UNDRESSING THE ISSUE OF ETHICS IN FASHION

An Explorative Study into the Ethical Consideration of Sweatshop Labour in Clothing Consumption among Fashion Conscious Generation Y Consumers in Ireland

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ABSTRACT

A rise in the interest surrounding the social reputation of companies has resulted in an infinite number of research papers attempting to explore the philosophy of ethics and its influence on consumption. However, these papers are limited in their analysis of consumers' understanding of ethics and their ethical considerations of particular issues during consumption. Similarly, academic knowledge regarding specific ethical matters is restricted to recurring issues in the literature such as fair-trade grocery products, with little emphasis on other equally pressing matters such as the existence of sweatshop labour and its influence on the clothing consumption of fashion conscious consumer groups such as the Y generation.

This study seeks to explore the ethical consideration of fashion conscious generation Y consumers in Ireland towards sweatshop labour and its influence on their clothing consumption. Particular emphasis is given to this group's understanding of ethics and its application in every-day life. As consumption is a continuous, on-going act, an exploration of their thought process in moments both during and beyond purchase decisions is also emphasised in order to adequately assess their over-all levels of ethical consideration.

Nine in-depth interviews were carried out with college educated generation Y consumers, with thematic coding used to uncover salient themes relevant to the over-all findings. Using a phenomenological based approach through photo elicitation exercises during the interviews, it was found that participants exhibited relatively low levels of ethical consideration about sweatshop labour, during both purchase decisions and every-day consumption. They also had difficulty in attaching any profound meaning to the term 'ethics' which, it is argued, may have contributed to their lack of ethical consideration and thus warranting further research in this area.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my brother Stephen for his generosity in providing endless support, encouragement, and very insightful contributions throughout this entire process.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 – THE STATE OF RESEARCH ON CONSUMER ETHICS

"One thing is clear, don't do any research. Don't ask the public any questions on the subject. The answers are never reliable. In instances where the head says one thing and the heart another, studies are useless if not misleading" (Ulrich & Sarasin, cited in Carrigan & Attalla 2001, p. 566). This quote highlights the sheer complexity of the current research on ethical consumer behaviour.

Despite incalculable papers existing on evolution of 'the ethical consumer' and the need for companies to become more ethically minded and socially aware (Brunk 2012; Shaw 2009; Shaw, Grehan, Shiu, Hassan and Thomson 2005), conflicting studies have shown that consumers' intentions do not always match their behaviour, and certain factors can impede ethical purchase decisions from happening (Bray, Johns & Kilburn 2011; Carrington, Neville & Whitwell 2010; Eckhardt, Belk & Devinney 2010; Auger & Devinney 2007; Carrigan & Attalla 2001).

Much of the research on ethical consumer behaviour has focused on this discrepancy between consumers' intentions and behaviour, also known as the attitude-behaviour gap. Authors have dedicated article upon article in academic journals to this phenomenon, in the hope of answering the burning question: why don't consumers consume ethically? (Carrington et al. 2010; Eckhardt et al. 2010) In this regard, it could be said that consumer ethics is both an over-researched and under-researched area; although academics have spent considerable time talking about and researching it, new information is slow to emerge.

1.2 – GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

Constant reference has been made to the attitude-behaviour gap and its effect on the purchase decision of consumers, leaving several gaps in the literature with authors

failing to address other significant concepts and theories. Despite the fact that the act of consumption is an on-going process and not only restricted to the moment of purchase, previous studies have not emphasised this point nor addressed the level of ethical consideration in moments both during and beyond purchase decisions. Previous studies have also failed to address the concept of 'ethics', and have not sought to understand its actual meaning and importance to consumers.

This has led to some important questions which have not yet been asked in this field:

1. What does the term 'ethics' mean to consumers?
2. How do consumers relate with ethics when they are buying products?
3. How do consumers relate with ethics on a day to day basis?

1.3 – OVER-ALL AIM OF THIS STUDY

These questions have helped to form the over-all basis for this research project. In highlighting these literature gaps, this study hopes to achieve a better understanding of the ethical considerations that consumers have when making purchase decisions and also on a day to day basis. These are issues which have not been given adequate attention in the current literature. The existing research on consumer ethics has been dominated by issues such as fair trade grocery products (White, MacDonnell & Ellard 2012; Nicholls & Lee 2011; Chatzidakis, Hibbert & Smith 2007; Shaw, Shiu & Clarke 2000; Shaw & Clarke 1999). Other ethical issues such as the sourcing of clothing materials and the use of sweatshop labour are yet to be examined in depth, despite being largely associated with the study of ethics (Kopf, Boje & Torres 2010). Therefore, this research project will address the issue of sweatshop labour in fashion consumption among the group of consumers most concerned with clothing: the generation Y cohort (Ismail & Spinelli 2012).

Sweatshop labour is a controversial issue which is strongly linked to fashion consumption (Mayer 2007). Research has also shown that clothing hugely contributes to the self-concept and social status of generation Y consumers, a cohort that is considered to have the highest levels of status consumption (Eastman & Liu

2012). Generation Y is also noted as being hugely concerned about labour abuse issues in clothing production, and this is particularly evident among college educated consumers (Pookulangara, Shephard & Mestres 2011; Hiller 2010; Valor 2007). However, these claims could be considered vague, as little emphasis has been placed on the actual level of consideration that this highly fashion conscious group has towards sweatshop labour and whether it is something they regularly think about.

1.4 – RESEARCH RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION

As mentioned above, the research area of ethical consumer behaviour is a complex one. Clarity is needed to understand the way in which consumers think about and consider ethical issues during consumption; something which has not been adequately addressed in previous studies. It could be argued that in order to carry out any research pertaining to ethical consumption, it must firstly be understood what the concept of ethics means to the individuals being researched. Various authors have called for a more in depth look at the use of the word 'ethics' in research, and argue that better emphasis is needed on the definition of the term from a consumer's perspective (Hiller 2010; Valor 2007; Smith 2001). Therefore this study will focus on ethical considerations from a consumers' point of view.

Despite being a global issue with increasing media attention given to it (Iwanow, McEachern and Jeffery 2005), research on sweatshop labour specific to generation Y consumers is limited. Focus has also been placed on factors such as price and quality affecting consumers' intentions to purchase ethical clothing, without consumers actually being asked whether they even think about sweatshop labour when buying clothes. Also, virtually no attention has been given to the moments before and after the purchase decision, suggesting that information about consumption during this time is seriously lacking or even unknown.

Close ended research questions such as: 'Do generation Y consumers consume ethical fashion?' have also been more often asked than qualitative based questions such as: 'How does the generation Y cohort feel about sweatshop labour?' It has also

been argued that generation Y cohort is poorly understood (Bucic, Harris and Arli 2012), further justifying the examination of this group more closely.

Several academics have also called for more qualitative approach in researching ethical consumer behaviour (Hiller 2010; Valor 2007; Brinkmann 2004) in order to obtain more enriching and insightful information around this research phenomenon. This study will therefore be of a qualitative nature, and it is hoped that by exploring this phenomenon from this perspective, it will shed some light on a research area that is both complex in nature and lacking in new information.

1.5 – OVERVIEW AND STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter is comprised of a brief introduction into the chosen research topic. Gaps in the literature on ethical consumer behaviour are also identified as supporting justification for the chosen research topic, and the over-all aim of the study is also established.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter provides an in depth look at the current literature on the phenomenon being researched. As this study is seeking to explore the level of ethical consideration that fashion conscious generation Y consumers have about sweatshop labour, several areas will be addressed in the literature review. This will include a general overview of the 'ethical consumer', the existence of sweatshop labour, generation Y consumers, fashion consumption, the appeal of ethical fashion, and symbolic consumption.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The methodology chapter provides a detailed insight into the researcher's objectives for this project and the methods chosen for carrying out the primary research. Details of the sample are also provided, as well as an in depth analysis of how the primary research was conducted and what instruments were used. Research limitations, ethical considerations, and method of data analysis are also outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4 – Findings

Chapter 4 presents the over-all findings from the primary research, which is based on thematic analysis used to identify themes and salient points relevant to the research objectives outlined in the previous chapter.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

The discussion chapter involves critical reflection by the researcher. The seminal findings from the primary research are synthesised with the secondary research from the literature review to derive a more theoretical understanding of the research phenomenon and bring the project to a conclusive point.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion and Recommendations

Finally, this chapter concludes on what was discovered from the primary research and determines whether the research aims and objectives set out in chapter 3 were met. Recommendations for further research and future studies are also provided.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 – WHAT IS ETHICS?

2.1.1 – Can Ethics Be Defined?

"Where does ethics come from? is a question that has been asked for thousands of years by thinkers from many different traditions" (Singer 1994, p. 17). A branch of philosophy that has been studied by world famous thinkers such as Aristotle, Foucault, and Kant that dates back to more than two thousand years ago, ethics is a subject which has caused considerable debate over both its definition and application in society (Winkler & Coombs 1993). Singer (1994) divides the field of ethics into two main areas: normative ethics and meta-ethics. Normative ethics, he claims, is concerned with action and how rules, principles or guidelines influence the decisions of individuals regarding what they 'ought' to do. Meta-ethics, however, is more concerned with reflecting on the practice of ethics, questioning the meaning of right and wrong, rather than simply asking what is right or wrong.

Many of the widely known ethical theories such as utilitarianism, virtue, and rights and duties are branches of normative ethics (Arnold, Audi and Zwolinski 2010) which set out particular standards and rules for individuals to adhere to. Smith (2001) notes that much of the literature within this subject area has focused on normative ethics. However, it is argued that the ambivalent nature of humans cannot be explained by normative ethics (Bauman 1993). Donaldson and Dunfee (1994) claim that normative theories such as utilitarianism are not context specific, making application difficult depending on each individual situation. However, Winkler and Coombs (1993) consider contextualism to have a growing influence on ethical decision making, which questions the existence of universally valid ethical theories.

2.1.2 – Ethics in Business

Despite this debate in the literature surrounding the definition and application of 'ethics' in society, it is largely accepted that it has become a prevalent topic in business strategy over the last number of years (Brunk 2012; Martin & Johnson

2008; Winkler & Coombs 1983). This is likely due to the fact that previous research has highlighted a link between a company's ethics and consumer responses (Brunk 2010). An increasing concern over ethical issues among consumers within the last few decades has shifted towards consumption patterns. This has created an expectation for companies to behave in more ethically minded and socially acceptable ways, thus leading to more ethically focused business strategies.

2.2 – THE ETHICAL CONSUMER?

2.2.1 – The Rise of the Ethical Consumer

Ethical consumer behaviour is a topic that has been researched extensively over the last number of years. The ethical consumer has been defined as somebody who "considers environmental issues, animal issues and ethical issues, including oppressive regimes and armaments, when shopping" (Mintel, cited in Shaw, et al. 2005, p. 185). Cherrier (2007) notes that ethical values are often formed through the collective identity and not solely from an internal perspective, suggesting a sense of unity and external influence among those who consider ethical practices to be important.

Boycotts from activist groups, which could possibly contribute to this sense of unity among ethical consumers over unethical business practices (Lindenmeier, Schleer and Pricl 2012) have led to a higher level of consumer empowerment which has influenced the way companies conduct business activities. They have now resorted to more socially conscious decision making (Vanhamme, Lindgreen, Reast & Popering 2012; Carrigan & Attalla 2001). For example, negative consumer reactions from the BP oil spill were so strong that the company CEO was forced to resign (Lindenmeier et al. 2012).

It is suggested that consumers in the twenty first century are socially conscious, ethically minded, and often motivated by societal reasons rather than personal reasons during purchase decisions (Auger & Devinney 2007; Shaw et al. 2005). Hoeffler & Keller (2002) show that two thirds of respondents in one study claimed that they would switch brands to one associated with a good cause. Results from

studies conducted in both the US and the UK show an increase of 44% between 2001 and 2002 of the sales of fair trade products, and an increase of 30% in ethical apparel sales from $57 million in 2003 to $75 million in 2004 (Shaw, Shiu, Hassan, Bekin & Hogg 2007).

This is further supported by Carrington et al. (2010) who note a 47% increase in the global sales of fair trade products in 2007. Also, a recent study found that 70% of respondents claimed that social responsibility was an important factor when choosing a product or service (Singh, Iglesias & Batista-Foguet 2012). Similarly, Trudel & Cotte (2009) found that consumers were willing to reward companies for being in some way ethical, and Carrigan & Attalla (2001) provide a startling fact - almost 44% of British citizens have boycotted a product on ethical grounds in one given year.

2.2.2 – The Not-So-Ethical Consumer

Despite the above research suggesting that companies should invest in ethical business practices and that consumers are considerably interested in ethical issues and concerned about the well-being of society, other authors argue that this is not necessarily the case. They claim that whether or not a company portrays an ethical ethos may be of little importance to consumers when it comes down to the actual purchase decision.

Mintel, cited in Nicholls and Lee (2011) claim that only 28.3% of UK consumers purchased fair trade products in 2003, with the majority of these being one-off purchases. Dickson (2001) found that although 86% of survey respondents were willing to pay extra for sweatshop free apparel, only 16% were actually identified as 'no sweat' label users. Another study showed that despite 30% of consumers stating that they would purchase ethically, only 3% actually did (Futerra, cited in Carrington et al. 2010). This is further supported by Eckhardt et al. (2010, p.426) who argue that 'the market share held by green products is abysmally low.' Finally, another study showed that only 25% of respondents could name a socially responsible company, with only 18% able to name a company that was not socially responsible (Boulstridge & Carrigan 2000).

2.2.3 – The Attitude-Behaviour Gap

Many authors suggest that this disparity between the ethical and now not-so-ethical consumer is due to the fundamental existence of an attitude-behaviour gap, i.e. what consumers say they intend to do does not match their actual behaviour (Carrington et al. 2010; Auger & Devinney 2007; Carrigan & Attalla 2001). This attitude-behaviour gap has been a key feature of many of research papers on ethical consumption, with endless attempts made to understand how and why this gap exists, and what is preventing ethical consumption from taking place (White et al. 2012; Boulstridge & Carrigan 2000; Shaw et al. 2000; Creyer 1997).

In one study it was argued that although consumers did care about ethical and social issues, situational factors such as time constraints, mood, behaviour of others, and even price, all acted as barriers the purchase of ethical products, i.e. the decision to purchase ethically can often be outside of a person's control (Carrington et al. 2010). Other authors have suggested that factors such as neutralisation or the ability to rationalise or accept unethical behaviour at the point of purchase can also impede ethical consumption (Eckhardt et al. 2010; Chatzidakis, Hibbert and Smith 2006). A third argument claims that factors such price and quality often take precedence over ethical considerations (Sudbury & Böltner 2011; Joergens 2006; Carrigan & Attalla 2001; Boulstridge & Carrigan 2000).

A reluctance to change behaviour or 'purchasing inertia' is also noted as another reason for consumers to make non-ethical purchases, as it has been argued that consumers are invariably resistant to change unless they feel that it will personally benefit them (Bray et al. 2011; Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh 2010). Finally, Chung and Monroe (2003) note that social desirability bias is another factor impeding ethical consumption. It is a significant issue in researching consumer ethics, particularly as consumers may overestimate the likelihood of performing desirable or ethical behaviour when not faced with the situation and may give inauthentic answers when asked about future purchases (Chung & Monroe 2003).

Despite the above models and theories being employed to measure consumer behaviour patterns towards ethical decision making, some academics have called for less normative assumptions in the research on consumer ethics, as it is has been

argued that ethics cannot easily be measured in a normative sense (as mentioned in section 2.1.1). This will be discussed further in section 3.2.

2.3 – ETHICAL SEGMENTATION – SWEATSHOP LABOUR

2.3.1 – Sweatshops Defined

Sweatshop labour, a concept that has been more widely discussed and researched over the last number of years, has long been associated with the term 'ethics' (Kopf et al. 2010). Mayer (2007) claims that most of the clothing worn by consumers today is produced in foreign and domestic factories by people earning little money who are working in arduous conditions. These factories are commonly referred to as 'sweatshops.' A sweatshop can be defined as:

> Any workplace in which workers are subjected to [...] forced overtime; health and safety risks that stem from negligence or the wilful disregard of employee welfare; coercion; deception that places workers at risk; underpayment of earnings; and income for a 48 h work week less than the overall poverty rate for that country (Arnold & Hartman 2005, p. 207).

Van Natta, cited in Snyder (2010) asserts that this kind of labour is undoubtedly exploitative and immoral in nature, and Tomolillo and Shaw, cited in Bruce, Moore and Birtwistle (2004) consider sweatshop labour to be a major ethical concern for consumers when purchasing clothing. Adams (2002) also claims that the preference for price, brand, and quality over the treatment of workers and social responsibility is beginning to turn the other way, as consumers are now becoming more aware of the treatment of workers in clothing factories abroad.

2.3.2 – Origins

The term 'sweatshop' has been used for more than a century, originating from the word 'sweater' which was used during the 1800s to describe the middleman for whom English workers made garments under extremely laborious conditions (Barraud de Lagerie 2012). The increasing influence of global competition and free trade zones in developing nations in more recent years has encouraged organisations,

particularly those in the apparel industry, to outsource production from North America and Europe to subcontractors in developing countries (Arnold & Hartman 2005; Adams 2002).

Although deemed a cost saving advantage for organisations, Dickerson cited in Pookulangara et al. (2011) notes that this outsourcing of production to developing countries often leads to organisations inadvertently supporting the creation of sweatshop factories. However, DeWinter (2001) argues that apparel retailers are often fully aware of where, when and how garments are produced and still maintain a high level of control over levels of profit at each stage of production.

2.3.3 – The Anti-Sweatshop Movement

From as early as 1933, activist groups were fighting to abolish the use of sweatshop factories (Arnold & Hartman 2005); a global effort now commonly referred to as the anti-sweatshop movement. The movement has successfully increased public awareness of the harsh reality behind fashion apparel production, and exposed companies such as GAP and Walmart in the mid-1990s after it was discovered that both were sourcing from suppliers who were operating sweatshop factories. This exposure encouraged a strong public reaction which forced many apparel companies to engage in codes of conduct to regulate working conditions in production facilities (DeWinter 2001).

This heightened awareness of the dreadful working conditions in sweatshops has led to increasing concern from consumers regarding the manufacture of their own clothing (Pookulangara et al. 2011). Of particular concern is the use of child labour, which many consumers find morally inexcusable (Adams 2002). Similarly, Meyers (2004) argues that critics object to the use of sweatshops on the fundamental ground that this sort of labour violates the basic human rights of a person. Pookulangara et al. (2011) claim that the more aware consumers are about international labour practices, the more dubious they are likely to be when shopping for apparel, and Powell and Zwolinski (2012) also note that since the 1990s, consumers have been quick to condemn multinational corporations (MNCs) who source products from sweatshops.

2.3.4 – Media Attention

Increasing global media coverage of organisations sourcing unethically manufactured apparel has created even higher awareness of these issues (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000), also resulting in consumers boycotting particular brands (Iwanow et al. 2005). This has led to increased negative PR for apparel retailers, necessitating an acceptance of more responsibility for the labour conditions in the factories where they source products from. DeWinter (2001) argues that this influence from media attention has resulted in companies such as Nike and Reebok appointing a VP of corporate responsibility and human rights. Similarly, Joergens (2006) discovered that the majority of college-age respondents in one study (18-25 year olds) believed that bad publicity of fashion brands would influence their buying decisions.

2.3.5 – Arguments in Favour of Sweatshop Labour

Despite a general agreement in previous research that argues in favour of an anti-sweatshop movement, an economic argument also exists that opposes it. Some believe that in order for national economic development to occur, sweatshops must exist and are considered to be the bottom rung of the economic ladder (Eckhardt et al. 2010; Snyder 2010: Arnold & Hartman 2005). Further arguments claim that markets are self-regulating (Meyers 2004) and will provide optimal results for all without intervention, and many people work in sweatshops because it is the most rational option available for them and their own development.

Furthermore, the ethical theory of utilitarianism is often used to justify the existence of sweatshops, if it can be shown that the actions performed can increase pleasure or happiness to the majority, outweighing the harm to the minority (Radin & Calkins 2006; Arnold & Hartman 2005). Zwolinski (2007) notes further claims about sweatshops being morally legitimate because those who work there choose to do so. However, opposing arguments are often made, claiming that exploitation can occur even if workers choose to remain in the factories, as little alternatives exist for them (Meyers 2004).

2.3.6 – Sweatshop Reality

Although continuous efforts are made from the anti-sweatshop movement to tackle this global issue, garment workers around the world are still suffering. Health problems, physical and mental abuse, and intimidation are just some of typical experiences for these factory workers on a daily basis (Radin & Calkins 2006). Loss of life is not uncommon either. In April 2013, a factory in Bangladesh that produced clothing for several international brands (including Primark and Mango) collapsed, killing over 1,100 garment workers and injuring thousands more (Labour behind the Label 2013). The building was deemed unsafe by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) after visible cracks appeared the day before the building collapsed. However, workers were told to remain in the building and were threatened by managers, informing them that they would not be paid if they did not attend work the following day (Dhaka 2013; Labour Behind the Label 2013).

This tragic incident is just one of many that highlight the need for an anti-sweatshop movement to help protect workers from these precarious labour conditions. Sweatshop factories such as this one in Bangladesh operate in countries all over the world, including China, Pakistan, and Thailand (Clean Clothes Campaign 2013). However, Cheek and Moore, cited in Ruddell (2006) warn that these sweatshops will remain in existence as long as the apparel industry continues to grow and globalise, ultimately making it very difficult to learn how and where clothing is manufactured.

2.3.7 – Separation from Reality

Also, the attitude-behaviour gap mentioned earlier applies equally to the apparel industry; previous research has identified a conflict between consumers' awareness of and attitude towards sweatshops and their actual behaviour when it comes to purchasing apparel (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2007; Carrigan & Attalla 2001; Dickson 2001). One study showed that consumers were able to separate themselves from the harsh reality of sweatshops despite being aware of their existence: "I know Nike is using sweatshops [...] But I will still buy it, when I like the shoes. It is shallow, but it is so far away from your own situation. It is not your mother who gets exploited, you know" (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2007, p. 416).

Klein (2000, p. 345) also asserts that the increasingly creative nature of advertising which uses "folksy mascots to lend a homemade feel to mass produced goods", separates the product being advertised from the factory that it was produced in. DeWinter (2001) similarly claims that this allows organisations to remove themselves from the 'dirty work' and distance the brand image from the actual production in many cases. Perhaps this is helping to shield consumers from reality and why they, like the ones in Salzer-Mörling and Strannegård's study, are unable to construct a realistic understanding of what is happening in sweatshop factories.

However, in reference to a quote by Helen Woodward, an influential copyrighter during the 1920s, Klein (2000) is mindful of the difficulty in escaping reality: "If you are advertising a product, never see the factory in which it was made [...] When you know the truth about anything, the real inner truth, it is very hard to write the surface fluff which sells it" (Woodward, cited in Klein, 2000, p. 345). This raises a significant question: could exposure to these real and genuine labour conditions of garment workers have a bigger impact on consumers and affect their fashion apparel consumption? Ruddell (2006) also considers the fact that no trace of labour exploitation is ever found on the clothes themselves.

2.4 – THE GENERATION Y COHORT

2.4.1 – The Poorly Understood Generation

Despite research existing on 'the ethical consumer' and the factors influencing and impeding ethical consumption, attention has focused broadly on the 'collective consumer' with little emphasis on specific generational cohorts and whether this has any impact on ethical consumption patterns (Cui, Trent, Sullivan, & Matiru 2003). A large number of seminal papers on ethical consumption have focused on varying age ranges that are not specific to particular cohorts (Podoshen & Andrzejewski 2012; Souiden, M'Saad & Pons 2011; Niinimäki 2010; Iwanow et al. 2005).

Research pertaining to generation Y consumers and their ethical considerations of sweatshop labour is limited, and it is also argued that these consumers are poorly understood (Bucic et al. 2012; Noble, Haytko & Phillips 2009). Similarly, little

research exists on the influence of sweatshop labour on generation Y's fashion consumption habits, despite claims that college-age consumers are considered to be the most influential group in opposing labour abuses in clothing production. Also, the following section which argues that generation Y consumers adhere to symbolic forms of consumption in identity formation may offer an alternative insight into how consumers understand and think about ethical issues such as sweatshop labour, thus offering an interesting perspective on a generation that is somewhat under-researched.

2.4.2 – Marketing Savvy & Brand Loyal

Generation Y consumers, sometimes referred to as millennial consumers (Grotts and Johnson, 2013; Bucic et al. 2012), are those born approximately between 1977 and 1994 (Hill & Lee 2012). They are driven to shop, embrace technology, and are considerably individualistic (Sullivan & Heitmeyer 2008). However, Eastman and Liu (2012) note that they are also hugely influenced by the socialisation impact of peers. They have high levels of disposable income and are extremely market savvy and difficult to reach through advertising (Bucic et al. 2012; Hill & Lee 2012). However, Grotts and Johnson (2013) assert that despite not being easily swayed by marketing messages, generation Y consumers are very brand loyal and use brands to express themselves and their identities. Noble et al. (2009) note further that generation Y consumers actually use brands to find their own identities and develop strong relationships with them.

Generation Y has an indirect purchasing power of nearly $500 billion dollars (Niedt, cited in Sullivan and Heitmeyer 2008), is socially motivated, and is considered the most indulged generation surrounded by instant gratification. It is also more concerned with status consumption than other cohorts such as generation X and baby boomers (Eastman & Liu, 2012). According to Grotts and Johnson (2013), many generation Y consumers have never known an internet-free world and products such as mobile phones and mp3 players are considered mere accessories as opposed to high value items (Featherstone, cited in Grotts & Johnson 2013). Crmtrends.com, cited in Runyan, Noh and Mosier (2013) claims that by 2015, the generation Y cohort will reach approximately 86 million, accounting for 27% of the US population.

For generation Y, clothing is seen as an 'essential social tool' (Piacentini & Mailer 2004, p. 251). These consumers consider fashion to be a code in communicating their personal status to others (O'Cass & McEwen 2004), and it is also argued that when it comes to purchasing clothing, personal needs and self-interest takes precedence over other factors (Joergens, 2006). Generation Y consumers also enjoy wearing clothes that make them look and feel good about themselves, and they express themselves and their identities through what they wear, using the personalities of fashion brands (Ismail & Spinelli 2012).

2.5 – FASHION CONSUMPTION

2.5.1 – High Involvement Goods

Fashion consumption is perhaps the most dominant factor of the modern psyche in social and cultural terms (O'Cass & McEwen 2004), and is used to satisfy both social identification and individual functions (Gronow, cited in Banister & Hogg 2004). Solomon and Rabolt, cited in Niinimäki (2010) claim that fashion leads consumer choices in the clothing industry. The strength of fashion trends can even determine whether styles are accepted and socially valued by particular groups of consumers (Banister & Hogg 2004).

2.5.2 – Identity and Social Acceptance

Clothing carries a huge social component, and consumers who enjoy shopping for apparel are often motivated by social and recreational identities, (Shim and Kotsiopulos, cited in Gam 2011). Even shoes can display the social status of a person wearing them; they are considered the foundation of one's sense of self (Belk 2003). Uotila, cited in Niinimäki (2010) notes that clothing is an act and choosing the right clothing is essential when gaining approval from others in a social context. Grotts and Johnson (2013) also claim that consumers spend more money on fashion apparel that communicates importance, regardless of their income levels. They also argue that consumers often take part in self-symbolising, i.e. using symbols to build a self-definition, to communicate this importance through their apparel.

Self-symbolising is a common feature of fashion consumption, as consumers often use brands to portray the personality traits they possess as individuals. For example, the Levi's brand conveys a sense of excitement and youthfulness about the person wearing it (Ismail & Spinelli 2012). This resonates with Wood (2004) who found in one study that generation Y respondents claimed that their jeans and trainers said something about them as a person, and the brand was a reflection of their self-image. This visual display of symbols and logos on clothing creates cultural meanings and interaction between consumers (Niinimäki, 2010), which can lead to membership of a reference group (Cassidy & Schijndel 2011). Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg (2010, p. 384) define a reference group as an "individual or group conceived of having significant relevance upon an individual's evaluations, aspirations, or behaviour."

Although it is clear that a desire exists to consume fashion brands that portray aspects of one's personality to others, consumers also use the symbolic qualities of clothing to avoid particular groups as well as identifying with desirable ones (Banister & Hogg, 2004). Belk (2003) offers that shoes carry many different connotations, and can reflect personalities in a negative way. For example, particular types of high heels may suggest promiscuity. He considers this particularly true, as consumers seem to delight in making inferences about others from the shoes they are wearing. Wattanasuwan (2005) refers to this avoidance of particular brands or products as consumption resistance, and notes that creating a particular lifestyle for oneself may necessitate the disassociation from another lifestyle.

2.6 – THE APPEAL OF ETHICAL FASHION

2.6.1 – The Ethical Niche
Little research has been carried out on ethical fashion, despite findings which show that in 2005, £29 million was spent on ethically sourced clothing, subsequently increasing to £52 million in 2006 (Ethical Consumerism Report, cited in Beard 2008). According to Joergens (2006), apparel companies such as Edun, American Apparel, and People Tree are becoming more prominent, trying to attract young, mainstream consumers by producing fashionable clothes. Increasing concerns for

environmental issues among consumers has also influenced US apparel companies to develop products that are 100% organic cotton (Ellis, McCracken & Skuza 2012). Ruddell (2006) also shows that an increase in concern among U.S. consumers towards sweatshops has led to a higher willingness to pay a premium for ethically soured clothing.

However, as a disparity has already been established within the general context of ethical purchase intentions and behaviour, it seems apparent in the limited research carried out on the appeal of ethical fashion that one exists here also. Sudbury and Böltner (2011) report that the sales of ethical clothing in the UK are worth only 0.4% (£175 million) of the over-all market. This conflicts with Beard (2008), who shows the dramatic increase in sales of ethical clothing between 2005 and 2006, and the above research suggesting that there is a higher willingness from consumers to purchase ethically sourced clothing.

Conflicting research exists between consumers' attitudes towards ethical apparel and their actual behaviour when purchasing apparel. This is especially relevant for the generation Y cohort. Although many respondents in one study claimed that they would like their clothing to be ethically sourced, many professed that ethical apparel was not 'fashionable' enough (Joergens, 2006). Other studies claim that generation Y consumers do not consider ethical factors to be of any importance when buying clothes (Bucic et al. 2012; Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2007).

2.7 – SYMBOLIC CONSUMPTION

2.7.1 – Identity Through Consumption

The conflicting research above shows the disparity between consumer attitudes towards 'ethical fashion' and their actual purchase behaviour. Although this can be attributed to the attitude-behaviour gap mentioned in section 2.2.3, little research attention has been given to the influence that symbolic consumption may have on consumer behaviour.

If the consumer has choices to consume, he or she will consume things that hold particular symbolic meanings. These meanings may be idiosyncratic or widely shared with other people. For example, using recycled envelopes may symbolise 'I care for the environment' (Elliot & Wattanasuwan 1998, p. 134).

Souiden et al. (2011) note that the majority of consumers' purchase decisions and brand choices are influenced by their self-image and how it is projected in society, using products as symbols of social identification and affiliation (Banister & Hogg 2004). This is likely due to an inherent desire to communicate oneself to others and a need to belong, which is universal across cultures (Lee & Shrum 2012).

2.7.2 – The Extended Self

Solomon et al. (2010) also consider the influence of the extended self on consumption, i.e. the definition of the self that is characterised by physical objects that individuals use to symbolise their identity. Belk (1988) asserts that consumers' tendency to identify themselves through objects or 'possessions' is an inescapable factor of life, particularly as they use these material possessions to seek happiness, remind themselves of their accomplishments and experiences, and also to form group identities (Wattanasuwan 2005).

This is further supported by O'Cass & McEwen (2004) who claim that consumers defining themselves through their possessions serve as key symbols and indicators of personality traits and interests. Banister & Hogg (2004) identify clothing as having a major role in symbolic consumption, suggesting again that clothing is considered a high involvement product for consumers. Perhaps this need to express one's identity and personality through possessions such as clothing will outweigh the considered importance of the ethical factor in fashion consumption, particularly if ethical fashion brands do not convey a sense of style that exhibits the consumer's own personal identity.

2.7.3 – Brands

As mentioned above, consumers, particularly generation Y, use brands symbolically to signify their own personalities in consumption (Ismail & Spinelli 2012). Some authors consider this influence of branding to be so extreme that consumers now

exist in a branded landscape, i.e. a 'brandscape', where branding items such as symbols and logos dominate day-to-day life (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2007). One study which looked at generation Y consumption of fashion highlighted the importance of branding, when one respondent said: "We don't buy jeans – we buy Levi's" (O'Cass and Frost, cited in Grotts and Johnson 2013, p. 285). As mentioned previously, the Levi's brand portrays certain personality traits that can also define the personality of the individual when wearing it, making inferences about the identity of that person (Ismail & Spinelli 2012).

Similarly, another study found that generation Y consumers used several different brands to communicate meanings about themselves and various aspects of their personality. For example, Toyota represented confident and assertive qualities, while Lancôme represented charm and attractiveness: "different brands reflect the different parts of my personality. They are part of me, but I do not think I can be one brand. But there's a connection, and each is part of my personality" (Schembri, Merrilees & Kristiansen 2010, p. 629).

2.7.4 – The Postmodern Consumer

This idea of consuming symbolically and using brands to represent multiple aspects of an individual's personality can be linked to the effects of postmodernity, where an individual's understanding of knowledge is deemed to be inherently metaphorical and relativistic (Brown 1995). This is exemplified through symbolic consumption or 'hyperreality', one of the defining characteristics of postmodernism where the distinction between what is real and what is represented is blurred; reality is open to negotiation and constructed through symbols (Rytel 2010; Elliott 1997; Brown 1995; Firat & Venkatesh 1995).

Ellis, Fitchett, Higgins, Jack, Lim, Saren and Tadajewski (2011) note that consumers' identity is no longer derived from the social class that they were born into or the jobs that they do; rather, it is their consumption habits that represent their identities. A complex understanding of identity is central to postmodern thought, one which Stuart Hall argues is "never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting discourses, practices and positions" (Hall 2000, p. 17).

Fragmentation, i.e. the breaking apart of one single reality into multiple realities is a significant factor of postmodernism, resulting in disjointed consumption experiences. This leads to fragmentation of the self, questioning the existence of 'the authentic consumer' (Firat & Schultz 1997; Firat & Venkatesh 1995). Fragmentation means that consumers have a divided self, are not committed to central themes, and buy products to suit their protean lifestyles (Wattanasuwan 2005; Firat & Venkatesh 1995). This resonates with Schembri's et al. (2010) study, where generation Y consumers used different brands to reflect different aspects of their personality. "They may adopt several different life styles in the same day. In fact, for the postmodern person, the leitmotiv is: "It is as I wish and when I wish" according to the mood of the moment" (Cova 1997, p. 304).

Current research has given scant attention to the effects of postmodernity and symbolic consumption on consumer behaviour and ethics, despite these factors having an arguably large influence on consumption habits. It is clear from this argument that consumers find it difficult to commit to one central theme in establishing their identity, making their consumption experiences fragmented and unpredictable. In this regard, it could be said that this erratic behaviour may reduce their likelihood to think about how and where their clothes were made if there is a constant need to always seek out new representations of their identity through the outfits that they consume. It could also be argued that these effects of postmodernity such as fragmentation and symbolic confusion makes normative ethical approaches difficult to apply in consumer ethics research, suggesting other avenues to be explored within this research area when theorising about consumers' feelings towards and understanding of ethics. This is discussed further in section 3.2.

The above research highlights a discrepancy in consumers' claims of ethical consumption, and particularly ethical fashion, with conflicting findings from various studies. Much of the research has focused predominantly on the factors affecting the purchase of ethical products, ignoring how consumers relate with ethics before, during, and after the purchase decision. It is also clear that generation Y is poorly understood, with many studies on this group being carried out only within the last few years and with very few specific to ethical consumption; many of the studies

carried out on ethical consumption are based on varying age ranges rather than concentrating on particular age demographics.

Similarly, the above research shows that symbolic consumption has a huge influence on fashion consumption, despite little attention given to this in the research on consumer ethics. A gap exists for further research to examine the influence of sweatshop labour on fashion consumption. It is a topic that has not been well researched specific to generation Y consumers, despite research suggesting that this cohort is the most concerned with labour abuse issues in fashion production. This is also despite the fact that sweatshop labour is a controversial and topical issue featured in the media regularly, warranting further attention.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1 – INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide an extensive discussion of the various methodological considerations behind this study. This includes an overview of the research aims and objectives, the philosophical reasoning behind the chosen research method, the research instrument, an overview of the chosen sample, the limitations of the study, the ethical considerations made by the researcher, and the method of data analysis.

3.2 – RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The over-all research aim of this project is to understand how fashion conscious generation Y consumers in Ireland consider the ethics of sweatshop labour in clothing consumption. This will encompass further research objectives which will be explored to help fulfil this.

3.2.1 – Research Objective 1

The first research objective is to understand the level of fashion consciousness among generation Y consumers in Ireland. In order to understand the level of consideration given to the ethics of sweatshop labour issues during clothing consumption, it is firstly necessary to understand how concerned the Irish generation Y cohort is with fashion. This may be crucial fulfilling the over-all research aim, as the literature review has highlighted the emotional attachment that consumers have with clothing items. Therefore it may be questioned whether this emotional attachment overrides other factors in clothing consumption, such as ethical considerations.

Although previous research has looked at fashion consciousness among generation Y consumers (Hill and Lee 2012; Joergens 2006; Iwanow et al. 2005), these studies have looked only marginally at the importance of fashion to this group of consumers.

Therefore they have failed to demonstrate a clear understanding of the true level of involvement that this cohort has towards fashion. It is hoped that this study will delve deeper into the emotional connection between this generation and fashion, to ascertain how exactly they feel about their clothing, and how this contributes towards a sense of identity.

3.2.2 – Research Objective 2

The second research objective is to understand Irish generation Y consumers' ethical consideration of sweatshop labour during clothing purchase decisions. In fulfilling the over-all research aim, it is imperative to firstly understand the extent to which these consumers feel concerned about sweatshop labour when buying clothes, as that may determine whether they are inclined to consider such issues important during clothing consumption. Although several studies have addressed this concept (Hiller 2010; Valor 2007; Shaw et al. 2007), each has focused on consumers' intentions to either avoid unethical clothing or purchase ethical clothing, and the factors affecting this decision, such as price and quality in some cases. None have focused on how consumers relate with ethics during purchase decisions, and whether they think specifically about sweatshop labour. This has meant that probing questions have not been asked to understand the reasons why they may or may not think about this during purchase decisions.

3.2.3 – Research Objective 3

Finally, the third research objective is to understand the ethical consideration that Irish generation Y consumers have about sweatshop labour beyond the moment of purchase. More emphasis is needed on exploring moments beyond the purchase, i.e. to understand how people think ethically beyond behavioural and situational measurements and how it is experienced in a phenomenological context. Consumption occurs on a daily basis, and in order to understand generation Y consumers' ethical considerations of sweatshop labour in clothing consumption, it is necessary to examine all aspects of consumption which are not restricted to only the moment of purchase.

3.3 – RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Quinlan (2011, p. 95) notes that any research project is influenced or underpinned by a philosophical framework, which is defined as 'the worldview within which the research is situated.' Kapoulas and Mitic (2012) liken the term philosophical framework to a research paradigm, and note the importance for the researcher in choosing the most appropriate paradigm which will essentially influence how the research is conducted and what sort of conclusions the researcher is likely to arrive at. This worldview as defined by Quinlan (2011) is determined by the researcher's epistemological and ontological considerations. A researcher's ontological assumptions concern the nature of reality and social entities.

> The central point of orientation here is the question of whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors
> (Bryman and Bell 2011, p. 20).

Objectivism and constructionism occupy these two positions. Objectivism argues that reality is constructed beyond influence or interaction from social actors, while constructionism, sometimes referred to as social constructionism, holds that reality is constructed through the actions and perceptions of social actors. Constructionists believe that reality is also in a constant state of revision because of the strong influence from social interaction (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). The question of what is real is linked closely to the question of what we can know to be real, dealt with in the philosophical realm of epistemology.

Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 15) define epistemology as 'the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline.' Two of the most commonly referred to epistemological considerations in sociological research are

positivism and interpretivism. However, some authors consider other epistemological positions.[1]

3.3.1 –Positivism vs Interpretivism

Kapoulas and Mitic (2012) note a complex dissimilarity between the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the positivist and interpretivist research paradigms. Brand (2009, p. 432) defines positivism as:

> a belief system arising out of practices in the natural sciences, i.e. physics, biology, chemistry, etc. which assumes that matters that are the subject of research are susceptible of being investigated objectively, and that their veracity can be established with a reasonable degree of certainty.

In other words, positivism is an epistemological position that outlines the existence of one objective truth or reality in obtaining knowledge in research (Denzin & Lincoln 2008).

Researchers assuming a positivist epistemology usually employ a quantitative based research design, using methods such as questionnaires, empirical experiments and content analysis to gather and analyse data. Creswell (2003) claims that any research attempting to demonstrate causality or variation among research constructs is very much suited to a quantitative based approach. The term quantitative, as defined by Quinlan (2011, p. 104), is 'data in the form of numbers; or data that can be coded numerically.' Bryman and Bell (2011) also claim that quantitative strategies use a deductive approach to research, i.e. when theory guides research and a hypothesis is deduced and tested.

Interpretivism (sometimes referred to as post-positivism) however, claims that there is no one objective reality or truth to be discovered in research; rather, meaning is constructed through the interpretation of social actors. Brand (2009) argues that from an ontological view, interpretivism assumes that meaning is relative. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) also note a stark difference between interpretivism and positivism in

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[1] Bryman and Bell (2011) consider realism as a sub-category of, albeit a separate philosophical and epistemological position to, positivism. Similarly, Quinlan (2011) considers social constructionism to be an epistemological position that sits between positivism and interpretivism

claiming that interpretivists argue that reality can never fully be understood the way positivists believe; it can only be approximated.

Bryman and Bell (2011) note that interpretivism has been heavily influenced by Alfred Schutz's idea of phenomenology, a philosophical assumption concerned with how individuals experience and make sense of the world they live in. A phenomenological approach accepts the differential experiences of each individual in how they perceive the world and extracts a richer understanding of social life.

Interpretivism has also been influenced by Blumer's concept of symbolic interactionism, whereby individuals 'continually interpret the symbolic meaning of his or her environment, and acts on the basis of this imputed meaning' (Bryman 2004, p. 14). Similarly, Saunders et al. (2009) comment on interactions with others and their influence on and adjustment to individuals' own interpretations of meaning and action. Research conducted from an interpretivist based epistemology emphasises how reality is constructed socially and how meaning is created through social experiences. The focus is on 'meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency' (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, p. 34), upon which positivist assumptions are based.

Hiller (2010) notes that adopting an interpretivist paradigm will naturally lead to a qualitative based research strategy. Quinlan (2011, p. 105) defines qualitative data as 'data that represents feelings, thoughts, ideas, understanding – non-numeric data.' Data collection techniques following a qualitative strategy are usually in the form of focus groups, interviews, or ethnography/observation (Saunders et al. 2009). Researchers seeking to understand the 'how' and 'why' of individual's perceptions (Brand 2009) and the nature of experiences are encouraged to employ a qualitative research strategy (Davis, Golicic, Boerstler, Choi & Oh 2013). Similarly, Warren and Karner (2010) note that qualitative research is subjective and does not seek to test hypotheses or claim that one objective reality exists, in the way that quantitative research does.

3.4 – ISSUES IN RESEARCHING ETHICS

The research area of consumer ethics has caused considerable concern among some academics in recent years.[2] Three key issues have emerged from the literature as major concerns in researching consumer ethics, which must be taken into consideration to ensure that the most appropriate methodology and research design are chosen to fulfil the research aims and objectives of this project.

3.4.1 – Methodology

The infamous attitude-behaviour gap which has trivialised much of the research on ethical consumerism has led to some academics even questioning the reliability and value of such research (Ulrich & Sarasin, cited in Carrigan & Attalla 2001). However, Auger and Devinney (2007) speculate whether this 'gap' has occurred as a result of the research instruments used in these studies. Other academics have also voiced concerns about previous research within the field of ethics and the methodologies used in previous studies. [3]

Most of the research carried out on consumer ethics has been influenced by the positivist methodology and used quantitative based research instruments (Hiller 2010; Brand 2009; Valor 2007). For example, seminal findings such as those by Hill and Lee (2012), Iwanow et al. (2005) and Shaw et al. (2000) all used questionnaires to gather data. Warren and Karner (2010) assert the stark differences between qualitative and quantitative research, arguing that they require not only different methods and approaches, but also a different underlying logic.

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[2] Newholm and Shaw (2007) claim that ethical consumption remains an under-researched area of consumer behaviour, while Smith (2001) asserts that ethics is poorly understood by the broader field of marketing. Shaw et al. (2005) agree by noting that a deep understanding of the subject of ethical consumerism and a rising concern about ethical issues is severely limited.

[3] Hiller (2010) states that little attention has actually been given to the methodologies used in researching consumer ethics. Donaldson and Dunfee (1994) also note that the field of business ethics has become entangled in its own logic from a lack of direction. They conclude that the issue stems from incongruous research methods used to explore it.

Many academics claim that this heavy influence from quantitative methods in consumer ethics research has resulted in an over-reliance on the positivist paradigm where ethical decision making has been defined by objective judgements (Hiller, 2010). Valor (2007) argues that the use of quantitative methods in ethics research has oversimplified the consumer buying process and often tests the same variables from previous studies. Brand (2009) also repudiates the use of questionnaires in ethics research because they foreclose potential responses given from participants.

Brinkmann (2004) calls for more qualitative studies of ethical consumption. Similarly, Crane (1999) argues that a qualitative approach allows for better engagement with the subject in a more phenomenological way. Eckhardt et al. (2010) also maintain that although Ajzen's (1985) theory of planned behaviour explores an accurate prediction of reasoned action [a theory linking attitudes, subjective norms behavioural intentions and behaviour with one another], such approaches are not appropriate when dealing with emotional consumer choices such as ethical consumption. Therefore an interpretivist based approach is considered the most relevant methodology in researching ethical consumer behaviour.

3.4.2 – Ethics Defined as an Objective Norm

Another issue emerging from previous research is the portrayal of 'ethics' as an objective norm, with researchers already underpinning what 'ethical' means before considering participant responses. Hiller (2010, p. 239) argues that "ethics is subjective, contextual, and multi-dimensional." Similarly, Bauman (1993) comments on the how the ambivalent nature of human beings can be a roadblock in one's ability to define ethics as an objective norm. Firat and Schultz (1997) also assert the influence of postmodernity on consumption habits, noting that the fragmented nature of postmodern consumers makes commitment to any single project or idea difficult to fulfil. "They [consumers] don't commit or conform to any consistent, centred idea, system or narrative or 'regime of truth' […] In postmodern culture, the self is not consistent, authentic or centred" (Firat and Schultz, 1997, p. 190/193).

This suggests that consumers themselves may find it difficult to construct any meaning behind ethics, creating even further complications for a research area that is

already deemed significantly complex. Wiggins, cited in Hiller (2010) posits that the study of moral philosophy fails if it is not related to and grounded in the experiences of individuals. Davis, Andersen and Curtis (2001) even consider the basic idea that differences in ethical ideology at individual level are crucial in ethical decision making. Thus, future studies may need to consider the advice of Crane (1999) and Collins and Hussey (2003) who call for a more pluralistic approach to researching consumer ethics.

3.4.3 – Social Desirability Bias

Social desirability bias is consistently noted as a major issue in ethics research, often hindering the researcher's ability to obtain meaningful data (Carrington et al. 2010; Auger & Devinney 2007; Crane 1999). Chung and Monroe (2003, p. 291) define social desirability bias as "the tendency of individuals to underestimate or overestimate the likelihood they would perform an undesirable or desirable action." Similarly, Quinlan (2011) considers it to be the act of giving the socially desired or politically correct answer to a question, i.e. what the individual feels 'ought' to be the right answer as opposed to their honest opinion. Some academics provide guidance in minimising the risk of social desirability bias occurring.[4]

3.5 – RESEARCH METHOD

Having considered the philosophical framework of the research and the various issues in previous studies which have been discussed above, it is necessary to select the most suitable methodology for this study that will seek to fulfil the research aims and objectives. The over-arching aim here is to explore how fashion and style conscious generation Y consumers in Ireland consider the ethics of sweatshop labour in clothing consumption. These are complex issues of a social and cultural nature, involved in constantly changing negotiation with the material world.

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[4] Sekaran and Bougie (2010) emphasise the importance of carefully phrasing questions that reduce the risk of social desirability bias occurring. Bryman and Bell (2011) also comment on the need for researchers to be aware of bias as it can act as source of error in measuring findings. To help minimise this, Auger and Devinney (2007) suggest using a combination of research methods to accurately assess whether behaviour matches intentions. For example, they suggest using observational methods as close to shopping behaviour as possible.

The extent to which generation Y consumers consider fashion, ethics, and sweatshop labour is not a linear process to be measured against static, universal, positivist criteria. Rather, meaning is to be found at the site of negotiation between consumers, their experiences, and the social and cultural contexts they find themselves within. As such, a qualitative approach which accepts that reality is at least partially constructed by the individual is necessary. The reality of ethical consideration among generation Y consumers is to be found in the variable lived experiences of the individuals, not simply in the definitional value of "ethics". It is how ethics is perceived and experienced that counts, not how it measures up to a universal norm. As such, the insights of phenomenological investigation are particularly useful here.

Phenomenology is strongly linked to interpretivism as a philosophy which examines how individuals make sense of the world around them. Attributed to the work of philosophers such as Schutz, Husserl, and Heidegger, phenomenology has been employed extensively in social science and humanities research over the last century. Creswell (2007) suggests that the application of a phenomenological methodology is best suited to studies whereby a deep understanding of lived experiences of a particular phenomenon is necessary to answer the research question. According to Fay and Riot (2007), researchers employ phenomenology to better understand situations from an individual perspective; how they feel, perceive, see, and construct meaning from the world around them.

Similarly, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that, in qualitative interviewing, phenomenology clarifies the mode of understanding in obtaining accounts of participants' lived experiences in relation to the phenomenon under investigation and how that phenomenon is interpreted. Therefore, it is felt that semi-structured interviews using a phenomenological influence will be the most appropriate data collection method for this study in fulfilling the over-all research aim.

3.5.1 – Semi-Structured Interviews

Hiller (2010) offers that qualitative interviews may be more likely to obtain authentic accounts of experiences than other data collection methods, thus reducing the possibility of social desirability bias occurring. Bryman and Bell (2011) make the distinction between quantitative and qualitative interviews, noting that quantitative

interviews are predominantly structured, whereas qualitative interviews are either semi-structured or un-structured.

Semi-structured interviews, although flexible and allowing participants considerable leeway in how to respond, do follow a list of themes or general questions to be covered by the researcher. However, these questions do not have to be followed exactly in order and the researcher may include supplementary questions not listed on the sheet. In contrast, unstructured interviews are conducted with only prompts used by the researcher to cover a range of topics, and without specific questions. This style of interviewing usually takes the form of a conversation between the researcher and the participant (Bryman & Bell 2011).

As this study entails research objectives concerned with understanding generation Y consumers' interpretation of and attitudes towards sweatshop labour and fashion consumption, it was necessary to have some form of structure in the interview between researcher and participant. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate method of data collection. Although a guided format was followed, the leeway given to participants on how to respond was flexible enough to allow for a phenomenological influence which sought to encourage participants in providing narratives of their lived experiences and interpretation of the phenomenon being studied. Questions were carefully designed to ensure a discursive and open ended approach and each interview employed a conversational tone. An example of the interviewing template used can be seen in appendix 1, along with a sample interview transcript in appendix 4.

The interviewing format was designed in line with qualitative studies carried out by Hiller (2010) and Piacentini and Mailer (2004). The interview was divided into three sections: section one involved the exploration of fashion consumption among generation Y consumers using photo elicitation, section two entailed a general discussion on sweatshop labour in the clothing industry, with section three including a second photo elicitation exercise with a discussion about clothing labels.

In order to obtain the most authentic responses, questions regarding of an ethical nature were asked subsequent to the discussion on fashion consumption. This decision was influenced by Hiller's study (2010), whereby the author felt that social desirability bias was far more likely to occur if a discussion on ethical consumption was covered in the first section of the interview. In line with Piacentini and Mailer's (2004) study, probing questions were also asked to encourage elaboration on participants' answers, and to project feelings and meanings on to situations. This was particularly useful, given the sensitivity of the topic being discussed.

3.5.2 – Triangulation

Although interviewing alone is an excellent method of uncovering feelings and attitudes towards a phenomenon (Warren and Karner 2010), some academics have encouraged a triangulated approach to research, in which more than one method of data collection is used in studying the social phenomenon (Bryman & Bell 2011; Auger & Devinney 2007; Shaw et al. 2005). Davis et al. (2013) note that triangulated studies often result in more compelling findings and discover new avenues of inquiry for further research. Similarly, Sekaran and Bougie (2010) claim that using a triangulated approach will give the researcher more confidence in his or her results from using different sources of data.

3.5.3 – Photo Elicitation

It was felt that participants' ability to recall or imagine hypothetical scenarios involving fashion consumption completely unaided may have been weak. In order to correctly employ a phenomenological influence, enriching narratives were needed from individuals about their lived experiences of the phenomenon being researched. To effectively encourage such a descriptive account, other approaches were considered to aid the participants in doing so.

Photo elicitation is a projective technique used in research which involves the use of photographs in interviews, either sourced or created by the researcher or participants.[5] Denzin and Lincoln (2008) posit that the use of photographs in

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[5] A projective technique is a method whereby stimuli are used to prompt participants, which is then interpreted by the researcher as the underlying characteristics of the participant (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

interviews goes beyond the 'what', 'when', and how', and more towards themes surrounding meanings and feelings, i.e. what something meant to the participant. Warren and Karner (2010, p. 157) assert that "subject created photographs and videos have the potential both to engage participants and to provide insights that would not otherwise be available to researchers." Two separate photo elicitation exercises were used during each interview, one based on subject created photographs and the other based on researcher generated photographs.

3.5.3.1 – Subject Created Photographs

Research objective 1 sought to understand the level of fashion consciousness among Irish Generation Y consumers. Therefore, in order to obtain a clear understanding of their experiences and feelings towards fashion, participants were asked to submit three photographs of their favourite clothing items to the researcher, prior to being interviewed. Participants were given considerable freedom in choosing which items of clothing they wished to photograph, under the condition that they were considered to be their favourite items – the likelihood of the researcher obtaining more enriching data would be higher if participants spoke about something they really cared about. Using these photographs during the interviews, the researcher asked questions about these items of clothing in order to uncover the stories behind participants' fashion consumption experiences. Samples of these photographs can be seen in appendix 2.

3.5.3.2 – Researcher Generated Photographs

As research objective 2 sought to understand the level of Irish generation Y consumers' ethical consideration of sweatshop labour, it was felt that photographs of real clothing labels should be used to obtain more realistic and authentic responses from participants. Therefore, the researcher produced two photographs of the 'made in' labels from two pieces of clothing during each interview. The first photograph included an image of a clothing label marked: 'Sweatshop Free – Made in the USA' from the company American Apparel, an apparel company which manufactures all garments in an L.A factory that is deemed completely sweatshop free (American Apparel 2013).

The second photograph displayed an image of a clothing label marked 'Made in Bangladesh' from the company H&M, which has never professed to be ethically

minded but whose garments are manufactured in Bangladesh. The decision to use Bangladesh as the location in the second photograph was as a result of the building collapse in April 2013, as mentioned in section 2.3.6. However, no claims were made by the researcher that H&M was involved in this particular incident. It was originally intended to use a clothing label from the fashion brand Primark, as the company was linked to this particular incident. However, Primark clothing labels do not include any information regarding the 'made in' locations, making it impossible to use the company as an example. The researcher generated photographs can be seen in appendix 3.

Previous studies that have researched consumer ethics have not employed a photo elicitation approach by asking participants to photograph their own clothing or showing them photographs of clothing labels. A study by Iwanow et al. (2005) found that consumers did not look at clothing labels or consider them to be particularly significant. However, they were not shown photographs of real clothing labels nor asked to discuss their feelings towards them. In this study, by engaging with participants to this degree, it was hoped to uncover an authentic account of their ethical consideration towards sweatshop labour and whether they actually consider it important on a day to day basis.

3.6 – RESEARCH DESIGN JUSTIFICATION

It is argued that using a quantitative based approach in research will 'undoubtedly help to test the truthfulness of observations and assumptions' (Kapoulas and Mitic 2012, p. 364) about the phenomenon of interest. Bryman and Bell (2011) also note that questionnaires are advantageous because they are much quicker to administer than qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups. Similarly, they assert that the presence of an interviewer may affect the answers that participants give to questions during interviews and focus groups; questionnaires are completed with nobody else present, thus minimising this threat. However, as mentioned in section 3.4.1, an academic debate exists surrounding the appropriateness of using questionnaires as a means of gathering data on topics such as consumer ethics.

It was felt that semi-structured, in-depth interviews using a photo elicitation approach were sufficient to fulfil the over-all research aim. This research project is explorative in nature, exploring how consumers feel about particular issues. Therefore a questionnaire based approach would not offer any additional insight.

Focus groups were originally considered as a supplementary data collection method. However, after further investigation it was felt that, although they are advantageous in obtaining new insights on particular topics (Quinlan 2011), research on consumer ethics is often sensitive (Chung and Monroe 2003) which could make participants feel uncomfortable. Group effects such as dominance by certain participants or the desire to supress honest opinions (Bryman and Bell 2011) may negatively impact the effectiveness of a focus group approach. Therefore it is again argued that using focus groups in addition to interviews would provide little advantage to the researcher in uncovering further information regarding the research phenomenon.

3.7 – SAMPLE

The sample for this study was chosen on the basis that previous research had outlined the generation Y cohort to be poorly understood. Research on sweatshop labour pertaining to generation Y consumers is also scarce, with no emphasis given specifically to Irish generation Y consumers. Therefore, all participants chosen were Irish consumers born between 1997 and 1994 (specifications as to what constitutes a generation Y consumer, as defined by Hill & Lee 2012). As mentioned in section 1.3, college educated consumers are most likely to oppose sweatshop labour practices, therefore all participants chosen for this study were current university students or recent university graduates.

Nine participants were interviewed over a four day period (August 1st-4th 2013). Five were female and four were male, with ages ranging between 23 and 27 years. Each interview lasted between 50 and 90 mins and was recorded using an audio device. The interviews were also carried out in quiet locations with minimal distractions. All participants submitted their photographs for the photo elicitation exercise to the researcher via email prior to the interviews.

Although many previous studies within this research area have involved considerably larger samples (Bucic et al. 2012; Hill and Lee 2012; Iwanow et al. 2005), they were of a quantitative nature and thus more concerned with measuring quantity and frequency, factors upon which quantitative assumptions are based. However, previous studies which have adopted a qualitative approach (Hiller 2010; Valor 2007; Joergens 2006; Carrigan and Attalla 2001) used small sample sizes because of the emphasis on meaning, feelings, and thoughts, rather than on quantity. Therefore, upon reflection, nine interviews was deemed to be an adequate number for this study.

The sample chosen was purposive as it has been established that information was needed from a specific group of individuals in order to fulfil the research objectives. Sekaran and Bougie (2010) comment on two distinct types of purposive sampling; judgement sampling and quota sampling. They define judgement sampling as a design used when subjects are chosen based on their suitability in providing the required information, with quota sampling referring to a predetermined number of subjects sampled from different groups.

Considering that this study seeks to understand the level of ethical consideration towards sweatshop labour among college educated generation Y consumers' that are also fashion conscious, a judgement sampling design was used in determining the suitability of participants. A predetermined number of participants was not defined prior to the interviews taking place. Instead, interviews were carried out until theoretical saturation had been reached, i.e. the phenomenon being researched was saturated with data and no new information was emerging following nine interviews (Bryman 2004).

Table 1 (Participant information)

Participant 1 Gender: Female Age: 24 Education: University graduate (level 8)	**Participant 2** Gender: Male Age: 23 Education: University student (level 8)
Participant 3 Gender: Female Age: 24 Education: University graduate (level 8)	**Participant 4** Gender: Female Age: 25 Education: University graduate (level 8)
Participant 5 Gender: Female Age: 26 Education: University student (level 8)	**Participant 6** Gender: Female Age: 23 Education: University student (level 8)
Participant 7 Gender: Male Age: 25 Education: University student (level 8)	**Participant 8** Gender: Male Age: 27 Education: University student (level 8)
Participant 9 Gender: Male Age: 24 Education: University graduate (level 8)	

3.8 – LIMITATIONS

One major limitation in this study is the presence of bias during the interviews, which can affect responses given by participants. The ability to research consumer ethics without the presence of interviewee bias, particularly social desirability bias, is virtually impossible (Crane 1999). Given the sensitive nature of the phenomenon being researched, it can be difficult to ensure that the answers given by participants are authentic and not overestimated, despite careful planning of the questions.

Therefore it is not possible for the researcher to know whether participants have answered every question truthfully.

Another limitation in this study is the time constraints faced by the researcher. In order to obtain an even more enriching account of participants' ethical considerations towards sweatshop labour, the researcher would have liked to carry out follow up interviews with all participants to assess whether they felt any different subsequent to the initial meeting. This was also based on Hiller's (2010) study which used follow up interviews several weeks after the first interviews to assess and measure any similarities and differences in participant responses. However, time constraints regarding the completion of the research project prevented the researcher from carrying out any follow up interviews.

3.9 – ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given that the nature of this study is particularly sensitive due to its involvement in discussions pertaining to ethics, it is likely that participants may have felt reluctant in sharing their thoughts and feelings on certain issues. Therefore it was imperative for the researcher to guarantee anonymity to participants before being interviewed. They were also made aware that the interview was related to an MSc research project, and gave their permission for the researcher to use any of their quotes in the findings and discussion chapter. Participants were also reminded that they had full access to their individual transcript and audio recording, should they wish to view or hear it.

3.10 – METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Each interview was recorded using an audio device and subsequently transcribed into a word processing format. The interviews were then read thoroughly several times, and notes were made by the researcher when significant comments by participants were encountered. Thematic coding was also used following the guidelines of Creswell (2007) to analyse responses by participants. Important comments were grouped into labels or codes with abbreviated terms to represent

thoughts or feelings that participants had about particular issues. These codes were then subsequently broken down into major and minor themes; depending on the emphasis of discussion among participants about a particular theme, and its relevance to the overall research objectives of the study determined its label as either major or minor. Some of the major themes which encompassed various factors were also broken down into sub-themes. Each theme was then categorised according to the research objectives set out in section 3.2. These themes are presented in the tables below:

Table 2 – Themes emerging based on research objective 1

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1 *To understand the level of fashion consciousness among generation Y consumers*
Themes • Symbolic meaning • Social acceptance [minor theme]

Table 3 – Themes emerging based on research objective 2

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2 *To understand generation Y consumers' ethical consideration of sweatshop labour during clothing purchase decisions*
Themes • Moderately Concerned ▸ General awareness of fashion brands ▸ Made in labels ▸ Buying or thinking about buying ethically • Indifference towards sweatshop free fashion brand

Table 4 – Themes emerging based on research objective 3

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3

To understand generation Y consumers' ethical consideration of sweatshop labour beyond clothing purchase decisions

Themes

- Difficulty in defining ethics

- Exposure [minor]

- Justification

  ➢ False sense of security

  ➢ Style over ethics

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS

This chapter will present the findings from the nine in-depth interviews that were carried out between August 1st and 4th 2013. The themes which were derived from the data analysis outlined in section 3.10 are presented and discussed below:

4.1 – RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1

To understand the level of fashion consciousness among Generation Y consumers

Interview Themes
- Symbolic meaning
- Social acceptance [minor theme]

The themes relevant to the first research objective were associated with the first section of the interview, i.e. photo elicitation where participants discussed their favourite clothing items based on photographs they took themselves.

4.1.1 – Symbolic Meaning

A major theme emerging from the interviews relates to symbolic consumption and the meaning behind why participants wear certain clothes and search for particular fashion brands. One participant spoke about her membership of a music scene and wearing clothes to represent that:

"Em, well Levi's are an important part of the rockabilly scene as well [...] so I wear Levi's turned up and a lot of people would know, if you're into that kind of scene, that you wear your Levi's turned up and you're a part of that"
(Interviewee 1, female).

Another participant claimed that the shoes she wore were very much representative of her personal interests and the meaning behind them. She was consuming them for symbolic reasons as well as practical ones:

"It's going to come back to concerts. I got them [shoes] the weekend I went to Berlin, and then I actually wore them to Berlin and London to see Snow Patrol, and then to Belfast again last year. And I just really like the kind of writing and the message on them, I dunno if you can see that or not, it says 'Live' and 'Dreams' and stuff like that [...] Well it's kind of inspiring, a little bit. They're my happy shoes!"
(Interviewee 3, female)

4.1.2 – Social Acceptance [minor]

The final theme emerging from the interviews is based on the desire by many participants to be socially accepted by their peers through the clothes they wear. One participant even spoke about the influence that others have over his choice of clothing and how he felt that he had to look a certain way to make a good impression on others:

"I think it's, I personally don't care what I wear...but I'd wear something to give out an image of myself, I wouldn't want people to think....well, no, ok...the shoes are a perfect example of that. They're my snazzy shoes that I wear to feel good about myself; so I go 'Hello, I'm Jack*[6]' and they go 'Oh, who's this guy?'"
 (Interviewee 2, male).

Similarly, another participant spoke about her favourite pair of shoes as being extremely uncomfortable to wear, but as a part-time singer, preferred to wear them on stage over another pair of shoes because she felt that she would be more accepted if she wore something that represented her onstage persona well:

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[6] *Name changed to protect identity

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"Standing at a microphone, yeah, it's a bit painful when you're just standing in the one spot. So I suppose it doesn't do any favours blood wise for my feet! […] But I suppose it's also important to have a certain look as well, when it comes to, you know, trying to dress up and do a gig" (Interviewee 6, female).

Another participant spoke about a favourite t-shirt she had; a tribute to a famous rockabilly club in Scotland which she visited recently. She felt that having this t-shirt made her feel more accepted into the group and more involved in the music scene that she is part of, particularly because it is considered an exclusive t-shirt that only 'authentic' members can receive:

"The t-shirt is from a Rockabilly club in Scotland. And you only get that t-shirt if you're a member of the club, nobody else is allowed to wear one […] It makes me feel more accepted in the group, and to know that they have my back, you know? If anything did happen, they'd be there for me. And they're kind of like a family in a way, so I guess it's kind of like a connection to them" (Interviewee 1, female).

4.2 – RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2

To understand generation Y consumers' ethical consideration of sweatshop labour during clothing purchase decisions

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Interview Themes

- Moderately concerned
  - General awareness of fashion brands
  - Made in labels
  - Buying or thinking about buying ethically
- Indifference towards sweatshop free fashion brand

The themes relevant to the second research objective were discovered during the second and third sections of the interviews which included a general discussion about ethics in fashion and a second photo elicitation exercise in which the researcher showed participants two photographs of clothing labels featuring the 'made in' location.

4.2.1 – Moderately Concerned

Of considerable interest to the second research objective is the discovery that, although the majority of participants claimed to be concerned about the fact that sweatshop labour exists in the world, it was not something many had ever really considered before, particularly when purchasing clothes. However, all participants were very familiar with the term 'sweatshop' and had similar ideas of what a sweatshop was or looked like, in line with the definition used in the literature review. Some of the participants who claimed that they did feel concerned about the existence of sweatshop labour also admitted to only feeling that way because it was being discussed at that particular moment.

General Awareness of Fashion Brands

There was a general lack of awareness among participants about where the clothes of their favourite fashion brands were made. Very few had ever thought about it before being asked. Of the favourite clothing items chosen as part of the first photo elicitation exercise, only one participant could recall where a particular item of clothing was made. In general, participants felt unsure about even the origins of their favourite fashion brands and where the company was based. Most participants also admitted to knowing very little about the working conditions of those making their clothes.

Interestingly, although previously admitting to knowing little about their own clothes and where they were made, it was easier for participants to recall incidents of companies using sweatshops to make clothes rather than companies not using sweatshops. This perhaps suggests that participants may be more receptive to incidents of unethical corporate behaviour rather than ethical corporate behaviour. Very few participants knew of any ethical fashion brands, one participant even admitted to never hearing the term 'ethical fashion' before. American Apparel and Edun were the two companies mentioned that participants considered ethical and sweatshop free, and Penneys, H&M, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Nike were four companies mentioned who were considered to be involved in sweatshop labour to manufacture clothes.

'Made In' Labels

Participants were also asked whether they check the 'made in' labels on their clothes. The majority of participants had never checked the labels on their clothes, the main reason being that it had just never occurred to them. One participant regularly checked the labels out of curiosity to see where their clothes were made. However, they also admitted to shopping in Penneys despite earlier claims that the company was involved in sweatshop labour. This demonstrates an inconsistency in the participants' ethical position in that they willingly purchase clothing that is (as far as they perceive it phenomenologically) manufactured under sweatshop conditions.

Participants were also shown two photographs of clothing labels: 1) 'Sweatshop Free – Made in the USA' and 2) 'Made in Bangladesh.' The researcher asked participants to talk about the photos and describe how they felt knowing that each item of clothing was made in that specific location. Several participants admitted to making an assumption that something produced in the USA would not be made in a sweatshop environment because of stringent legislation and regulatory bodies preventing such practices. However, the 'Made in Bangladesh' label generated a negative response from many participants who stated that the country had a reputation for sweatshop labour. Many assumed that clothes manufactured in Bangladesh would be made under very poor working conditions.

Despite this, several participants noted that majority of their own clothes were likely to have been made in a country such as Bangladesh. Some participants also claimed that it was unfair to assume that all clothes made in Bangladesh are done so in a sweatshop environment; they argued that it was impossible to know about conditions in which they were made. However, two participants also admitted to that they never thought about where their clothes were made and did not feel concerned about the fact that they were uncertain of whether clothes made in Bangladesh were done so in a sweatshop environment.

Buying or Thinking About Buying Ethically

It appeared that participants were hardly motivated by ethical factors when either thinking about or actually buying clothes. Several participants felt that clothing made in a sweatshop-free environment was considerably more expensive than mass produced clothing from countries such as Bangladesh. Despite appreciating the sentiment behind companies treating and paying their workers fairly, many felt it was not enough to encourage them to spend extra money on something that was made in a sweatshop-free environment.

Fundamentally, participants felt that ethics or the conditions of production were just not something that came into their minds when buying clothes. When asked why it was not something they thought about, one participant considered that the excitement of shopping outweighed the ethical factor, while another participant noted the effects of globalisation on their consumption habits:

"It just doesn't come into my head. Just doesn't come into my head at all, you know that kind of way? Maybe when I'm buying something I guess I have like, tunnel vision, just the fact that I'm about to pay for it. And then maybe I'm excited about it cos I'm like 'Oooh, I'm getting something new.' Maybe that's all I'm thinking about at the time" (Interviewee 5, female).

"I think it's because we live in such a globalised world, so if I don't wonder where, you know, my XBOX comes from or my laptop or the paint on my walls, then why would I worry about my clothes?" (Interviewee 2, male)

4.2.2 – Indifference Towards A Sweatshop Free Strategy

Although many participants felt positive towards the 'Sweatshop Free – Made in the USA' label and had more respect for American Apparel because of it, many also felt that it would not encourage them to buy clothes made in a sweatshop-free environment. Of the eight participants who were aware of the American Apparel brand, only two knew that the company employed a vertically integrated business model and was completely sweatshop free. Nonetheless, the general consensus was that the brand was expensive and unappealing to participants, thus discouraging them from buying the clothes.

Participants were also asked whether they felt that a sweatshop-free strategy was a good unique selling point for a fashion brand to have and whether they felt it was profitable. Only two participants considered it to be a good strategy, with others uncertain for reasons such as price, general appeal, and the assumption that most consumers would not even think about whether a company was sweatshop free:

"I don't see it as a good strategy; it just doesn't have an impact on me. Like, if there are loads of people like me, it wouldn't sell. If it was expensive and you're telling people that it's sweatshop free, it won't sell. I won't buy it, I won't bother. I'll just go for the cheaper one" (Interviewee 8, male).

None of the participants had ever seen a label marked 'Sweatshop Free' on any piece of clothing before. Many also claimed that seeing this on a label was more likely to make them think about where their own clothes came from, rather than seeing 'Made

in Bangladesh' on a label. Interestingly, one participant wondered whether the word sweatshop could even be separated from the word factory, particularly as so few companies were employing a sweatshop free strategy. Perhaps this suggests that the use of sweatshops has become a socially accepted norm:

"We've maybe come to a point where sweatshops aren't sweatshops anymore, they're just factories. And by that t-shirt saying 'Sweatshop Free T-shirts', it's kind of pointing out that most of the t-shirts are from sweatshops…you know, you might assume that 'Oh, so if this is a sweatshop free t-shirt…so where have all of my other t-shirts come from then?'" (Interviewee 9, male).

4.3 – RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3
To understand generation Y consumers' ethical consideration of sweatshop labour beyond clothing purchase decisions

Interview Themes

- Difficulty in defining ethics
- Exposure [minor]
- Justification
  - False sense of security
  - Style over ethics

The themes relevant to the final research objective were found during the general discussion about ethics in fashion and the photo elicitation exercises involving the photographs of clothing labels featuring the 'Made In' locations.

4.3.1 – Difficulty in Defining Ethics
In order for the researcher to fully understand the level of consideration that generation Y consumers gave to sweatshop labour, participants were asked to explain their understanding of the term 'ethics' and what it meant to them. All

participants struggled to answer the question, with many needing significant time to think about it. Facial expressions and body language also revealed that they were not comfortable in the answers that they gave. Visible signs included participants folding their arms, biting their nails, and fidgeting with objects or their hair.

Few could define ethics in any broad sense, with the majority relating it back to fashion. Thus, when asked to define their understanding of terms such as 'ethical fashion' and 'unethical fashion', the answers were more enriching. Words such as 'sweatshops', 'organic cotton', 'fur' and 'fair trade' were considered major factors in ethical and unethical fashion among participants. However, it was also admitted by many that terms such as 'ethical fashion' and 'unethical fashion' were not topics that came to mind regularly.

Despite ethics being of a philosophical and conceptual nature, participants did not seem to make this connection and appeared to only understand it through relations to physical commodities such as fur, organic cotton, and fair trade produce. There did not appear to be any deeper experience of ethics aside from associations with physical objects. This suggests that their general understanding of the term is very fragmented, in line with Donaldson and Dunfee (1994) who claim that the ambivalent nature of consumers makes a definition of ethics almost impossible to pinpoint.

4.3.2 – Exposure [minor]

Nearly all participants felt that there was a general lack of exposure towards or awareness of issues such as sweatshop labour. Some attributed this lack of exposure and awareness to the reasoning behind why, despite being aware of it, sweatshop labour issues did not occur to them on a day to day basis; only one participant claimed to think about it regularly. The majority of participants considered media exposure to be weak, with not enough coverage given to issues on sweatshop labour. However, when asked whether they knew about the garment factory collapse in Bangladesh last April, as mentioned in section 2.3.6, all participants were aware of the tragedy through media exposure either via television, newspaper, or social networking sites.

4.3.3 – Justification

One relevant theme emerging from the interviews specific to the third research objective was participants' ability to justify and rationalise why issues such as sweatshop labour did not occur to them on a regular basis. They expressed huge conviction in their abilities to justify why they did not often think about sweatshop labour. Several different reasons were provided, including: having a false sense of security, and the importance of style [minor theme].

False Sense of Security

Many participants felt that their ability to rationalise decisions about not thinking about sweatshop labour, either when buying clothes or on a day to day basis, was a result of having a false sense of security towards the reality of the situation, i.e. convincing themselves that the issue of sweatshop labour did not actually exist when it came to their own clothes. Interestingly, all participants subsequently admitted that they were fully aware of having a false sense of security and felt that they were being naïve in believing that sweatshop labour did existed only in certain circumstances. Even one participant who had previously considered sweatshop labour issues to be hugely important to them admitted to believing that companies such as H&M could not be involved in unethical manufacturing practices:

"I think I probably convince myself to get it because I'm thinking 'Oh it's H&M, you'd know if people were being mistreated doing this. You know, so, because it's such a big label [...] I suppose it's the uncertainty. You're not guaranteed, like, somebody hasn't said: 'Oh they're definitely involved with such and such.' I think it's really a case of going 'Oh no, it would have to be fine…sure how would they get away with it?' I think it's really that" (Interviewee 6, female).

Similarly, another participant claimed that, prior to being interviewed, they would have never thought about whether any of the clothes they wore were made in sweatshops, most likely because they assumed that somebody somewhere was doing something to tackle the issue.

The Importance of Style [minor theme]

The importance of stylish clothing also constituted a big appeal for participants. When asked whether knowledge of H&M's sourcing from Bangladesh would affect their perception of the brand, one participant regrettably noted that because they liked the clothing, they assumed that the brand would not be involved in any unethical practices. Another participant openly admitted that their clothing choices were based completely on the importance of style over whether it was sweatshop free:

"It has made me sort of stop and think that I don't really know a lot about them [H&M]. That I'm sort of just mindlessly buying stuff because I like it. It has kind of made me think: 'I don't actually know anything about them and I'm just assuming that they're ok because I like it" (Interviewee 4, female).

"Even if a sweatshop free sign was literally in front of my face, I still think that I'd pick the one that I actually liked, even if it wasn't the sweatshop free one…..like, I do kind of feel bad saying that. But for some reason, that must mean that fashion means more to me" (Interviewee 7, male).

4.4 – SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

It is clear from the above research that, overall, college-educated Irish generation Y consumers who participated in this study are not overly conscious about sweatshop labour or where their clothes are manufactured. It has also been discovered that while the majority of these participants are not particularly interested in spending extra money on sweatshop free clothing, they also admitted that they rarely think about or consider the existence of sweatshop labour on a day to day basis. For many, being asked about their feelings towards sweatshop labour was the first time they had thought about the issue in some time.

Similarly, it was found that participants demonstrated high levels of involvement in their clothing, and despite being aware that their clothes were manufactured in third world countries, participants had not considered this to be a particularly concerning

issue prior to being interviewed. Many also admitted that, even with the knowledge that some of their favourite fashion brands were sourcing materials from sweatshop factories, it would not discourage them from buying from the same brands.

Although mainly implicit through body language and facial expressions, guilt and remorse was also crucial data that was observed by the researcher. All participants at some point during each interview displayed signs of guilt about the fact that they were not aware of any ethical fashion brands or could not fully recall the events of the factory collapse in Bangladesh. Some even spoke openly about feeling guilty for not thinking much about where their clothes came from and having little knowledge about whether they were made in a sweatshop environment or not. Similarly, even the participants who openly admitted to not caring about such issues felt remorseful in doing so.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

This chapter will build on the key findings from the primary research and, referring back to the literature review, discuss the salient points that have been identified as key themes in sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

5.1 – FASHION CONSCIOUSNESS

It was noted that many participants consumed particular clothing brands that were synonymous with their personality and identity. For example, one participant wore designer brands such as Tommy Hilfiger and Ralph Lauren to portray a particular image of being 'cool' and 'proud' – this can be linked with Grotts and Johnson's (2013) concept of self-symbolising, in which consumers use brands to construct their identity and personality traits. Similarly, it was noted that many participants referred to items of clothing by brand name, i.e. Topman jeans or H&M shirts, resonating with the concept of twenty first century consumers becoming so influenced by brands that they are now living in a 'brandscape' (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2007).

When asked to submit three photos of their favourite items of clothing, each participant photographed a pair of shoes and spoke about the symbolic meaning behind them. One participant even mentioned the association that their shoes had with music and lifestyle; she particularly enjoyed wearing Converse shoes because of the link she created between the brand and her favourite type of music. She also claimed that, although an avid runner, she would never wear running shoes made by Nike because that image did not fit in well with her identity. This idea of making inferences about a person's lifestyle choices and music interests through the shoes that they wear supports Belk's (2003) claim that shoes carry many different connotations and can form the foundation of one's sense of self.

Also interesting was the presence of the fragmented, postmodern consumer as mentioned by Firat and Venkatesh (1995). Many participants, as well as claiming to define their identity through particular brands and clothing items, felt that they could not commit to one particular style regarding their clothing consumption. It was also evident from conversations that they appeared to have a multiple sense of self where clothing consumption was based on how they felt in that particular moment. For example, one participant spoke about his favourite pair of shoes that he enjoyed wearing when he wanted to look respectable and 'upmarket', but also spoke about a pair of tracksuit bottoms that represented his 'relaxed self' and when he wanted to 'bum around' the house. Similarly, when asked about their general style regarding clothing, another participant said that she did not have one particular style which represented her, that it changed regularly:

"I dunno, I think in terms of wearing clothes and my identity, I'm a bit of a mixed bag. I think I have like, if you look at my wardrobe, I have stuff that is all sorts of different styles, do you know that kind of way? I don't think I'm one particular style at all, I think I'm one of these people who would wake up in the morning and be like: 'Hhhmmm, what will I wear today?' and I'll open the wardrobe and be like: 'Oh, I feel like that today'" (Interviewee 5, female).

These findings surely highlight the identity-centred nature of consumption and the strong influence that individual motivations, such as personal style, have over other factors such as the ethical consideration of labour conditions in clothing production. Perhaps consumers do not think about the conditions of production because they are more concerned with having a personal and unique style of clothing. It could also be argued that this concept of self-symbolising is preventing generation Y consumers from feeling concerned about sweatshop labour on a day to day basis. An obsession with brands and their association with personality and identity has arguably distracted consumers from their role in the process of production and consumption and thinking about where material objects are actually coming from.

It also highlights the emotional involvement that consumers have with their possessions and the meaning that they construct from them. Again, consideration of the importance of sweatshop labour and ethics in general may be shielded by this

inherent need from consumers to construct meanings through possessions. Unless having high levels of concern about sweatshop labour allows consumers to derive some sort of positive meaning through what they are consuming, it is perhaps unlikely that they will ever consider sweatshop labour issues to be hugely important or relevant to them during consumption.

The presence of the postmodern consumer unable to commit to any particular idea about their style in clothing consumption is also relevant to the over-arching theme of this research project. Participants' inability to define ethics in any broad sense has led to a somewhat fragmented understanding of what the term means, thus suggesting that the effects of living in a postmodern society has created considerable difficulty in these consumers understanding and applying ethics in every-day life.

5.2 – ETHICAL CONSIDERATION OF SWEATSHOP LABOUR DURING THE PURCHASE DECISION

Despite the emotive responses from participants regarding the incident in Bangladesh, many had previously admitted earlier in the interview that they were not overly concerned with where their clothes came from or under what conditions they were made. This contradicts claims made in previous studies that college educated generation Y consumers are considered the most influential group in opposing labour issues in clothing production (Pookulangara et al. 2011; Hiller 2010; Valor 2007). This project shows that the majority of participants had never really considered the issue of sweatshop labour prior to being interviewed about it.

Findings from the current study have also shown that although participants have demonstrated high levels of concern about the fact that sweatshop labour exists in the world, few felt very strongly about it or claimed that it was unethical or morally wrong. Many participants also admitted that their levels of concern were intensified because they were being interviewed on the subject, and that it was not something they had thought about before. As mentioned in section 4.3.2, perhaps sweatshop labour is becoming more socially accepted by consumers, and thus deflating their concerns on the issue.

The general lack of knowledge regarding participants' favourite fashion brands and where their clothes were sourced from also questioned results from previous studies; although able to name several fashion brands that they claimed were involved in sweatshop labour, it did not stop participants from using those particular brands themselves. Only one participant who identified an 'unethical' brand also considered the fact that it was unethical when they were buying or wearing the clothes made by those companies.

This conflicts with previous research carried out which argues that Generation Y consumers strongly consider the ethical reputation of a company when purchasing products (Hill & Lee 2012; Hyllegard et al. 2011). The fact that consumers admitted to knowingly consume the brands they considered 'unethical' certainly highlights the influence of branding once more, and also the ability to 'bypass' the ethical aspect of consumption. This point also questions the extent to which consumers could ever feel concerned about sweatshop labour, if they can so easily admit to consuming the very brands they feel are unethical.

In order to gain a better understanding of the extent to which participants felt concerned about the existence of sweatshop labour, they were asked whether they ever look at the 'Made In' labels on their clothes. The fact that only one participant checked their clothing labels out of genuine curiosity supports previous comments made about the level of ethical consideration that participants had over the existence of sweatshop labour. It could be said that the extent to which they are concerned about it is not particularly high as many admitted to never looking at their clothing labels before, either on a day to day basis or during the moment of purchase.

Although several participants vowed to be more vigilant about checking their clothing labels following the interview, some also claimed that they were likely to forget about it soon after because it was not something they would ever consider doing, had they not been asked. A moment of honesty exists here. Initially claiming that they would be more likely to check their clothing labels in future, participants quickly accepted that they would likely forget about it, thus avoiding the uncertainty of an attitude-behaviour gap forming.

The fact that many participants considered factors such as price and quality to be more important than whether clothing was sweatshop free is not particularly surprising. Various studies have examined the influence of factors such as price and quality on ethical purchases such as fair-trade groceries, and organic made and sweatshop free clothing (White et al. 2012; Carrington et al. 2010; Shaw et al. 2007; Carrigan & Attalla 2001). Although this study is not concerned with consumers' intent to purchase ethically, the discovery that style was also more important that sweatshop free for some participants is an important finding nonetheless. It further adds to the claim that sweatshop labour is not of major concern to participants, also demonstrating how factors such as style have become almost equally as important as price and quality in fashion consumption.

This is exemplified by the claim of many participants that despite American Apparel being sweatshop free, they did not buy the clothes because they found them unappealing and irrelevant to their own personal style. A denial of responsibility was also noted when participants claimed that sweatshop free clothing was too expensive and they should not have to pay extra for something just because it was made in a sweatshop free environment, arguments which completely discounted the idea of ever buying clothes for those reasons.

This finding resonates with Sykes and Matza, cited in Chatzidakis et al. (2006) who talk about neutralisation theory and note a denial of responsibility factor in consumers' ability to rationalise decisions about ethical purchases. As mentioned in section 4.3.3, participants could rationalise their feelings of guilt or responsibility towards sweatshop labour issues. Perhaps this rationalisation has created a sense of denial about the fact that sweatshops exist in the world. If it is possible for them to reduce their feelings of guilt or responsibility then perhaps the issue does not exist in their mind.

5.3 – ETHICAL CONSIDERATION OF SWEATSHOP LABOUR BEYOND THE PURCHASE DECISION

It was discovered from the primary research that in addition to not considering the issue of sweatshop labour during the moment of purchase, participants also failed to show any higher levels of concern beyond the purchase, either before or after. Several reasons were identified for this. Firstly, the fact that participants faced extreme difficulty in defining what ethics was questions the extent to which they even think about it as a normative concept. Over-all there was a strong sense of uncertainty among the responses, with some participants admitting that they had never thought about it before. One participant also claimed that they were not 100% sure on what the term 'ethics' even meant, and others looked for prompts from the researcher despite being told that there was no right or wrong answer.

This finding suggests a gap in the literature among studies which have claimed that consumers consider ethics to be of extreme importance on a day to day basis (Lindenmeier et al. 2012; Vanhamme et al. 2012; Shaw et al. 2005). The gap is particularly evident as previous studies have all failed to address participants' general understanding of ethics before asking them whether they purchase ethically or not. Again, referring back to Hiller's (2010) argument, too many studies have focused on ethics as a normative concept without first considering participants' understanding of it.

The findings from the present study have supported arguments made by Bauman (1993) and Donaldson and Dunfee (1994). The ambivalent nature of human existence means that ethics cannot be defined as a normative concept, nor is it universally applicable; it is context specific. The fact that participants found it difficult to define ethics, with many admitting that they did not think about it on a regular basis, suggests not only an area for further research, but also that this may be the root of the problem with regards to understanding how consumers consider ethical issues both during and beyond the purchase decision.

Participants' claims of having a false sense of security about sweatshop labour allowed them to feel less guilty about not finding such issues hugely concerning during moments beyond the point of purchase. Despite this, it was evident that they did feel guilty when discussing it during the interviews; many felt almost remorseful for not considering these issues prior to being interviewed. However, the fact that they admitted to having this false sense of security suggests that there may be some doubt in their own minds surrounding the reality of the situation, and perhaps their favourite fashion brands are using sweatshop factories to make their clothes.

Perhaps this could be linked with Woodward, cited in Klein (2000) who claims that knowledge of the truth makes it very difficult to ignore. One participant even admitted that they did not have thoughts about sweatshop labour because they did not want to have those thoughts. It could be said that a reluctance exists to fully accept that this issue of sweatshop labour exists in the world, and consumers fear knowing the truth about the situation. Perhaps knowledge of the truth would make the ability to rationalise guilt more difficult, therefore consumers do not want to think about the fact that sweatshop labour exists and thus do not experience particularly high level of concern about it.

From a phenomenological perspective, the removal of symbolic references to the conditions of clothing production, coupled with the individual's will to construct a guilt-free sense of self, creates a world where the issue of consuming clothing manufactured in sweatshops ceases to be an ethical one. The notion of ethics itself is potentially fragmented and scattered across various aspects of daily life from fragments of media consumption, to notions of self-identity and responsibility to others. Ethics in this case ceases to consist of a set of rational principles according to which a person can order their moral life, existing instead as a confused mix of denial and guilt.

Finally, the importance of style highlighted by some participants raised a significant question: is style more important than ethics? Little attention has been given to this in previous research. Although Joergens (2006) found that generation Y consumers preferred fashionable clothing over ethical clothing, the study was not specific to sweatshop free clothing. Of the participants in this study who acknowledged that

they were more likely to choose stylish clothing over sweatshop free clothing, all had previously admitted that they did not think about sweatshop labour issues on a day to day basis; when they thought about their clothes, they thought about brands and how the clothes looked aesthetically. However, it is important to note that they also exerted signs of guilt when discussing this and it was clear that they had difficulty in admitting that this was the case. Perhaps this also demonstrates the subconscious nature of consumption; until it was talked about at great length, participants did not actually realise how they felt about sweatshop labour.

This primary research has uncovered significant insight into the ethical consideration that Irish generation Y consumers have towards sweatshop labour. The photo elicitation techniques used during the interviews have allowed the researcher to gain a phenomenological insight into generation Y's every-day consumption of fashion, capturing their fragmented understanding of ethics and highlighting how they think about sweatshops. It has also demonstrated the competing forces of sweatshop labour portrayal through lacklustre media attention, and the power of branding.

Perhaps a link can be made between the emotional attachment that participants have with clothing and fashion brands, and their relatively mild consideration of sweatshop labour issues. Earlier research claiming that consumers have become accustomed to using brands to convey a particular identity may have overridden the importance of ethical thought in consumption. Perhaps the postmodern argument of deriving one's identity through what they consume may in fact reduce the likelihood of consuming sweatshop free clothing, if one does not associate their identity with ethics in general. Then it may cease to be synonymous with clothing consumption.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 – CONCLUSION

The over-all research aim of this project was to understand how fashion conscious generation Y consumers in Ireland consider the ethics of sweatshop labour in clothing consumption. By achieving the three research objectives set out in section 3.2, it is felt that this research aim has been adequately fulfilled. The qualitative and phenomenological nature of the in-depth interviews carried out for this study has allowed the researcher to understand the level of fashion consciousness among generation Y consumers, as well as explore the ethical considerations they have about sweatshop labour both during and beyond the purchase decision.

The photo elicitation exercise allowed the researcher to obtain a thorough understanding of the level of fashion consciousness among the participants sampled. High levels of symbolic meaning were attributed to their clothing, and particular fashion brands were representative of their desired characteristics. The need to identify with others socially through what they wore also indicated a high level of involvement towards their clothing and an obsessive need to conform to social norms within their reference group. This clearly shows that the generation Y cohort truly is fashion conscious.

Instead of focusing merely on factors such as price and quality which have dominated most previous studies when looking at considerations during the moment of purchase, the current study sought to understand specifically the level of ethical considerations during the moment of purchase. Probing questions and a discursive account of their underlying motivations during the moment of purchase quite clearly unearthed the finding that participants rarely took into account any ethical considerations such as labour conditions of workers when buying clothes. Further, they did not appear to relate with ethics in any shape or form when buying clothes.

Also, the fragmented understanding of ethics and its application in society beyond physical commodities was crucial in establishing a justifiable result for the third research objective. The ethical consideration of sweatshop labour in every-day life was found to be somewhat minimal, and this haphazard idea of what ethics represents is clearly supportive of that finding. Similarly, no association or involvement with ethics appeared to be present during every-day consumption.

Despite countless studies embarking on a never-ending quest to uncover the mystery behind the attitude-behaviour gap in ethical consumption, none have addressed either consumers' general understanding of ethics or their consideration towards ethics in moments beyond, as well as during, the purchase decision. Research pertaining to generation Y and sweatshop labour specifically is also sparse at best. This study has shown that not only does this sample of Irish generation Y consumers have a difficulty in defining what ethics is, but also that they do not generally think about ethics on a day to day basis.

The fact that they could not fully define what ethics was, nor do they generally consider the importance of ethical issues such as sweatshop labour during clothing consumption on a day to day basis, surely skews the logic in the current research on ethics and fashion. Continuous research on the attitude-behaviour gap is surely becoming redundant, as an even bigger issue is afoot. Consumers are uncertain about what the term 'ethics' even means – therefore how is it possible for them to easily attach any fundamental meaning to the word and apply it to every-day consumption? Perhaps it is no wonder that an attitude-behaviour gap exists. Surely the new burning question should be: why do consumers not know what ethics is? An answer to that question may firstly be needed before delving any deeper into the concept of intentions vs behaviour.

6.2 – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The current study has identified some key issues which warrant further attention. Firstly, further research should examine consumers' general understanding of ethics more closely. A more in depth look at the complexity of ethics as a philosophical

concept is needed to ascertain the difficulty that consumers have in defining it and identifying its presence in society and every-day life. In doing this, it may shed some light on generation Y consumers' inability to attach any real meaning to the concept beyond that of commodities such as fur and organic cotton. It is of course uncertain whether this is a generational issue. Perhaps further research should examine this across different cohorts to determine whether individual understanding of ethics is relative to life cycle.

Secondly, further research should acknowledge the effects of postmodernity on ethical considerations in clothing consumption. This study has clearly demonstrated that the postmodern nature of the generation Y consumers interviewed has led to a fragmented identity that was multiply constructed and constantly changing. Despite this having an arguably strong impact on the ethical considerations in clothing consumption, particularly if consumers' identity is changeable, little research has focused on this and made the connection between postmodernity and fashion. Further research should look more closely at the highly symbolic nature of clothing, and whether it may override the importance of ethical considerations among generation Y consumers. Particularly if there is an emotional attachment to brands and the important role that they play in their fragmented identity formation.

It could also be said that further research should employ more triangulated methods such as photo elicitation, which lends itself to the identification of a different, and perhaps equally interesting perspective on the research phenomenon. It is likely that without the inclusion of visual images in each interview, the current study would not have uncovered the same insights and valuable findings. Similarly, insight from a phenomenological perspective is useful when exploring the every-day life of consumers. Therefore future studies seeking to understand consumption habits should perhaps consider the use of phenomenology in their methodology to gain a better understanding of their sample.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEWING TEMPLATE/GUIDE

Photo Elicitation Exercise 1

1. Can you tell me why you chose these photos as part of your favourite outfit?

2. What is the story behind this photo?

- Why are they your favourite?

- How often do you wear them?

- What does the brand or style say about you? Does it represent who you are?

- How do you feel when you wear these shoes/t-shirt/jeans, etc.?

- Is fashion and style important to you?

3. Was it difficult to pick a favourite item of clothing?

Ethics discussion

1. What does the word 'ethics' mean to you?
2. What does 'ethical fashion' mean to you?
3. What does 'unethical fashion' mean to you?
4. What do you think of when you think of the word 'sweat shop'?
5. Do you know of any companies using sweatshop factories to make clothes?
6. Does knowledge of sweatshop labour concern you or impact on your decision to purchase certain clothes?
7. Do you ever look at the 'Made In' labels on your clothes?
8. Do you know where your favourite clothing brands source their products from and under what conditions they were made?
9. Do you know of any ethical fashion brands?
10. Have you ever considered purchasing/have purchased an item of clothing because it was made in a sweatshop free environment?
11. Can you tell me about a time when you thought about how your clothes were made/where they came from when you were purchasing them?
12. On a day to day basis, do you ever think about where your clothes come from?

Photo Elicitation Exercise 2

American Apparel label

1. What does this photo say to you?
2. Is this an important message to you?
3. Have you ever seen anything like this before?
4. Were you previously aware of American Apparel before now?
5. Are you aware that American Apparel is known for manufacturing clothes ethically?
6. What do you think of when you consider that this t-shirt was made in L.A.?
7. Can you visualise the person who made it?
8. How does this photo affect your perception of American Apparel?
9. Do you think that sweatshop-free is a good strategy or USP for a company?
10. Does this photo encourage you to check the 'Made In' labels on your clothing?
11. Do you feel that this photo may influence your future fashion purchasing habits or generation consideration of sweatshop labour?

Bangladesh label (H&M/Penneys)

1. What does this photo say to you?
2. Is this an important message to you?
3. What do you think of when you consider that this item of clothing was made in Bangladesh?
4. Can you visualise the person who made it?
5. It is uncertain whether or not this item of clothing was made in a sweatshop. How does that make you feel?
6. Does it encourage you to find out whether or not it was made in a sweatshop?
7. How does this photo affect your perception of H&M?
8. Are you aware an incident that happened in Bangladesh this year regarding the collapse of a garment factory?
9. What is your understanding of what happened?
10. Do you know why it happened?
11. Do you remember how/where you heard about it?

12. Did you know that Penneys was one of the companies outsourcing its production to this particular garment factory?

13. Does this change your perception of Penneys, or influence you in any way towards your consumption of the Penneys brand?

APPENDIX 2 – SAMPLES OF SUBJECT CREATED PHOTOGRAPHS

(used with permission)

Participant 6

Participant 7

Participant 3

Participant 8

APPENDIX 3 – RESEARCHER GENERATED PHOTOGRAPHS

APPENDIX 4 – INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE

INTERVIEWEE 5 (August 4th 2013 – 15:00, duration: 58 mins)

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so firstly I just want to find out why you chose each of those pieces of clothing as your favourite outfit. So let's start with the blouse. Why did you choose this?

INTERVIEWEE: "Hhhmmm. It was probably, actually, I got that I'd say a few weeks ago"

INTERVIEWER: Oh, did you?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, I only got it when I got a part time summer job in the office in town, it's the family that I work for, and so I needed something that I could wear in the office and stuff. But because of like, it would have to be something that I would wear outside the office too, because…well the job has ended now so I need something that I can wear now too."

INTERVIEWER: Oh, ok.

INTERVIEWEE: "I dunno, I really like it, I really like that it's white and everything, I was looking for something kind of, eh, that could be formal and casual at the same time, I suppose? And it was just really pretty looking as well. Like, feminine or something."

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that that's part of your identity, when you say feminine? Would you dress in that sort of way, where something is quite feminine looking?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, probably. Like, I think, I always find that I really like dresses. I would wear a lot of dresses most of the time. Or skirts and things like that. And this is kind of like, it's a long blouse so it goes down to my knees, say, so I suppose I could wear that like it's kind of a dress but also as a skirt as well, so."

INTERVIEWER: Oh, ok. And how often would you wear that?

INTERVIEWEE: "Only on, well, when I say special occasions, I mean for like, work; if I'm working in the office, or I'll wear it like, for a night out or say for a day out. You know, something that's, I dunno, planned or…something that's not just hanging out with my friends or whatever."

INTERVIEWER: And did you buy this for a particular reason, in the sense that it was a particular brand, a certain price, or a style that you liked? What was the sole motivating factor that made you think 'Yeah, this is what I'm going to get'?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, do you know, it's funny. Like, I was walking around Dundrum and I was looking for stuff that I could wear for work and everything, and I couldn't get anything that would fit my size because I was a little bigger in size, and I couldn't get anything that was nice or smart, that I could do casual and smart, but that would also fit me. And I remember going into H&M, because that's where I got that, and I was, I had given up, and I think, you know, it's murphy's law for me that if I'm actually looking for something then I'll never find one! So, when I was in H&M and I had given up, I was kind of walking around with just a big head on me or whatever, and I just happened to spot this, you know what I mean, out of the corner of my eye. And I just saw it and wanted it. I knew I loved it so I just had to try it on. I think eh, I can't even remember how much it was actually, funnily enough. But I just, I don't think I even cared, I know that's really bad, but like, I dunno, I just picked it up and bought it!"

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that's really bad?

INTERVIEWEE: "Because I think, I dunno, I was always brought up to be really like, my Mum and everything would be very like, we would never have had money so like, my Mum would always have brought us up to be like, you know, really sensible with money. Of course I'm really bad at it, now that it's my money, I know that's really bad, but I would think more about how much I'm spending…but I just really wanted something just nice, and I saw that and I was like 'fuck it.'"

INTERVIEWER: And did you actually look at the price and think 'Oh' or, how were you able to overcome that thought or justify it?

INTERVIEWEE: "Like, just forget about it? [laughs] I remember, I think…sorry, I did look at the price. It is always the first thing I look at, even before the size or anything, I'll always look at the tag, the price. Yeah, and I remember looking at the price and thinking, I think it might have been about €30 or something like that. And I remember looking at and thinking 'Oh God, I don't think I can spend that much money on this', but then I dunno, I think it was probably because I hadn't found anything that I could get that would fit me or you know, anything that I really liked, and then when I saw this one thing and I KNEW I'd wear it, maybe I was able to justify it because I knew I'd be able to wear it for work and nights out or something like that. So I was like: 'It's worth the money, I'm going to really wear it.'"

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and do you feel that this kind of style is representative of you as a person?

INTERVIEWEE: "I dunno, I think in terms of wearing clothes and my identity, I'm a bit of a mixed bag. I think I have like, if you look at my wardrobe, I have stuff that is all sorts of different styles, do you know that kind of way? I don't think I'm one particular style at all, I think I'm one of these people who would wake up in the morning and be like 'Hhhmmm, what will I wear today?' and I'll open the wardrobe and be like 'Oh, I feel like that today.' I kind of have like, a mix of different styles and stuff, and I love to em, I was going to say, mish mash lots of different stuff and everything, so really, I suppose, I'd normally wear stuff that's kind of, a bit mad looking, you know that kind of way? That this [the blouse] is actually pretty tame

compared to the rest of the clothes that I wear! So I suppose it's a bit different from what I wear normally, maybe."

INTERVIEWER: Ok. And so, what about the next photo, the leggings? Are leggings part of this outfit with the blouse? Would you wear them with anything else?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, I mean, I'm wearing them right now, and I'd actually, this is funny, because it's one thing that I'll always have. I'll always have a few pairs of leggings in my drawer. They're like one of those things, where like, people will have something that they'll always have to have in their drawers or wardrobe or whatever, and leggings are definitely something that I'll always have. I love them so much, they're just so comfortable and I could wear them, I wear them under dresses, or skirts, or, you know, just under long tops or something like that, so, they're a bit of a staple in my wardrobe."

INTERVIEWER: So, you'd obviously wear them quite often then?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah."

INTERVIEWER: And where would you normally buy them?

INTERVIEWEE: "Those ones are actually H&M as well. I bought them on the same day that I bought the blouse."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and do you think that wearing leggings is representative of who you are?

INTERVIEWEE: "Leggings, maybe. I mean, I guess I probably wear them with most of my outfits, you know, most clothes I would wear, I would wear them with leggings. Em, yeah I suppose maybe comfort, I always find them very comfortable. And I think maybe in the clothes that I do wear, they're all very comfortable clothes. Like, I think they look lovely, and I love the way I look in them, but I just think that leggings are always just really, really comfortable. So maybe that says something

about me, do you know that kind of way? That I like to be comfortable, so my clothes kind of represent that."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and do you feel that by feeling comfortable in them, do you think that it helps to make you feel comfortable in yourself, as well as just physically comfortable?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, yeah. I mean, I think, like, I'll wear leggings say, all the time. Whereas, for a night out say, out to a pub, I wouldn't. You know that kind of way? I so think the times that I am wearing leggings, is when I'm more casual and em, sometimes like, if say I'm going out into, I dunno, like, I love going out to the markets in temple bar and stuff. And I'll dress up kind of nice and I'll wear leggings then because it's still, it kind of makes it a little bit more casual."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and then what about the photo of the sandals? Why are they your favourite?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, the sandals I've had, God, those sandals are actually ancient. Yeah I dunno, I love them. I got them like, you know what's really funny actually, they're not a big brand. Well, for me they're a big brand, they're Clarks."

INTERVIEWER: Clarks are known for having really good shoes, aren't they?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah. So for me they're like, my designer shoes. They're not really designer shoes though!" [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: [laughs] But do you feel like that would be something that's on your mind, when you're buying things like that? Whether it's a designer brand?

INTERVIEWEE: "No, not at all. That's why, I think that's probably why I love them so much, because apart from the fact that they're super comfy, and I love them for summer, I'll wear them with most outfits. Like especially my leggings and stuff

like that. That I'll wear them going out. But I think when I wear them sometimes I maybe feel a bit fancy cos I'm like 'Ooooh, my Clarks' sandals!'"

INTERVIEWER: And do you think that it's important to feel 'fancy' when you're wearing clothes?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, I mean like, maybe not so much, ok maybe fancy is the wrong word for it. I just, I want to feel really nice when I'm wearing clothes, you know that kind of way? So yeah, I suppose, I would get clothes that would make me feel really good and that includes shoes as well. So yeah, I think it's important to feel good in what you're wearing cos I think that helps *you* to feel good."

INTERVIEWER: And do you think that fashion is important to you?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah. Yeah, absolutely I'd say. Like I mean, when you're saying fashion, it's not like I would follow the magazines and what they're saying is 'in' in you know, Spring or something. Or what's, you know, 'Well, so and so is wearing this, and this is brilliant' or whatever. It's not even that, I would never follow anybody, it's more like, if I see something that I really like and I think looks really nice on me, then I'll wear it. I think that's probably why I'm such a mish mash of all different kinds of clothes and stuff like that. So nothing really matches, there's not one particular type of style."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and what about to other people? Do you feel that people communicate their identity to others through what they're wearing?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, I think some people do; I think a lot of people do. Some people might wear clothes that they might not necessarily feel comfortable in, or you know, they might not feel, em, that good in either. But because they might see it as being, em, like, say, 'big this season', or it's really popular, that they'll wear it and think that because they're doing it, then they're like, they're coming across as a real, what's that word they're using now, 'fashionista' or whatever. And I think a lot of people do that with fashion, they love fashion, they think it's really important to be

wearing what's 'big' this season, and I think some people find that that represents what they are or whatever.

INTERVIEWER: And have you ever found yourself doing that, where you've bought something or you've worn something that might not necessarily be comfortable but you think you're going to overlook that because you think it does come across as very stylish?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, I probably have. Maybe not so much now, but maybe a few years ago, do you know that kind of way? When I left school and stuff like that. Maybe, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And what do you think has changed, what has made a difference now?

INTERVIEWEE: "I don't know, see, maybe now I've gotten to a point where I actually just don't give a fuck what anybody thinks anymore. Now, I just like what I like and I'll wear something because I feel good in it. And then because when I feel good in it then other people will see that I feel good. Do you know that kind of way?"

INTERVIEWER: Oh, so you think that it exerts a sort of, visible effect to others?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, absolutely. Like, when you feel good in clothes or, you know whatever, even not so much just about clothes, but when you feel good and you feel more confident, I think other people will see that, absolutely."

INTERVIEWER: Ok. And was it difficult for you to choose your favourite items of clothing when I asked you to pick three?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, no I kind of had the blouse actually, it reminded me of the blouse as you said it to me. Because that is actually like, my favourite thing, you know? So I can really wear that, I love it. And the leggings are one of these things

that I'll just kind of wear with anything, like I said. So I think that's why I chose them, because I can wear them with most of my outfits. And then the sandals maybe because, maybe in one sense, they go with that outfit and also maybe because, well, it's been a really nice summer so far so I've worn them loads."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, great. The purpose of that exercise was really for me to, I suppose, gauge your level of involvement with fashion and the clothes that you wear. So, the next section that I want to go through is about ethics, and the extent to which you might consider ethical factors when you're buying and wearing clothes […] So, what is your general understanding of the word 'ethics'? What does that word mean to you?

INTERVIEWEE: "…Is it really bad to say that I don't really understand the word?"

INTERVIEWER: No, it's not.

INTERVIEWEE: "I mean, I kind of have a, like, I might have an understanding of it….am I right in saying that it's along the lines of…wow, I don't know!"

INTERVIEWER: There is no right or wrong answer, it's literally just to get your own perspective on it. It's not a matter of fact kind of thing at all.

INTERVIEWEE: "Ok, well, am I right in saying that ethics would be like, how the clothes were made, and how they're traded, if it's done ethically. As in, maybe in what people would see being, you know when you hear those horror stories of children in India kind of thing. Whereas people would say that's very 'unethical'…maybe? Am I right in saying that?"

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, absolutely! There really is no right or wrong answer to this, it's completely your opinion; whatever you think it is. So, ok, when you think about terms like 'ethical fashion' and 'unethical fashion', is that what you would think of? What you've mentioned just now?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, I guess I just don't really understand a lot about it, and I probably should…you know that kind of way? But yeah, that would probably be the first thing that comes into my head really."

INTERVIEWER: And why do you feel like you should understand it?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, because like what I was saying to you about like, those horror stories you hear of like, the likes of little children in India and everything like that. Basically em, stitching together a pair of leggings just so I can wear them back here in the summer. You know like, the way they're unfairly treated. And the way that they're not paid enough, they're treated so badly, the work standards are so bad…and that would be very unethical. And I wish I knew more about it because I dunno, I feel like I'm kind of ignorant to it, like, I know of it…but it wouldn't really stop me from going into a shop and buying clothes. As in, if I knew, if I knew of the places that did it, I probably would think about it more, but the truth is, I've never really asked."

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever really thought about it?

INTERVIEWEE: "Not really. Yeah, I do feel guilty about that."

INTERVIEWER: That you haven't thought about it?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, because I think we as people here are a lot better off than those children or whatever, and those people in poorer countries who are in those circumstances or whatever, and if we were to be going through that and if you think about it, the way we're treated at work now; if anything bad happens where we feel like we're being unfairly treated or whatever, we complain straight away. We're like 'No, that's wrong…blah, blah, blah.' Do you know that kind of way? Whereas, like, and I would be one of those people who would be like 'I'm not going to be treated like that, it's not fair.' But at the same time, you know, to think about people who are doing it because they really don't have a choice."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I know what you mean. Ok. So, are you familiar with the term 'sweatshop'?

INTERVIEWEE: "…Yeah."

INTERVIEWER: So what do you think of when you think of the word 'sweatshop'?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, I would think of like, a really horrible maybe, room, or like a building or something like that. A place where a lot of people or children, adults, women, men, you know, it doesn't really matter...in a really bad environment. They're being treated badly, they're not getting, say, any breaks and working like, massive hours that we wouldn't even dream of doing here. And they're not getting say, paid even for all those hours that they do, and you know, they're barely able to keep their family above the breadline over there. You know, that's kind of what I would see when I think of a sweatshop, it's just this horrible place where they're just being treated so badly while they're working, making our clothes."

INTERVIEWER: And, do you know of any fashion brands that are using these sweatshops to make clothes? Have you heard of any?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, no actually, funnily enough…I remember hearing rumours that Penneys was one of them. That was a long time ago though, but I remember hearing, I think somebody just said it…it was just said and that was it. But I don't really know for sure, like. You know?"

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and the fact that sweatshop labour exists, does that concern you, that you know it is out there?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, absolutely. But like, it would concern me like anything bad. Do you know that kind of way?"

INTERVIEWER: Ok. I know you were saying that, to this point, it hasn't really affected your purchase behaviour, but do you think that if you found out that one of your favourite brands, say Clarks, was sourcing from sweatshop factories, how would that impact on you?

INTERVIEWEE: "…I don't know, unless it actually happened. But I think that if it was to happen, it would first of all probably make me think about it. But I don't think I'd…yeah, funnily enough I don't think I would use them if I found out about it. I know that sounds silly right now though."

INTERVIEWER: Why does that sound silly?

INTERVIEWEE: "Because I know there's lots of places that I get clothes from and they're probably all involved, or maybe some of them are involved, in the likes of sweatshops or unethical trading and that kind of stuff"

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and how does that make you feel that you could be buying stuff that is sourced from these places?

INTERVIEWEE: "It just makes me feel really uncomfortable. Like, yeah, cos I'm kind of like, you can't help but think 'God, if that was my family, that if I was living over there and doing that, you know that kind of way?"

INTERVIEWER: Alright. And do you ever check the 'Made In' labels on your clothes, in terms of where they have been made or where they come from?

INTERVIEWEE: "Never. I've never checked those labels, no."

INTERVIEWER: Ok. And do you know where any of the fashion brands you mentioned, such as H&M or Clarks, source their products from?

INTERVIEWEE: "No, I don't."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and do you know of any fashion brands that are 'ethical' or completely sweatshop free?

INTERVIEWEE: "…Em, no. I don't actually. Well, I don't know if she's still around, but you know your one Ali Hewson, Bono's wife? She had something going on there for a while, she had something like that?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that's her clothing brand: Edun.

INTERVIEWEE: "That's right, yeah! They got in trouble though recently, didn't they? As far as I know? I'm not sure, I remember hearing something about it" [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: I think it was something to do with the clothes being made in Kenya. Well they're supposed to be made in Kenya, but apparently only 15% of them were, I think.

INTERVIEWEE: [laughs] "Oh God."

INTERVIEWER: And how did you know about that brand being ethical?

INTERVIEWEE: "Actually, I think, I'm trying to remember it now…I think I read about it in a magazine or something. It was a long time ago when I heard about that though. I think it was actually when she was just kind of, what's the word, releasing the stuff? So obviously there would have been a lot of buzz about it then."

INTERVIEWER: And have you ever thought about buying, or have bought an item of clothing that was sweatshop free, purely for that reason?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, I think, I did buy a top once. I bought a top once because of that. It was in Denmark, when I was in Copenhagen for 3 months, and they had loads of stuff there. But I remember going into a little boutique place and em, the woman who owned the boutique, her and her sisters all made the clothes. Like, so,

there was like one piece, or maybe two or three pieces of the same thing, there wouldn't be lots of them. They made them themselves."

INTERVIEWER: Oh, ok. Cool! And so, when you bought that top, were you thinking 'I want to buy this because I know it wasn't made in a sweatshop'?

INTERVIEWEE: "…it was kind of….no [laughs] No. being honest, no. I just remember going in and knowing that it was, I knew the story of them. One of my roommates had told me, she's Danish, she told me about this shop. And she knew that they had made their own clothes. And it was just a really nice top…I know that sounds really bad, but I just bought it, and it wasn't because it was ethical! [laughs]"

INTERVIEWER: [laughs] Why does it sound bad?

INTERVIEWEE: "Because you're asking me about it, and ethics and everything, so I feel like I'm a bad person!" [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Don't feel bad. Have you ever thought 'Ok, I want to buy something that is ethical, or that is completely sweatshop free'?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, absolutely. I'd love to be able to buy all the clothes that are that way, because then I'd probably feel better as a person!"

INTERVIEWER: And you've thought about that before now?

INTERVIEWEE: "Ah yeah, no I have. But unfortunately, I always find that when you go into places like that, that they're very expensive and I can't afford them. Which is kind of one thing about this whole ethical clothing thing. It seems like, a lot of say, fashion or clothes or accessories or whatever that are made 'sweatshop free' would be very expensive…like a hell of a lot more expensive. Do you know that kind of way?"

INTERVIEWER: Oh, right, have you had an experience of that?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah."

INTERVIEWER: Oh right, ok. And when you are buying clothes, does it ever cross your mind, either when you're looking at it on the rack or when you're waiting to buy it, where it was made or whether it was made in a sweatshop?

INTERVIEWEE: "No, not really. No."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, that's fine. And then what about on a day to day basis, when you're wearing clothes…

INTERVIEWEE: "Do I think about it when I'm just wearing clothes? Em, well I definitely don't think about it when I buy it, maybe em, just randomly sometimes, if somebody starts talking about it. Because a lot of people do talk about sweatshops and stuff like that, and yeah, maybe sometimes I do think about stuff that I've bought or that I'm wearing at the time, and I'm kind of wondering 'Well, you know what, this is Penneys or whatever, and I wonder where they source their clothes from, and do they get it from poor families who are forced to do this?'"

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so when you're talking to someone about it, then it makes you think about it?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, like now!" [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and when you say that you don't think about it when you're actually buying it, why do you think that is?

INTERVIEWEE: "….I don't know, honestly, it just doesn't come into my head. Just doesn't come into my head at all, you know that kind of way? Maybe when I'm buying something I guess I have like tunnel vision, just the fact that I'm about to pay for it. And then maybe I'm excited about it cos I'm like 'Oooh, I'm getting something new.' Maybe that's all I'm thinking about at the time."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, that's grand. I just wanted to discuss ethics in fashion to get a general sense for how much you think about it. So, the final section of the interview involves two photographs that I took myself of labels. So, I just want to go through them and talk a little bit about the meaning behind them. So, this is the first photo here. What does it say to you when you look at it?

INTERVIEWEE: "Um, well obviously like, what's written on it: 'Sweatshop Free T-shirts' so it's kind of like, that's good! But yeah, then I'm kind of like 'What kind of t-shirt is it? Is it expensive or whatever to buy, like?'"

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and do you think that this is an important message? That companies should be doing this?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, I think if a company is sourcing their clothes, like they're not being made in sweatshops, then yeah, they should write that on the label. I think a lot of people would buy that…but then again on saying that, I think a lot of people buy them anyway. I think people do go looking for it, some people who are really, who really think about it."

INTERVIEWER: And have you ever seen that before on a label?

INTERVIEWEE: "No, I've never noticed it actually."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and do you know what brand that is?

INTERVIEWEE: "No, actually I don't."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, it's American Apparel.

INTERVIEWEE: "Seriously?? American Apparel?"

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So obviously you've heard of that name?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, they're like, big. A pretty big make!"

INTERVIEWER: And did you know, well, judging from your surprised response, you might not have known that they were sweatshop free?

INTERVIEWEE: "No, I didn't!"

INTERVIEWER: Ok, because that's sort of part of their marketing strategy – you know, 'We are sweatshop free.' They're actually completely vertically integrated, so they do everything from the cutting and dying, to the sewing of t-shirts and everything they make, they do it in their factory in L.A. And their workers are all paid…

INTERVIEWEE: "Treated fairly? Like they should be?"

INTERVIEWER: Exactly. So, the fact that this was made in the USA, well L.A specifically, how does that make you feel, that it was in a sweatshop free environment?

INTERVIEWEE: "It's cool! Well, I think it's really good. Like I mean, obviously it's a really good thing that it's not made in a sweatshop environment."

INTERVIEWER: And can you imagine what the factory in L.A would look like, you know, and visualise the people who made this t-shirt?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, not really, haha. Em, I dunno, I'd imagine that it would be like, a cleaner environment, do you know that kind of way? Where they're not being pushed so hard, that they're doing their job because they're there to do their job, they want to do their job. They're being paid right, they're doing hours that they're physically and mentally able to do, do you know that kind of way, like? And, so yeah, I suppose that's all I can really see from it…I don't know whether I can imagine the actual workers."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, that's fine. And the fact that it's 100% certain that it was made in a sweatshop free environment, how does that make you feel?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, yeah, it makes me feel better about say, going in and looking at American Apparel."

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever shopped there before?

INTERVIEWEE: "No, they're fairly expensive though, aren't they?"

INTERVIEWER: I think they're a little bit more expensive, yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, you see, that would be the one thing that just turns me off."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so if you maybe saw two t-shirts on a rack and one was sweatshop free and one wasn't sweatshop free, and the sweatshop free one was a bit more expensive, do you think that that could…

INTERVIEWEE: "…I dunno, I suppose like, it's really good that it's sweatshop free and I'd definitely look at that for that reason. It would depend on how much more expensive compared to the one that was definitely made in a sweatshop. And I suppose, maybe in one sense because, and it's down to the ignorance again, the fact that I knew for fact maybe that the other one was made in a sweatshop, then I probably wouldn't buy it at all then. I would either just not buy either of them, because maybe I wasn't able to afford the more expensive one, but if I could then maybe I would."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and so how does this photo affect your perception of American Apparel?

INTERVIEWEE: "Maybe, like, I don't know a whole lot about American Apparel. Em, again, I've never gone in or looked at their clothes and stuff like that, but…from say, hearing about it from other people and hearing them talking about it, it sounds like one of these big brand makes, and I guess that maybe, I sometimes assume that these bigger, more expensive makes or whatever, would be the ones that *would* use sweatshops?"

INTERVIEWER: Oh really?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, I don't know why, it just kind of would be something that's in my head."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, that's interesting. And do you think that…

INTERVIEWEE: "Like I do know that it's expensive, because then in one sense they're paying their workers better wages, which makes it more expensive for the actual product. And that's how, say, em, the products that are made in sweatshops are so cheap maybe, because the employees aren't being paid properly. I do realise that."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and do you think that this photo would encourage you to start looking at the 'Made In' labels on your clothes?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, I think it would, like. I would definitely look. Because I think maybe, I think it's great, the fact that they have it on the tag. You know, I guess if more places definitely had it on the tag, it would definitely look, it would encourage me to have a look. And maybe now I might look at the likes of the clothes that I do buy and where I buy them, and think more about where I buy them, where they source their clothes, and things like that."

INTERVIEWER: Ah right, ok. And do you think that 'sweatshop free' as a marketing strategy works? Do you think it sells?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, I think it does sell, yeah. But at the same time, I think em, other people would like, by choice, just like, or maybe like me who just don't think about it, just don't think about it, you know? Because maybe some people just want lots of clothes and they just go and buy them cheap, especially people who can't afford more expensive clothes. So they'll just go and buy them cheaper, and just rather not think about whether they were made in a sweatshop or not. But I think, em, you know, any type of clothing that is made sweatshop free should have it on the

tag, cos I think it would probably sell more. I think if it was maybe advertised more as sweatshop free…"

INTERVIEWER: You don't think it's advertised well?

INTERVIEWEE: "Well I mean, like, I know American Apparel, do you know that kind of way? And I've often seen ads for them on different websites or in magazines or whatever, but I've never really seen, I didn't know it was sweatshop free."

INTERVIEWER: Oh, ok. Right, that's fine. That was the first photo of the two. So this is the second one that I want to look at and go through. What does this one say to you when you look at it?

INTERVIEWEE: "…Oh God, is that H&M??" [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: [laughs] …Well, what do you think of when you see it?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, oh God, 'Made in Bangladesh' – yeah, like, it's like, you instantly get this thing in your head where you're like 'Oh God, was that made in a sweatshop?'

INTERVIEWER: You would have that assumption by looking at it?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, it's really bad, like. When you see the likes of 'Made in Bangladesh' or 'Made in Taiwan', or 'Made in China' or something like that, you kind of, I can't help but be like, you know, countries that are maybe poorer working standards, and you know, maybe, well, definitely a lot more of a poorer population and stuff like that."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and the fact that this says 'Made in Bangladesh', what do you imagine that factory to look like, and those workers who made this hoodie?

INTERVIEWEE: "Probably just like, a horrible, run-down looking factory, do you know that kind of way? Like, a much dirtier environment and a lot more people in them, too many people for one room. Em, really filthy conditions, I dunno, being pushed too hard, doing too many hours, not getting paid enough for it, not getting breaks, things like that. I dunno, that's just kind of what I would imagine there."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and having said that you do think 'Oh God, was this made in a sweatshop?', and obviously because it doesn't actually say 'Made in Sweatshop', there's no visible trace of that; but the fact that you don't know where it was made and under which conditions, does that concern you?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, I mean, I suppose if you think about it, they're not going to write 'Made in a Sweatshop', because then people definitely wouldn't buy it. Well, I think a lot more people would stop buying it."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and do you think that by looking at this photo, do you think that it would try and encourage you to find out whether or not it was made in a sweatshop?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, it kind of makes me think right now, really."

INTERVIEWER: And have you done that before? Have you seen something like that and thought 'I want to know whether that was made in a sweatshop'?

INTERVIEWEE: "No."

INTERVIEWER: And, I assume from what you said earlier that you know what brand this is?

INTERVIEWEE: "It looks like H&M."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it is.

INTERVIEWEE: "…fuck."

INTERVIEWER: Well we've just mentioned that we don't know where exactly it was made and under what conditions, so…

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah but it doesn't say 'Sweatshop free' either, so, that's the one thing that kind of gets to me."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, fair enough. And…I know that you've said you haven't really looked at the labels before but you do shop in H&M. So, does seeing this now and knowing that some of their clothes are made in Bangladesh, although not necessarily a sweatshop, does it affect your perception of H&M?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, kind of. Maybe a little bit. Because I mean, I love H&M clothes, but you know, never really looked or thought about where they get them from. So it kind of would make me think about it."

INTERVIEWER: Oh ok. That's interesting. And let me just ask you, did you hear about the factory that collapsed in Bangladesh in April this year?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah…oh God. That horror story."

INTERVIEWER: What is your general understanding of what happened and why it happened?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, I'm trying to remember the actual things when I heard them on the radio and the news. But I think it was something, that the building just wasn't in good nick at all, like. And it wasn't being taken care of, that the people who were say, renting it or the landlords or whatever, didn't really put any bother into making sure it was safe or checking that it was safe and that they just allowed all of these people to go in, day in and day out, you know, working."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, they were only actually permitted to build five storeys in the first place, but eight were built for some reason. So the day before it collapsed, surveyors were called to assess the building because cracks started forming in the walls. So the surveyors then told the owners that everybody need

to be evacuated because the building wasn't safe. But the building wasn't just a garment factory, there was also a bank and a supermarket inside…and the bank and supermarket workers were told 'Ok, go home and don't come back until further notice.' But the garment workers were told that if they didn't come into work the next day, they wouldn't be paid for 3 months…

INTERVIEWEE: "See that, I dunno, just to me, cries 'Sweatshop' in my head, when you hear something like that."

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, so they were kind of coerced, I guess, into coming back into work…and then the building collapsed and over 1,000 people died and thousands more were injured.

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, and it just sounds to me that like, those are the kind of people who need the money, you know, they're not getting paid enough. Because you know, there's lots of people here say for example, and if you're in that situation then, ok maybe not everybody, but you'd be like 'Feck off or whatever, I value my life over that any day.' But that just sounds like those people weren't being paid enough and not being treated right in the first place. Or were just desperate and came in because they needed to be paid anyway."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, exactly. And did you know that Penneys was one of the companies using that actual factory to make their clothes?

INTERVIEWEE: "Uuuuuuuugh."

INTERVIEWER: Penneys and Mango.

INTERVIEWEE: "Mango, really? Yeah, I've never bought anything by Mango."

INTERVIEWER: Why, is that surprising?

INTERVIEWEE: "Mango is like one of those, well, no, I'm not really surprised, but it just goes to show you that Mango will be like, more of a high end clothing label. And then Penneys is kind of like, the other end."

INTERVIEWER: So, when you hear about something like this happening, who do you feel is responsible for it?

INTERVIEWEE: "Well like, they were told that they probably should leave the building and not be in the building. And the other businesses left the building, so you know, I suppose I would blame the people who had told them that they wouldn't be paid tomorrow if they didn't come into work. Do you know that kind of way? And I don't know who, but I imagine that would have been like, their bosses or, you know, the people who run that garment factory or whatever you want to call it. So I'd probably blame them."

INTERVIEWER: And do you shop in Penneys?

INTERVIEWEE: "The odd time, yeah."

INTERVIEWER: And does this affect your perception of Penneys?

INTERVIEWEE: "I don't know, I mean, part of me kind of wonders, I do kind of wonder with the likes of Penneys, or even with Mango, or any other company who use sweatshops, do they really look into this? You know, em, do they know that they're good or they're bad, or the way that they treat their staff? And it kind of makes me wonder, I'd like to think that maybe it was hidden from them, although I don't know how."

INTERVIEWER: That it was hidden from Penneys?

INTERVIEWEE: "Yeah, and that maybe they were like, they thought it was, that it was ok, and the staff were being treated right, or, you know, stuff like that. I'd like to think that."

INTERVIEWER: Why would you like to think that?

INTERVIEWEE: "Em, because I don't like to think of any company that are huge, they're like a huge company. They're very popular, like, I'm sure they make a fortune. So part of me would like to think that a company as big as them and as popular as they are, that they would, you know, be 'ethical' in the way that they would go about looking for sources. I just wouldn't like to think that any type of company would be willing to go so low, as to knowingly choose somewhere that they do know, or have a hint of an idea, or even don't know, whether the staff are being treated right or not."

INTERVIEWER: Oh, ok. And, why was your reaction so strong, so 'Oh, God!!' when I said that Penneys was involved?

INTERVIEWEE: "Because I buy clothes in Penneys."

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and so, do you feel now that knowing they were involved, and when you even said earlier that you had an idea Penneys might use sweatshops, do you feel that this is now going to change or have an impact on whether or not you buy from Penneys or whether you think about it when you're in Penneys?

INTERVIEWEE: "Hhhmmm…I mean, I'd like to think it will, you know that kind of way? Like right now, I feel like 'God, I don't want to buy clothes from them', knowing that they're most likely using sources that are like that. Yeah, well it makes me think right now, that I couldn't buy stuff from them knowing that, well for example, knowing about this story in Bangladesh.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, and do you think that it'll stop you buying from Penneys?

INTERVIEWEE: "…I don't know."

INTERVIEWER: What do you think is the difficulty you have with…

INTERVIEWEE: "Affordability, to be honest. Cos like, you know, it is cheap, and like, you do need clothes. Em, I tend to buy quite cheap. Like, the odd time, if I have some more money, I will buy something a little bit more expensive. But most of the time I can't afford that, you know that kind of way? It's just hard because maybe you might need to buy a new dress or something like that, or work trousers, and you're kind of like, automatically maybe choose to be a bit ignorant, and you think 'Well I really need them and I can't afford them anywhere else. And like, you like to think that you always think about it, but you can't say that...I would like to be able to say that I'm never going to Penneys again. But realistically speaking, I can't afford to do otherwise. I don't think people can ever say never. You know that kind of way? Like, I'm not going to buy a pair of underwear for €12 somewhere else! And when something like this happens, you know, like what happened in Bangladesh, it's like, you know, it's reported for a while but then you stop thinking about it. But it's funny, like, I have this friend, she's German, and she told me, you know Muller rice and Muller yoghurts?"

INTERVIEWER: Yeah?

INTERVIEWEE: "Well, one day we went out to get a few bits for the apartment, and she was like, she goes 'Oh, I don't buy Muller.' And I was like 'Oh why?' you know, out of conversation. And she was like, she had said that her boyfriend told her that the guy, the head of the company, a lot of the money they make, or part of it, goes towards the Nazi or the fascist party in Germany. That it's still around, whatever they call it now, maybe it's something different. But, like, that the money goes to that and that they have newspapers and stuff like that that they still send out, and Muller helps to fund that. And she was like 'I don't buy Muller anymore.' And do you know, I actually don't buy Muller anymore."

INTERVIEWER: Oh really?

INTERVIEWEE: "And yet, when it comes to Penneys and stuff like that, I'll go back into Penneys. But I think it's because Muller yoghurts are like 'Oh, well there's other yoghurts', so I can avoid it."

INTERVIEWER: Oh, as in, there are other alternatives you can have?

INTERVIEWEE: "Exactly. So I can afford to say 'Ok, well I won't get Muller again.' Whereas with Penneys and stuff like that, it's kind of like clothes, it's different. You're talking so much more expensive. It's really bad like, you do feel bad, like I do feel bad about it right now, but I know for a fact that, in a few weeks I'm going to Germany, and I know I'll have to go in and buy a few bits, and right now, I'm saving for Germany and I don't have much money, so I am going to buy something cheap and I am going to go into Penneys…and possibly H&M."