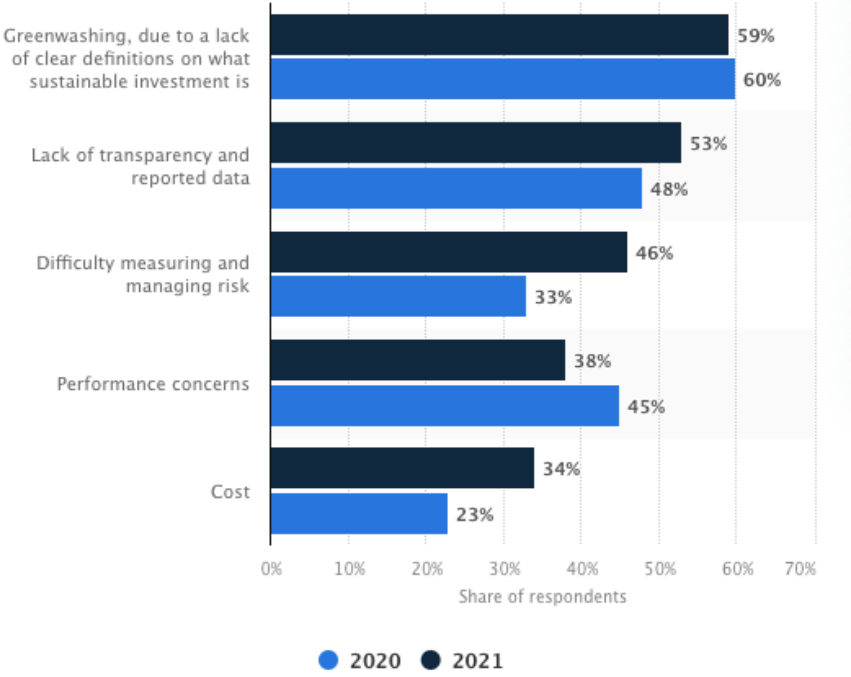
Consumers want to be associated with brands which amplify a brand promise which ensures the socially responsible attitude regarding its product. As discussed earlier, (Arrigo, 2013) states that CSR initiatives have a positive effect on consumers in which this returns an increase in the value of the brand. This then combines ethical responsibility and philanthropic responsibility to create that strong consumer loyalty. Creating this link then leads to an internal hypothesis of “does CSR influence consumer behaviour?”. The fast fashion industry sells the majority of their clothing at a low price point. This too influences the consumer to purchase. Would the consumer continue to purchase from their favourite fast fashion brands if they knew about the environmental impact which remains hidden as mentioned before? This leads us to gain a more in-depth knowledge of the consumer to see what is it that their favourite brands are doing for them, or what they are not doing for them.

2.3 ETHICS IN FAST FASHION

While companies are engaging in corporate sustainability (CS), which is the corporate and economic growth and maximization of profitability, they must ensure to meet more social and sustainable goals. These goals can be environmental, judicial, social justice and many more (Nguyen, 2020). This management paradigm is the core of what this paper aims to discuss. Do these ethical values, along with the more economical values, help to influence consumers to purchase fast fashion clothing? While its evident that consumers want to purchase cheap, fashionable, decent quality items, do they care about where, how, or when they're made? (Nguyen, 2020) makes a clear point that corporations practice CSR "*in a voluntary and philanthropic way to build public image*". This is mainly to boost the corporations' profits. Major corporations' priorities are not to benefit the environment. This is a common marketing front known as 'Greenwashing'. This term refers to corporations who will manipulate their customers using a marketing strategy to appear more environmentally friendly, sustainable, or more natural.

As Greenwashing can be seen in numerous multi-national companies outside of the garment industry, (Aggarwal & Kadyan, 2014) offers a breakdown of the drivers of greenwashing into the market. These drivers are composed of market external drivers, Newmarket external drivers, organizational drivers, and individual psychological drivers. All these drivers combine to enable companies to engage in these greenwashing practices. Individual psychological drivers lead us onto discussing consumer behaviour influences. These drivers are fed by organizational drivers and is what leads to consumers to believe in their greenwashing acts, or to bypass them. (Bowen & Correa, 2014) states greenwashing to be a combination of both '*green*' regarding the environment and '*whitewash*' regarding its concealment of inaccurate facts. Companies who engage in this form of public image marketing, then contradict their philanthropic responsibility as previously mentioned in which is important to convey to their consumers. Hence, no consumer wants to be associated with a company who wants to cause the world to suffer or not be a pleasant place. This is where Greenwashing comes into question.

Greenwashing can affect the corporations’ chances of receiving sustainable investors. This can have an influence on consumers if they witness that their favourite fast fashion brands are not receiving any investment due to their immoral practices. Below is a chart describing the main barriers to sustainable investing in which we see Greenwashing being the leading reason.



(Statista, 2021)

FIGURE 1 MAIN BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT

As the graph above is focused on institutional investors, it is important to see that these investors do not have a clear image of the corporation’s sustainability. Greenwashing does occur in multiple different sectors such as the automobile sector, food and beverages sector and electronic sector. The garment sector is the most important. This comes after an investigation into the fashion industry reveals that it is responsible for between 2% and 8% of global carbon emissions (Butler, 2022). From an ethical standpoint, fast fashion corporations should be considering their future regarding the way they produce and transport their products to customers. If it is seen that investors are not willing to invest in their company due to them not being clear of what their sustainable

focus is, this will lead to a slippery downfall for fast fashion corporations who are engaging in such unethical practices.

2.4 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR INFLUENCES IN FASHION

Upon reviewing the supported literature, the author describes fashion buying is “traditionally driven by a fixed calendar of trade fairs, fashion shows, fabric events etc.”. While this statement can be seen as a realistic approach to the recognition of fashion trends, the consumers who adopt the fast fashion purchasing cycle are influenced often by online celebrity/influencer trends. (Trivedi, 2018) analysed the comparative efficacy of fashion marketers hiring an attractive celebrity to endorse their brands apparel. The literature shed light on if attractive celebrity influencers translated a higher impact on purchase intention of fashion brands. The findings showed us that celebrity influencers had a higher influence on consumers. As these well-known influencers are contracted to model or show off the latest’s trends from the fast fashion company they are contracted with, the quick rotation of trending clothing which they model accounts for the rapid discarding of clothing. Consumers who are loyal to these brands and influencers will adapt to these rapidly changing trends which is what the clothing company wants. Investigating the effect of liked-celebrities influence to brands, (Rowley, Gilman, & Sherman, 2019) state that the psychological effect of celebrity endorsement leads to the consumer having little interest to process deepened information given in the advertisement. This is vital information as this research paper will demonstrate if consumers consider the celebrity/influence, before the values that the brand may try to portray. It is also important to understand what the company uses these celebrity influences for. Do they use celebrity influence to mask their CSR which they may not be utilizing? This leads us to discover a hypothesis featured in the research question below.

Without consumer behaviour, fast fashion brands would not witness a turnover. Fast fashion companies must ensure their quick and fast paced business strategy is effectively designed in order to maintain their consumers. The consumer behaviour can depend on this. (Cook & Yurchisin, 2016) explains the thought process behind consumers favourite brands. They explain that “*the latest fashion trends in small quantities at a reasonable price induces consumers to pay full price instead of waiting for sales*” (Cook and Yurchisin, 2016, p. 143). This enhances our vision of

consumers impatience to receive the newest trends, bypassing any corporate social responsibility the company may or may not have. This is in order pay full price instead of waiting for their favourite items to go on sale. This leads us to investigate if consumers purchase for accessibility of the items or the affordability while also not considering the ethical implications. As consumers are debating their newest fast fashion purchase, they will also understand that the product may only have a short life cycle within the store. The hastily approach to purchasing items that consumers know will have a short life cycle is what makes fast fashion companies so successful.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTION

Multi-national organizations tend to mask some of the main CSR positions mentioned in the literature review by focusing on other positions in that range. What is meant by this is corporations sometimes try to distract the consumer by focusing its CSR on one aspect more than another. For example, modern day fast fashion companies will advertise their clothing with low prices and celebrity endorsements so that the consumer doesn't perceive the brand as unethical or unsustainable. Therefore, it is important to formulate an objective of; do these CSR methods influence the consumer. The aim of this research is to discuss if the companies CSR encourages consumers to purchase from them and to understand what the consumer acknowledges before they purchase fast fashion items. This will guide this research paper to establish qualitative and quantitative information to see if these CSR practices influence consumer behaviours. To gain an insight into this claim, 4 hypotheses are proposed:

H1) CSR does influence consumers to purchase clothing from fast fashion retailers.

H2) Fast fashion retailers implement CSR solely to make sales.

H3) Fast fashion retailers need to improve their CSR to gain more market share.

H4) Fast fashion retailers can have effective CSR and sales without a compromise.

The use of qualitative information collected for this study will be done using a survey distributed to a select population. A survey will be key in in this research topic as its information from the group in which is being reported on. It is essential to harvest an insight into how consumers think before they purchase fast fashion items. The survey will help to answer several objectives which will be seen throughout this research paper. These objectives are gaining a knowledge of consumer behaviour, companies' effectiveness in influencing the consumer behaviour, an in-depth view of company's methods of retailing fast fashion and seeing if the public believe that change should be made. Completing these objectives will attain a strong viewpoint on the hypotheses mentioned above to enable us to see if they are correct or incorrect.

As the aim of this research is to analyse how corporate social responsibility influences consumer behaviour, a survey will allow this research to gain a surface level insight into how consumers are influenced to purchase from chosen companies. This survey will ask the public questions regarding their purchasing behaviours and will also gain key pieces of information such as their age, favourite retailers, spending habits etc. The findings of this survey will help this research paper to gain a foundational level of knowledge surrounding the main research question. It will provide results from various demographics and backgrounds and will allow this research paper to analyse the findings from first-hand sources in a quick amount of time. The questions presented in the survey will be easy for the reader to answer while also helping them gain some knowledge about the topic in which this paper entails.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to describe the research methodology taken into consideration and how each step was conducted to address the research question and hypotheses. The methodological approach used in this research paper includes quantitative research. The quantitative research carried out is through the use of a survey. The aim of this research was to address a theoretical issue. Therefore, a survey was most suitable. A survey allowed multiple respondents to share their opinions which allowed a clear interpretation and in-depth measurement of the respondent's answers. The use of quantitative research allowed generalisable knowledge which can be collaborated with existing studies to form assumptions and to enable the research question to be answered. The use of Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was a helpful tool to test the reliability of the survey given. This chapter will include the main elements used to undertake the methodological approach. Each element will clearly explain how and why the use of a survey was implemented and if any recommendations and limitations were discovered.

'Greenwashing' is a relevant term when it comes to discussing how multinational companies promises to seek a more sustainable and responsible form of production. It is an easy method of enticing customers to purchase "sustainable clothing" by promising that the materials are more eco-consciously produced. It is a form of cruel marketing. (Hannah, 2021) states that towards the end of 2020, ASOS introduced a clothing range called "circular collection" in which its purpose is to contain materials which produce least waste and are easier to recycle. This specific example is important to analyse as it was found that this clothing range ASOS has produced was only a minor level of what they can actively do. ASOS boasted that the collection featured over 3,000 new items each week. This example of a multinational corporations attempts to influence consumer behaviour excavates a path as to how much of an effect does it have?

4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

This research is positive in nature. The way in which consumers are influenced by CSR in relation to fast fashion can be viewed from an ontological position. The focus on sustainable production of fast fashion clothing was shadowed by the COVID – 19 pandemic during the last two years. As many consumers were purchasing clothing from their own homes, it is evident that global populations dismissed how clothing was manufactured and produced by multinational companies. The ontological perspective of this study is that consumers are more interested by multi-national fast fashion companies' prices, rather than their social and ethical standpoint. In line with the expletory nature of this research paper, the ontological perspective explores a critical insight into the characteristics of consumers in regard to fast fashion purchasing. These multi nationals are not focused on their corporate social responsibility but focused on getting the clothing from producer to consumer as quickly as possible.

The paradigm surrounding this research paper enables a variety of people to explain their thoughts on the question given to them. Through the analysis of (Trivedi, 2018) he analysed what impact celebrity endorsement/influence has on the fashion industry in relation to Gen Y respondents. A similar form of research will be undertaken on multiple generations but instead, adhering to how CSR influences them. The methodological approach to this research paper is influenced by (Pickering, 2008) in which he states that researchers must come to reality with why they think participants might agree to cooperate and to think about what might deter them. This analysis is in relation to interviews however conducting a survey is similar. Participants must feel comfortable with being involved in a research topic by allowing their opinions to be recorded (anonymously).

As these fast fashion clothing brands were forced to close their brick-and-mortar stores due to the pandemic, it led to vast unemployment which leaves garment workers unpaid throughout the world (Brydges & Hanlon, 2020) Therefore, from an ontological perspective it is important to examine how the general population are now focusing on what influences their purchasing decisions. The focus of this methodology is to underpin a previously answered research question of (“Consumer Attitude towards Sustainability of Fast Fashion Products in the UK”) with an additional element

of (“How CSR influences consumer behaviour”). It is essential to discuss what corporate social responsibility (CSR) is, and to break it down and relate back to the consumer. These two elements could possibly convey differing results however with the successful breakdown of corporate social responsibility, it will detect a relationship between the corporation’s responsibility, and the influence it has on consumers. This new lens of information collaborates previously researched information together to construct a new form of research question,

4.3 SURVEY DESIGN

Surveying a general population is the most suitable method of data collection for this research question. This is where a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative research effectively analyses a general populations opinion on if CSR influences their behaviour regarding fast fashion. A survey was conducted on a mixed population based on a relatively large residential town using a Facebook page. The use of this page ensured that all entrants were over 18 and that a variety of ages and demographics were targeted. Participants of the survey will be provided a brief blurb about the topic being researched and will be provided a timeframe of how long the survey will take. This form of data analysis is paramount for this research paper as it allows a wider population to input their opinions on the research question. The flow of the questions starts open ended and begin to narrow to a more specific point towards the end to specify the participants opinions. An introductory set of questions allow to see what type of demographic the participants fall into. A survey aiming only at one demographic would not allow for an accurate judgement of their opinions.

The questionnaire survey was designed using a range of multiple-choice questions, with answers tailored for each question. Four out of 10 questions are given the option to expand more on the answer if needed. The questions involved related to consumer behaviour, analysing if the respondent was familiar with fast fashion, and if more needs to be done by their favourite companies. Gathering information such as age, sex and spending behaviours allows for a clear insight on what their consumer behaviour is like. The survey is broken down into three categories. These begin with personal questions to narrow down the audience. What spending behaviours they have currently have and the last set of questions focus on the research question by asking what

companies do or don't do to influence their behaviour. These categories combine to convey a persona of a consumer which has taken the survey. It allows the previous material to dissect how the consumer thinks, based on demographics, personal consumer behaviour and organizational influence. Based on the questions asked, it is hoped that the consumers answering will have been influenced by CSR without knowing but will still choose to ignore it. An example of this would be as mentioned previously, customers purchasing what they think is sustainable, ethically produced products, when, greenwashing by clothing companies is in effect. It is also anticipated that no customers will be found to buy 100% ethically produced sustainable clothing as price takes place over the sustainability.

4.4 SAMPLING

Ontologically, it is important to remember that the response from participants is from their sense of the world and what they believe is out there and how it affects them. Therefore, it is important not to focus on one specific demographical party. The research conducted by (Trivedi, 2018) was focused on Gen Y as he believes celebrity influence may or may not have an influence on them. However, this research paper is of a broader stance in which it aims to discover if all generations are influenced by CSR. It is important from an ethical standpoint to ensure that the research method and analysis causes no form of harm or confidentiality breaches. Therefore, the data collection is totally anonymous, and the participants are informed of this before starting the questionnaire. No questions regarding the participants private life will be asked or any questions regarding their invasion of privacy. The storage of the questionnaire is key and is under password protection unable for the public to gain access to. GDPR is paramount to people's privacy.

The distributional method used to share the survey allowed the collection of multiple demographical backgrounds of respondents. The use of a Facebook community page allowed this. The community page contains 7,400 members from different backgrounds and ages. The use of a Facebook community page also ensured that the respondents were above the age of 18. Regarding restrictions, it was found that there were not many, as a successful feedback response of 220

respondents was sufficient. In relation to parameters, it would be more investigative if the distribution of the survey was more nationwide, however the timeframe and resources of the data collection restricted this.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

The method of data analysis used in this research paper was Cronbach Alpha which provides a measure of internal consistency within the survey provided with the use of a video guide provided by (Manis, 2016) Dr. Manis provides a score of 0.7 to be a desirable score which shows a high scale of reliability of the survey answers. Formulating the reliability from the Cronbach Alpha test will be the most suitable data analysis method as the reliability will be able to reveal results of the research objective which is how or if consumers are influenced by CSR to purchase fast fashion clothing. Based on the literature review, (Trivedi, 2018) investigates the fast fashion industry and analyses the comparative efficacy that celebrity influence has as mentioned previously. Cronbach Alpha was used in this research paper to test the internal consistency and reliability in a similar way as used in research in the literature review.

The information conveyed from the survey should aim to demonstrate that the respondents would like to change their purchasing behaviours based upon the questions asked. The true explanation of the respondents' opinions will come between question 5 and 10 in which the questions narrow down their perception of their purchasing intentions. It will enable the data to formulate broader perceptions of their consumer behaviours to create assumptions based on their answers. The data analysis will be interpreted from the viewpoint of the respondents not having knowledge of CSR. The data will represent an organic thought process the respondents will demonstrate when seeing if fast fashion clothing companies are influencing them. Interpreting this data will allow the quantitative research to correlate with the qualitative research with some noticeable differences which will present a different view of customers thought process.

4.6 LIMITATIONS

Throughout the research and data collection process came multiple limitations. The main limitation being the COVID – 19 pandemic. Hence an online questionnaire is the most suitable format of data analysis. This allows people contributing their opinions from the comfort of their own home without having to be involved in any risk. A survey questionnaire also allowed to attain a larger sample. While interviewing would be an option, COVID – 19 and a limited timeframe would have limited the ability to successfully achieve the research and data collection needed. While the COVID pandemic is the most relevant limitation, time is also another limitation which will come into effect. The timeframe of this research is within a very short, limited timeframe which is important. Also, a limitation was evident in the amount of people over the age of 55 who completed the survey. It is evident that the ‘baby boomer’ (55+) age cohort is not as proficient with technology as younger generations. However, a satisfactory number of baby boomer responses were collected.

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Respondents of the survey will be greeted with a blurb outlining what the study is aimed at and will acknowledge their consent to give their answers before starting. The blurb will demonstrate how the answers will be used within the study. The respondents are anonymous, and their answers will be stored in line with GDPR regulations through a password protected file and will be deleted accordingly. Respondents must be over the age of 18 to complete the survey which was stated before starting. No personal information on any respondent was collected from the survey.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Throughout the analysis of research and the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, the analysis section aims to demonstrate the bias of the research title. This being “*How corporate social responsibility influences consumer behaviour in regard to fast fashion.*” The expected outcome of the finding will aim to somewhat correlate with the literature analysed with differences. It is hoped that the quantitative analysis will find that consumers are not seemingly worried about the ethical or sustainable standpoint of fast fashion companies. Instead, it is likely to construct an assumption that the respondents would like to think they are encouraged to buy more sustainable clothing, when in fact companies’ methods of greenwashing will interfere unknowingly. The use of literature helps to gain a foundation of what to expect or perhaps unexpected from the use of quantitative analysis. The use of a survey as discussed in the methodology aims to gather and display the data based upon the 4 hypotheses and overall research question mentioned previously. It is essential to allow the respondents to gain an insight to CSR. The questions designed for the survey allowed the respondents to answer the questions without the full understanding of CSR. The use of both qualitative and quantitative research allowed the formation of the questions and provide information on what to expect from respondents’ answers. The questions provided to the respondents helped to prove or disprove the hypotheses being:

H1) CSR does influence consumers to purchase clothing from fast fashion retailers.

H2) Fast fashion retailers implement CSR solely to make sales.

H3) Fast fashion retailers need to improve their CSR to gain more market share.

H4) Fast fashion retailers can have effective CSR and sales without a compromise.

It is clearly identified that CSR does not have an over lasting impact on consumers behaviour regarding purchasing from fast fashion outlets. Large scale multinational corporations may be beginning to introduce new ways to implement a more sustainable way of procurement and manufacturing. The reality is that these companies possess a market share so large that any drastic changes to its supply chain which may affect the products or its logistical process, can potentially ruin their market share. For example, ASOS offer a next day premier delivery option for €10 a year. For a fee so low, consumers will take full advantage of this. This small shipping fee per year

is how ASOS persistently retain their market share, by offering all clothing to be delivered in such a short space of time, however unsustainably.

5.1 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Response time of the survey was between 1-3 minutes. All 220 respondents who took part answered fully leaving all responses suitable for analysis. Out of 220 respondents, 25% are Gen Z, 18% are Gen Y, 37% are Gen X and 20% are baby boomers. These percentages can vary slightly due to not knowing exact ages. The differences between the percentages are that there is a lower percentage of respondents over the age of 54 which is outlined in the limitations above. This is likely due to the baby boomer generations proficiency with technology as the survey was distributed on the Facebook social media platform.

- 56 respondents were aged between 18-24 (25.5%),
- 39 respondents were aged between 25 – 34 (17.7%)
- 38 respondents were aged between 35 – 44 (17.3%)
- 42 respondents were aged between 45 – 54 (19.1%)
- 33 respondents were aged between 54-65 (15%)
- 12 respondents were aged 64+ (5.5%)

To measure internal consistency of the survey, the Cronbach's Alpha test was used from the research gathered. The results of the test were calculated to be 0.355. The 220 respondents were composed of 51 males and 168 females and 1 person who did not want to identify their gender. This saw females making up 76.4% of the answers, whereas the males were 23.2% of the respondents.

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Rows	329.654545	219	1.5052719	1.50414107	8.3676E-06	1.17305789
Columns	1751.31818	9	194.590909	194.444724	1.99E-264	1.88462093
Error	1972.48182	1971	1.00075181			
Total	4053.45455	2199				
0.33516874						

5.2 MAIN PURCHASING INTENTION FOR FAST FASHION PRODUCTS BY CONSUMERS

Beginning the survey with open ended questions to discover what demographic the respondents are categorized as allows the rest of the questions to focus more on what they think or believe. As many of the respondents would not be overly familiar with CSR, it was essential to ask questions which may not confuse the respondents, or for the respondents to not know what they are reading. The respondents did not need to have a knowledge of CSR to give an answer. That is why the questions were designed to break down their behavioural approach to purchasing fast fashion clothing. When asked in question 4, “Do you know what fast fashion is?”, 171 (77.7%) of respondents answered yes. This shows that the audience of which the survey was aimed at is familiar with fast fashion. Furthering on, question 5 then allowed the respondents to answer what “If you do purchase fast fashion clothing, what brand/company is your favourite?”. The options given were ‘BooHoo, Zara, H&M, Pull and Bear, Penney’s, Other’. Penney’s received the highest number of choices. Question number 6 aimed to see “*Why do you purchase from them?*” From question 6 onwards, it is evident that the answers are displaying signs in which consumers are not influenced by CSR. Within question 6, when asked why you purchase from the fast fashion retailers, the results collected were as follows:

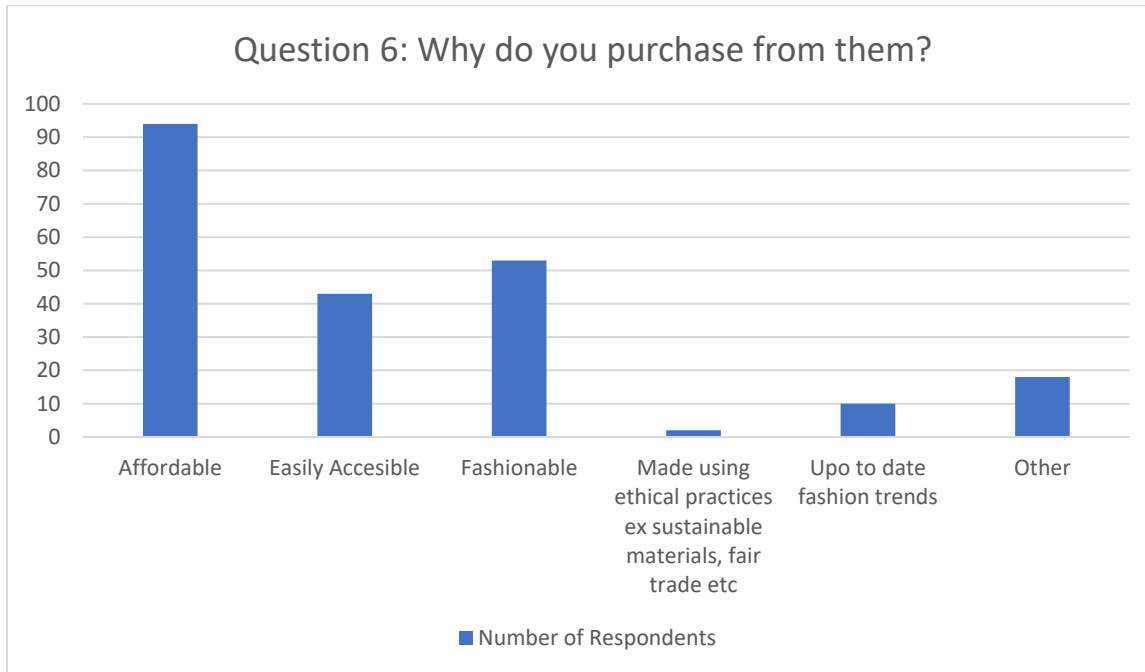


FIGURE 2 QUESTION 6

When analysing results, it was found that out of 220 respondents, only 2 people purchase their favourite fast fashion brand of choice as they are made using ethical practices for example sustainable materials, fair trade etc. The reality of this is that companies are not doing enough in relation to the procurement/sustainability of their products. This can be related back to greenwashing as mentioned previously. It seems that the companies greenwashing is unfortunately blind sighting consumers. This is evident to see as previous research conducted correlates with the answers displayed from the survey. As we identify in previous research conducted by (Aggarwal & Kadyan, 2014), it explained that green washing contains multiple drivers that influence consumer behaviour. These drivers distract customers from the practices the company are actively participating in. Due to these drivers influencing consumer behaviour, we can assume that the ethical and sustainable practices companies may or may not participate in are being overshadowed by the cheap affordability of the products they offer. This then confirms an original hypothesis being fast fashion retailers are influencing customers by using CSR, however, they are doing so under false conditions.

5.3 PRODUCTION AWARENESS

Having conducted quantitative research, question number 8 stated “*Do the clothing company’s make you aware of how their clothing is made?*”. Of the respondents, 171 people (77.7%) answered “No”. When analysing question 7 “*Do you think about how their products are made?*”, 134 respondents (60.9%) answered “No”.

There is a slight correlation here being that because fast fashion companies are not making it clear to consumers exactly when, how, and where the clothing is being made, it is making people not think about how it’s made. However, where there is skewness is between question 7 and question 10. Question 7 and 8 predominantly displayed that consumers are not aware of how clothing is made, nor did they think about how or where it is made. However, question 9 shows us that 209 respondents (95%) think that fast fashion company’s need to do more to prove their ethical responsibility is being met.

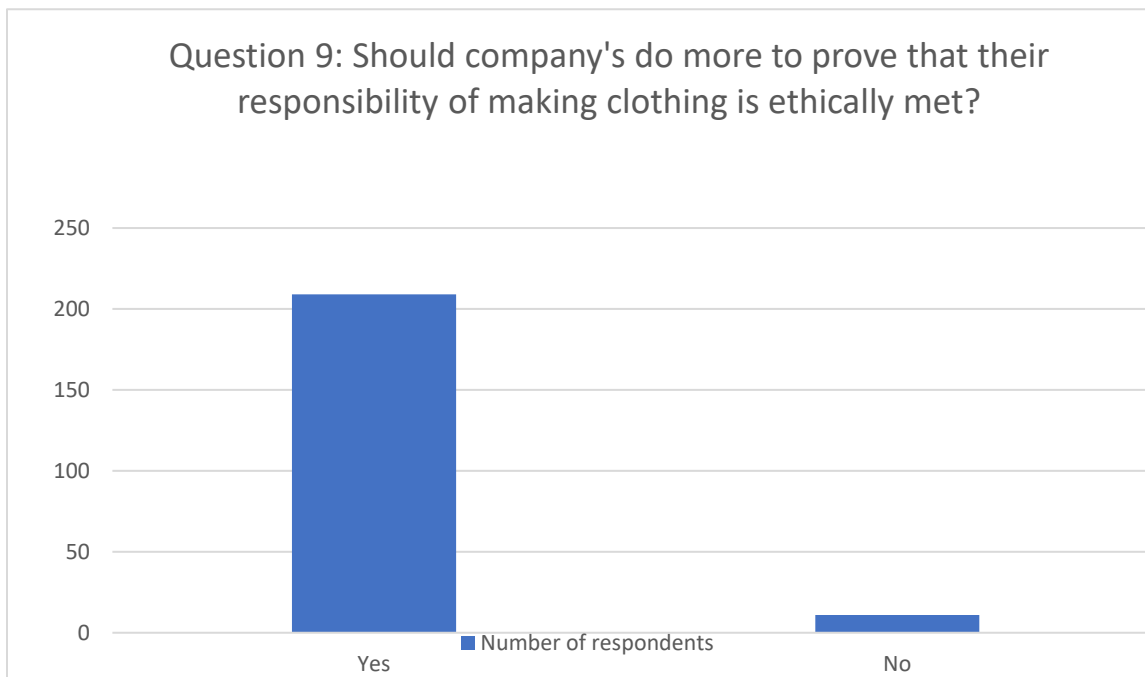


FIGURE 3 QUESTION 9

What was unexpected was shown in question 10 below when asked “*Do clothing companies ethical/responsible ways of production encourage you to buy from them?*” 121 respondents (55%) answered yes, meaning that respondents from question 7 and question 10 are potentially

contradicting of their answers. If respondents do not think about how the products are being made before purchasing, then it should be seen that the encouragement from fast fashion companies should play a smaller role in the thought process of purchasing when analysing question 10. It was expected that due to many respondents not thinking about how products are made, this would lead to a lower number of respondents not being encouraged by fast fashion companies to purchase from them for their ethical/sustainable attributes.

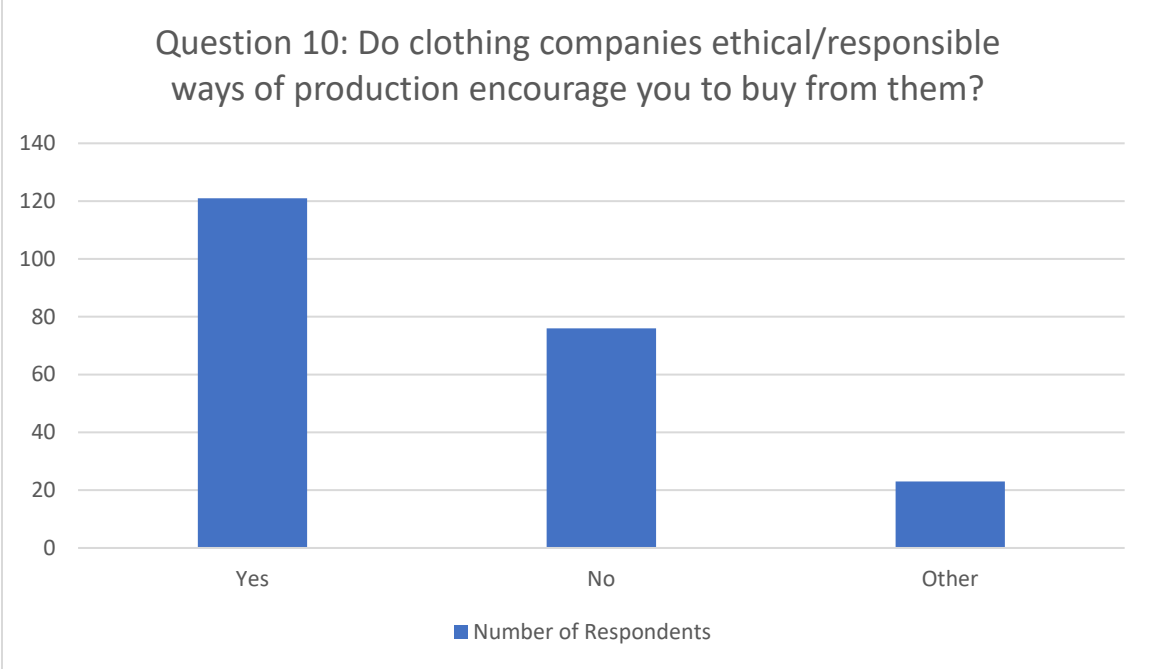


FIGURE 4 QUESTION 10

Through analysing respondents’ choice of ‘other’, it was seen that 8 of the 23 answers were answered as “sometimes” while other answers related to the price of the clothing outweighing the ethical production awareness the company is conveying. Respondent number 121 responded “I want to say yes, but at the end of the day it’s about cost”. As mentioned previously, this number of 121 respondents replying “yes” to this question draws an element of assumption. This is due to the results of question 7 stating that 134 people do not think about how clothes are made before they buy.

Throughout the analysis of the respondents, the public’s perception of fast fashion clothing is not having a genuine effect on their purchasing intention. The results of question 6 and question 10 display a factor of inconsistency within the results of the respondents. Out of 220 respondents

surveyed in question 6, 2 respondents shared that they purchase fast fashion clothing due to them being made ethically, however question 10 results show that 121 respondents think that fast fashion companies' ethical ways of production encourage to buy from them.

5.4 ASSUMPTIONS

Gathering qualitative and quantitative information has allowed this paper to gather assumptions about the public's perception of fast fashion and if the companies are influencing them using CSR or other methods. Collaborating information from research papers and comparing them with the survey has highlighted some of these assumptions that can be made. The first assumption that is evident is that consumers purchasing intention is based off the affordability of the clothing they want to purchase. This relates back to (Cook & Yurchisin, 2016) when stated that up to date fashion trends in small quantities enhances the consumers thought perception in which they bypass the ethical and responsible qualities they may or may not have. Consumers will tend to purchase fast fashion items at a slightly higher price to receive the latest fashionable items quicker, without acknowledging the ethical and social responsibilities. Question 6 in the survey demonstrates this as the majority of respondents acknowledged that affordability was the most important factor when purchasing from their favourite fast fashion companies. Consumers purchasing intention can be seen as a combination of impatience and low-priced fashionable items.

This leads onto the discussion of should consumers be more conscience when deciding what to buy? Should companies be more conscience of their methods of production? As greenwashing is a noticeable trend within fast fashion companies as previously discussed, companies should aim to pursue a different form of production and marketing rather the unethical methods they use already. This will have its compromises in which it will a more expensive option to companies. However, if it is proven more beneficial by consumers, it may lead to a consistent trend within the fast fashion industry. There is a niche in the market for ethical and sustainable new fashionable clothes at a low price. Fast fashion companies will have to prove exactly how they execute the ethical and sustainable format. With current situations in the world such as global warming, fast fashion companies who adopt this method could benefit the most in the long term. The only impact

on the companies changing their structure will be in the short and medium term. As witnessed in question 9 and Question 10 of the survey, there is a trend being that consumers want companies to adopt this method as it will encourage them to purchase from them more. Question 7 amplifies that consumers do not think about how the products they buy are made, but this is due to them not being aware of how they are made. This is evident in Question 8 of the survey. This is where fast fashion companies can pose a threat to their rivals by using feedback like this to build a new business structure regarding their production and total corporate social responsibility.

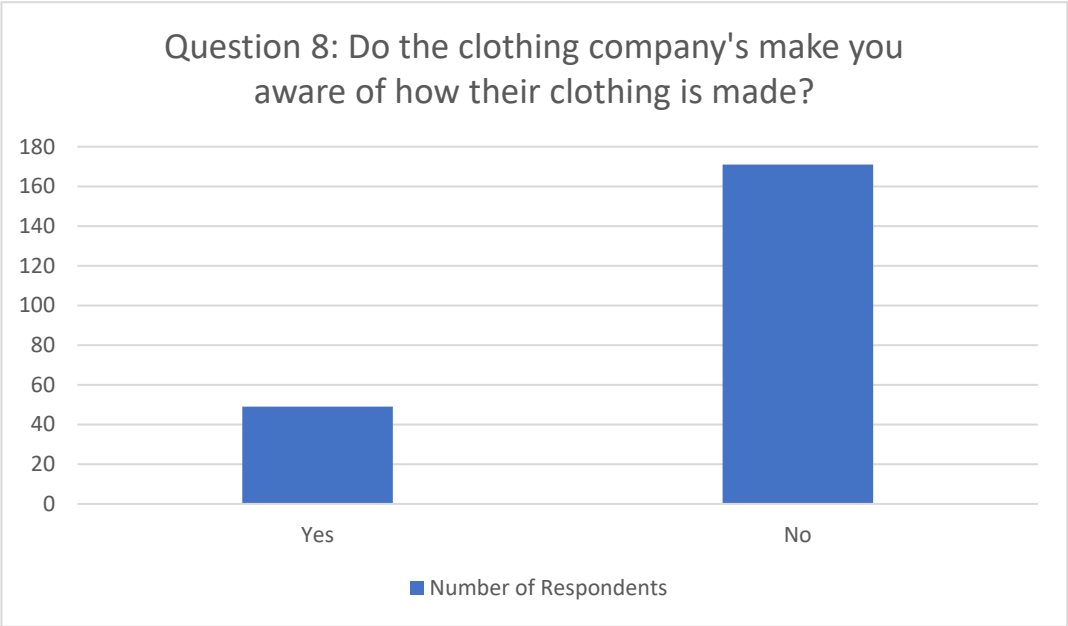


FIGURE 5 QUESTION 8

The analysis and findings of this research paper has recognized some linear patterns and patterns emerging from the research conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively. As the research conducted is positivist in nature, it is clear to derive results based off both forms of research to develop an evidential result being that corporate social responsibility does not have an influence on consumer behaviour in regard to fast fashion.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Throughout the research of this paper, it is clearly found that fast fashion companies CSR does not influence consumers behaviour. Consumers want to believe they are thinking about the ethical and sustainability of the fast fashion clothing they are purchasing, however in the current market, price outweighs ethical morals. This can be supported through the literature review in which (Arrigo, 2013) explains that the most important responsibility companies have are economic responsibilities. Arrigo also explains that philanthropic responsibilities are seen as the least important in the CRS hierarchy. There is a noticeable trend in which fast fashion companies have which are cheap, fashionable, and quick. These three components then relate back to the consumers impatience and financial issues. This then leads to the indication that consumer behaviour is following a negative trend by the lack of focus on a company's values, rather than a focus on price. The significance of these construct a foundation to pursue further research on specific companies CSR and how they want to implement it more effectively. The results of the survey portray that in the current market, consumers are focusing on the affordability rather than the social responsibility of the company. This shows that as the current economic sees a rise due to inflation, consumers are doing what is best for them in the short term. As the survey was based upon consumers behaviour towards purchasing, a more in-depth analysis of the current financial state of Ireland would have contributed to some of the answering. This leaves room for further study to research if the current financial climate is influencing consumer behaviour also.

Throughout the research, there have been evident patterns regarding CSR influence and consumer behaviour. It has emerged that the constant new trends within the fast fashion industry correlate with consumers impatience and spending ability. It is seen that consumers want to purchase the cheapest, trendiest up to date fashionable items without focusing on the broader perspective. These results build on existing evidence of (Barnes & Greenwood, 2006) explanation of out with the old, in with the new. The results of the data collected provides a new insight into the impatience of consumer behaviour, wanting the newest fashion trends as quick as possible without considering the CSR companies may or may not have.

The research conducted has slightly diverged from what was expected. At the beginning of the research, it was expected that fast fashion companies CSR would have an influence on consumer behaviour. It was found that while consumers want to think CSR has an influence, they are more focused on price and trend. It was unexpected to find that consumers purchase fast fashion clothing for affordability, when in the survey it suggests that they believe the companies ethical ways of production encourage them to purchase (Question 10). The contradictory results of the survey lead the research to question do consumers really care? This could develop the research by focusing more on fast fashion company's greenwashing methods as mentioned before. The hypothesis H1,H2,H3 and H4 remain unproven as the results from the respondents explained that fast fashion company's CSR is over looked. While they remain unproven, the research question regarding CSR influence in consumer behaviour remains open to further investigation and research.

Although there is a moral thought process that consumers are hiding. This is that they believe companies should do more to prove their CSR is being implemented more effectively. As seen in the respondents answering, a large majority believe that ethical and responsible products will encourage them to purchase, there is still an element of blind sighting and green washing that multinational firms are implementing. This pattern will lead onto further research to develop more of an insight as to what fast fashion companies do effectively to greenwash consumers. Regarding unexpected outcomes of this research paper, the influence fast fashion companies have over consumers was eye opening. From a consumer's point of view, it is easy to be "green washed" by these companies and focus more on yourself rather than the bigger picture of what is happening behind the scenes of these companies. Throughout the extensive research conducted, it is clear that the hypothesis' given were proven to be wrong as the data from the survey showed that consumers are not focused on CSR within companies but only the best bang for their buck as mentioned before. After creating the hypothesis, it was evident that the emerging pattern of consumers not contemplating their moral decisions to purchasing fast fashion was constantly seen. This was also an unexpected outcome of this research paper.

To further investigate the research question given, further research is need surrounding the specific fast fashion firms as previously mentioned. If more resources and time was available, this research paper would establish more information directly from fast fashion companies if they were willing to communicate. This would be done using one to one interview with colleagues from certain fast fashion companies. This would help to uncover what fast fashion companies are doing to improve their CSR and what they will do in the future to adjust to a fast-paced economy and spending culture. This would be important as a more constructive answer based on the research question could be given from both sides of the research. Additional methods of research would also include a more in-depth survey to a wider sample group as this was discussed previously.

Limitations are a frequent element seen in a majority of research papers. There were limitations throughout this research paper. The main limitation seen was the survey questions could have been composed of more questions. As seen in Chapter 5 the analysis and findings, the Cronbach alpha score of 0.3 is considered a low reliability. One way to combat this is to have more questions with more in specific answering to discover a more reliable data set. Due to the lack of data on ‘baby boomer’ respondents (Ages 55+), the data collection method unexpectedly impacted this. It was thought that more respondents over the age of 55 would participate due to high volume of Facebook users being active on the platform. The combination of more elderly respondents and more detailed survey questions would produce a more reliable consistency of answers. The sample group of 220 respondents was sufficient, however a larger number of respondents should have also allowed for more reliable data. Timeframes and resources limited the ability to allow this research paper to access a larger sample group along with a more in-depth question.

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APPENDICES

Survey Questions and answers

Q1. What age bracket do you belong in?

- 18-24: 56
- 24-34: 39
- 35-44: 38
- 45-54: 42
- 55-65: 33
- 64+: 12

Q2. What Gender do you identify as?

- Male: 51
- Female: 168
- Other: 0
- Prefer not to say: 1

Q3. Do you shop for clothing online? How often do you shop online for clothing?

- Always (Once a week or more): 10
- Usually (Once or twice a month): 84
- Sometimes (Once every three months): 73
- Rarely (Once every 6 months): 40
- Never: 13

Q4. Do you know what fast fashion is?

- Yes: 171
- No: 49

Q5. If you do purchase fast fashion clothing, what brand/company is your favourite?

- BooHoo: 18
- Zara: 47
- H&M: 18

- Pull&Bear: 7
- Penney's: 69
- Other: 61

Q6. Why do you purchase from them?

- Affordable: 94
- Easily Accessible: 43
- Fashionable: 53
- Made using ethical practices, example: sustainable materials, fair trade etc: 2
- Up to date fashion trends: 10
- Other: 18

Q7. Do you think about how their products are made? Example: are they made from sustainable materials, made using ethical practices?

- Yes: 71
- No: 134
- Other: 15

Q8. Do the clothing company's make you aware of how their clothing is made?

- Yes: 49
- No: 171

Q9. Should company's do more to prove that their responsibility of making clothing ethically is being met?

- Yes: 209
- No: 11

Q10. Do clothing companies ethical/responsible ways of production encourage you to buy from them?

- Yes: 121
- No: 76
- Other

