

The millennial slow fashion consumer's perception, attitude and awareness  
regarding slow fashion consumption in South Africa

Cheryldene Moodly

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by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Consumer Science

at the

University of South Africa

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January 2020

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## DEDICATION



This work is dedicated to my parents, Gordon and Sagree Perumal.

It is because of the selfless sacrifices you have made to afford me this opportunity and your continuous support and encouragement that I was inspired to strive towards such a goal and to persevere through this journey. I am who I am because of you and I could have never done this without you.

Thank you, mum and dad!

## DECLARATION



I, Cheryldene Moodly, hereby declare that the dissertation as fulfilment of the requirements for a MA in Consumer Science at the University of South Africa, herewith submitted by myself, has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other institution and that the work presented is my own work in design and execution and that all reference material contained herein has duly been acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryldene Moodly', written over a horizontal dashed line.

Cheryldene Moodly

January 2020

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



First and foremost, all glory goes to God for His grace that granted me the courage, strength and wisdom to pursue and complete this journey. Thank You Lord, for never failing to remind me of my identity in You.

To my supervisors, Lorna Christie and Mariette Strydom, thank you for making this experience one worthy of remembering, for re-igniting my passion for education and for never giving up on me. For your constant encouragement on both a professional and personal level, I will be forever grateful.

To my fearless mentor, Thea Tselepis, thank you for challenging me to re-evaluate my understanding of barriers and for showing me how to eliminate them, through example. You have been a tremendously influential force in my ventures.

To my husband, Jamie, thank you for being wonderfully supportive and encouraging through the course of this journey, and for trying to alleviate my woes in any way you could find. I am so blessed to have you by my side.

To my sister, Desiré, thank you for being my voice of reason when my emotions stifled my logic and for allowing me to vent when needed. You will forever be the Anna to my Elsa.

To my pillar of strength, my brother, Justin, you always saw the best in me, even when I was at my worst. I will be eternally grateful for all that you imparted in me. Your closet prayers brought me here.

To my baby boy, Zion, my heartbeat and the reason I wake up every morning, thank you for giving me renewed purpose in life at a time when I needed it most, and everyday there forth. I love you forever and always.

## SUMMARY



The globally relevant, billion-dollar fashion industry has been regarded as one of the industries responsible for the greatest amount of pollution. The fast fashion industry thrives on production, often overproducing clothing at a rapid pace, according to quick trends that have fleeting lifespans. It can be said that this industry feeds the 'throw-away culture' seen at present, whereby consumption has increased tremendously, resulting in large amounts of clothing waste which has fulfilled its superficial purpose. Consumers purchase new trends, use it for a short period of time and thereafter dispose of the clothing items to make room for the next trend. Such a practice has negative implications for the environment, through the irresponsible manner in which waste by-products are disposed of during production of the clothing and through the mass disposal of clothing, which often ends up in landfills. There are also societal implications, whereby the fast fashion industry has been responsible for many unethical business practices that allow for poor working conditions and unfair treatment of the makers of the clothing.

As a response to some of these concerns, slow fashion was born. Slow fashion intends to slow down the process of clothing production entirely and revisits the emphasis on quality over quantity, as it encourages the production and conscious consumption of clothing with longevity. As a result of the process of clothing production being slowed down, it has been suggested that the consumer would then be able to appreciate the production process in itself, as well as the clothing produced, resulting in a decreased desire to consume more, but rather to extend the lifespan of the clothing purchased. Slow fashion is synonymous with the slowing down of trends and the mindful consumption of clothing. Similarly, the voluntary simplicity movement (VSM), adopts the constructs of a life simplified, through the freeing of oneself from mental and emotional clutter, as well as material possessions. This lifestyle promotes simplicity of living and the appreciation of lived experiences instead of things, as a means to gain internal and external fulfilment. The VSM has therefore been used as the conceptual framework of this study, as both movements promote reduced consumption practices.

This study was qualitative in nature and took the form of an exploratory research design, as it intended to gain information and understanding on a topic within an environment where there is limited information. Millennial slow fashion consumers made up the sampling group because millennial consumers are recognised as the most influential consumer group, with the greatest buying power, and are also most likely to adopt or support environmentally and ethically sound brands and businesses. Interviews were conducted with the participants to gain knowledge on the perceptions, attitudes and awareness of these consumers in relation to slow fashion consumption in the country. Attitude has been recognised as a motivator of behaviour and was investigated to analyse consumption behaviour, in the context of this study.

The findings revealed that most participants recognised the fast fashion industry purely as a money-making scheme, which often employed reckless production practices and resulted in the consumption of clothing at a dangerous pace. They were aware of the damaging effects of the by-products of these production processes on the environment, as well as the negative social impacts as a result of unethical practices that have occurred. The participants recognised slow fashion as somewhat of an antithesis to fast fashion, whereby the focus is on quality clothing made to last a lifetime, which encompasses mindful consumption.

The participants revealed that they were influenced by the aesthetic appeal of clothing as well as the convenience and ease of access in acquiring the clothing. Price sensitivity was also raised as a motivator for consumption; however, the resounding motivator was that of consumption out of necessity for the item, which is a valuable perspective for both slow fashion consumers and VSM adopters.

Price sensitivity is a factor that cannot be ignored, considering South Africa is a country with an unequal dispersion of wealth and a high unemployment rate. As a result, it has been determined that slow fashion is only accessible to a certain niche market, in terms of the affordability of the items. The excessive imports of fast fashion clothing, which are often cheap and easily accessible, are said to be choking the local clothing and slow fashion industries alike. However, the most common response in terms of the hindrance of slow fashion in the country was notably a lack of information, education and awareness about slow fashion, its constructs and its availability in the country. The participants recognised slow fashion as relevant in the country, and that

South African consumers have the influence to make a change to the local clothing industry, if they supported local producers of slow fashion, ethical and sustainable clothing, instead of overconsuming cheap, trend-inspired, imported fast fashion clothing. As a result, the slow fashion designer was revealed as having a significant role to play, in ascertaining that such clothing is locally produced with sustainable, slow trend underpinnings. Further recommendations were expressed in the need for slow fashion designers to market their products and ethos well, and to educate and inform those around them, including their customers, about the philosophies behind and need for slow fashion. The upskilling of individuals from lower or no income households was also seen as a valuable tool to not only allow those individuals to lengthen the lifespan of their clothing by repairing it, but also to equip them with a skill that might lead to some form of employment, with the hope that the end result will be a rejuvenated local clothing and textile industry and a lowered unemployment rate. Conclusively, consumption levels could prospectively see a decrease, should the interest in slow fashion clothing increase among consumers.

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# CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

*“Any species that devours its natural environment will eventually fall victim to the resulting silence and I call the toxicity of silence: Extinction Silence” — Steven Magee (Goodreads n.d.[a]).*

## 1.1 Introduction

The fashion industry has become known as one of the leading contributors to environmental pollution, with the excessive consumption practices of clothing consumers being one of the primary causes (Anastasia 2017). The drive to consume clothing in excess has been linked to psychologically led desires for social status or certain lifestyle ideals (Gondor 2009; Barber 2018). Unfortunately, the excessive consumption of clothing results in excessive disposal of clothing, as a means to continuously make space for a newer clothing item, resulting in a vicious cycle that has a dire impact on the environment (Cooper 2016). The lifespan of clothing items has consequently reduced dramatically, while the excessive consumption continues to inspire excessive clothing production, contributing to increases in waste (Cooper 2016).

The culture of overconsumption is a global phenomenon, and South Africa is no exception to these alarming consumption practices. Statistics show that South Africans consume more than double the amount of resources that they should be consuming, in the context of resources available (WWF 2013). The Global Footprint Network released information stating that the planet’s resources are being used up 1.75 times faster than the ecosystem is able to regenerate it, with consumption being one of the greatest contributors to this matter (Gulati & Naude 2017, Earth Overshoot Day 2019). As a means to resolve this matter of overconsumption, it has been determined that consumer behaviour needs to be altered, through a reduction in general consumption patterns and an increase in the consumption of sustainable goods and clothing items (Forsman & Madsen 2017; Lang & Armstrong 2018). The millennial consumer, in particular, has been noted as one of the biggest and most prominent consumers of clothing in general, while also being the most likely consumer to purchase sustainable and socially and environmentally friendly products (Kibbe

2014; The Fashion Law 2018). Millennials are therefore regarded as key influencers in the movement towards ethically sound clothing consumption, even though they are also infamous for excessive consumption behaviour.

## **1.2 Literature review**

### **1.2.1 Consumption factors**

As mentioned, excessive consumption, or in this context excessive clothing consumption, has been linked to a means to fulfil psychological desires such as having a certain social ranking and status or the notion of a certain type of lifestyle (Gondor 2009; Barber 2018). Excessive consumption practices have also been determined as a leisurely practice and an ignorant act of those who have minimal regard for the impact that excessive consumption has on the environment (Schor 2001). The question has been posed regarding the ability of possessions to bring fulfilment (Stark 2017). In response, Proschle (n.d.) explains that, after the physiological needs of a person have been met, all other consumption of possessions is considered irrelevant, therefore consumption for pleasure is an unquenchable quest. Fashion, in particular, surpasses the purpose of clothing for necessity and takes the form of an agent and vehicle for overconsumption practices, through various aspects of the fashion cycle (Fletcher 2007).

Sources reveal that documented consumption levels in South Africa are increasing rapidly, with 98 million tonnes of waste, from the total of 108 million tonnes of waste generated in 2011, ending up in landfills (South Africa. Department of Environmental Affairs 2018; Trading Economics 2018). Various industries will profit from this increase in spending and consumption; however, the problem lies in the waste that these products may become or leave behind. Therefore, in the context of this study, it was imperative to establish South African millennial fashion consumers' stance regarding clothing consumption and its impact on the environment, as well as to identify their attitudes and perceptions regarding their consumption behaviour.

Fashion is understood as a cultural expression of one's individualism and identity, with an everchanging nature over periods of time or between different groups of individuals and associations (Sproles 1974; Hogenboom 2016). The element of change and the

pace in which the change occurs play a key role in the fashion industry and are pivotal aspects in the context of this study, as will be uncovered in the text to follow.

The making of one's own clothing was once a practice familiar to most, whereby clothing was home-made and had a long lifespan, intended to be reused for alternative purposes once its duty as a clothing item was fulfilled (Strasser et al. 1992:10; Claudio 2007:451). Much has changed over time through industrialisation and the expansion of the textile industry, enabling clothing production in large quantities, at lower prices, and readily available to a wider range of consumers (Rose 2007:2). The estimated value of the global apparel industry is said to reach nearly \$4 trillion in 2020, while the clothing industry is said to expand substantially in South Africa and is being recognised as one of the fastest growing industries in the country (PWC 2012; Lu 2018). This growth in the local clothing industry can be attributed to the growing fashion consumer base, also reflected in the twofold increase in clothing production in the last two decades (PWC 2012; Remy et al. 2016).

One of the outcomes of the increasing consumption of fashion over the years is the drastic reduction of lead time<sup>1</sup>, enabling new collections of clothing to enter stores at a surprisingly rapid and frequent pace (Shambu 2015:63; Khan 2016:7; Anastasia 2017:2). The intention of this new strategy, whereby new clothing trends are available at retailers every two to three weeks, is to draw the consumer into the store more frequently, thereby encouraging greater sales (Shambu 2015:63; Khan 2016:7; Anastasia 2017:2). This strategy was aptly dubbed 'fast fashion' and is solely intended to increase profits over a shorter period of time (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010:165). Fast fashion has seen global success, as consumers are enticed to consume clothing as often as they are made available for purchase (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010:165; Turker & Altuntas 2014; Gardetti & Torres 2013). The results in South Africa are seen in the excessive amounts of Chinese imported clothing, which have stunted the local textile and clothing manufacturing industry (SA aims to patch up threadbare clothing industry 2018). Other impacts of the fast fashion industry are found in the clothing production phases, including textile production.

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<sup>1</sup> Lead time is the lapse of time between receiving an order and delivery of the order (Kader & Akter 2014).

The production of textiles begins with the cultivation or chemical production of fibre (Momberg 2012; Remy et al. 2016). Most of the processes in natural and synthetic fibre production contribute towards a growing environmental footprint (Momberg 2012:18; Remy et al. 2016:6; Kadolph 2010). Excessive amounts of water are required for the production of cotton clothing, while the effluents from the production of cotton and other textiles are said to contain toxic matter that can be harmful to living organisms (Anastasia 2017:9). According to Kant (2012:23), the textile dyeing and finishing industry is regarded as one of the largest polluters of clean water worldwide, and have been traced to various human illnesses, with the potential to harm even unborn children, among others. Maintenance of clothing, in the form of washing and drying, accounts for over a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions (Berendt 2018). The excessive consumption of clothing often results in the irresponsible disposal of copious amounts of clothing, which end up in methane producing landfills (Anastasia 2017:10; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 2018b). Godfrey and Oelofse (2017) documented that landfilling is still the dominant method of waste disposal in South Africa. Larney and Van Aardt (2004) found that textile recycling was not cost-effective and that recycled textiles were viewed as inferior quality, thus rendering the recycling of textiles unpopular. This may explain the reason why landfilling is still the dominant method of waste disposal in South Africa, as documented by Godfrey and Oelofse (2017).

When analysing the clothing industry holistically, every aspect contributing to its function, from cultivation of raw materials for textile production, to manufacturing, through to consumption and disposal, has an impact on the environment. The quality of the clothing production processes seems to be compromised as a result of the speed in which it is expected to run, which therefore implies that a slower approach might be the antithesis needed to resolve some of the issues discussed (Fletcher 2007; Cortez et al. 2014:4).

### **1.2.2 The slow fashion approach**

Slow fashion, a concept developed to counter the ideals and effects of fast fashion, was initiated in the 1980s with the intention of placing more focus on the value and quality of the processes of the fashion production cycle, by slowing it down (Leslie et al. 2014:228). Ultimately, this would also imply an improvement in the quality of the

product, thereby increasing its longevity and countering the element of easily discarded fashion (Friedman 2017).

It is important to note that slow fashion is recognised as an addition to the global clothing industry and is not intended to replace the fast fashion model (Fletcher 2010). Such a proposition would most likely fail on the premise of the global financial success of fast fashion's business strategy (Fletcher 2010). However, focus needs to be placed on the quality of the processes in the fashion production mode, as a way to promote accountability and responsible behaviour, which will have no negative effects on society and the environment. This could be achieved through greater transparency in these production processes and a final product of clothing which is made to last for a longer period and purpose than that of a fleeting trend. Slow fashion brings light to these standards of transparency, accountability and value in the clothing production processes and product, thereby acting as a beacon in its own right (Fletcher 2010; Clark 2008).

Slow fashion is valued by its consumer base for being socially and environmentally conscious in all aspects of its production processes, but is also differentiated from other niche markets such as eco/sustainable and recycled fashion as it also promotes lower levels of consumption through the extended lifespan of its products (Jung & Jin 2014). Fletcher (2010) explains that a change in the fashion system has not been perceived in depth by the consumer, thereby stunting the ability of the slow fashion model to trump that of the fast fashion model; however, slow fashion is seen as a proposal for change.

### **1.2.3 Voluntary simplicity movement in the clothing industry and the millennial slow fashion consumer: a theoretical framework**

The voluntary simplicity movement (VSM) is identified as an adopted mode of existence whereby focus is placed on the simplification of one's lifestyle by minimising material possessions and amplifying internal fulfilment through lived experiences (Elgin & Mitchell 1978). This construct is well suited to the constructs of slow fashion, which intend to minimise consumption of clothing in particular, and focus on environmentally and socially responsible concepts. The VSM, also known as 'downshifting', is founded on an anti-consumption basis, whereby simplifiers (individuals who adopt the VSM lifestyle) are encouraged to embrace high ethical and

moral standards for society and the environment, while unwrapping their highest potential in life (Elgin & Mitchell 1978; Sandlin & Walther 2009). The VSM can be considered as a model that slow fashion consumers are likely to adopt, by favouring clothing that is made to last, instead of trend-dependent items, thereby reducing the consumption of clothing. Due to the fact that the VSM rejects consumption as an adversary to simplified living, it could prove to be beneficial to the problem of clothing overconsumption. It can therefore be determined that the VSM consumer is likely to purchase clothing out of necessity and not for fashion trends, with the principles of social and environmental responsibility in mind (Taljaard & Sonnenberg 2019). The VSM consumer is also expected to embrace clothing with longevity, to counter excessive and redundant consumption of clothing.

To fully understand the influences behind the consumption behaviour of VSM consumers, it is imperative to explore their motivation, perceptions, learning through experience and attitudes (Educba n.d.). These four aspects, namely motivation, perceptions, learning through experience and attitudes, have been explained as the categories of factors that influence consumer behaviour. Motivation speaks to their self-determination to fulfil goals, where perception is relevant to people's comprehension of their surroundings, which influences their behaviour (Educba n.d.). Consumer perception has also been described as the manner in which the consumer interprets a product or brand according their knowledge and acquired information (Clootrack n.d.). Learning and experiences underpin individuals' search for specific knowledge and their past experiences, both of which influence one's behaviour (Educba n.d.). Finally, attitude identifies one's emotional compass as it has been known as a driver of consumption behaviour (Educba n.d.). Likewise, other studies investigating consumer behaviour identified consumer perception as an influencer of consumer attitude, which in turn affects consumption behaviour (Sangroya & Nayak 2017; Visser et al. 2018). Other influencers of consumer behaviour are consumers' knowledge on a topic, generally derived from information they retrieved. Therefore, the perceptions, attitudes and knowledge of consumers were explored in this study to understand consumer behaviour within this context.

Research identifies millennials (identified as individuals born between 1981 and 1996), as the most powerful consumers in terms of their dominant buying power (Loria & Lee

2018; The 'ennial tribes 2018; Shroeder 2017). They are also known to be the consumer cluster most interested in socially and environmentally responsible organisations and products (Kibbe 2014). Finally, they make up more than half of South Africa's spending power, which made millennials the ideal consumer cluster to focus on in this study (The Media Online 2017).

The VSM can be considered a solution to the problems found in the fast fashion industry, in terms of social and environmental rashness and overconsumption practices. To understand consumer behaviour, it is imperative to identify the VSM millennial consumer's behaviour, with the intention of increasing knowledge of and awareness on said topics in a local context.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

The globally relevant billion-dollar fashion industry is driven by a quick pace, and an 'out with the old, in with the new' character, while its consumers are enticed with instant gratification through the rapid fashion cycle (Wang et al. 2017). Unfortunately, the debris left behind by fashion consumption is found in the disreputable waste and toxic effluents from the textile production processes and the large amount of clothing waste dumped in landfills after it has become unusable or unfashionable (Anastasia 2017). It can be understood that the impact of the textile and clothing industry on the environment has been a cause for concern, but is now beginning to reveal what could be catastrophic results. The consumption of fashion seems to be using up or tainting environmental resources at too great an extent and too fast a pace for the environment to replenish them (WWF 2013). In South Africa, waste and recycling co-operatives have experienced a 91.8% failure rate, with only 10% of waste being diverted to recycling (Godfrey & Oelofse 2017).

Movements calling for a minimalist lifestyle, such as the VSM, are growing in popularity partly because society is recognising the detrimental effects of consumption (Kennedy et al. 2013). Another movement, referred to as the slow movement, progressed into slow fashion, a fashion system which focuses on the responsible production and consumption of fashion (Leslie et al. 2014). In order to understand what role slow fashion plays, compared to a thriving system such as fast fashion, companies must understand what the purchase intention is of each of their consumers. The reason

being that consumers could potentially alter the course of the fashion industry and the principles that govern their systems. There is currently limited information available pertaining to the South African millennial slow fashion consumer's stance on fast and slow fashion and its impact on the environment. Enviroserv (n.d.) found that a lack of consumer awareness is one of the many hindrances to the progress of waste matter being dealt with responsibly. This study intended to identify Generation Y (millennial) consumers' perceptions, attitudes and awareness regarding slow fashion consumption.

#### **1.4 Aims and objectives**

The aim of this project was to investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions, attitudes and awareness regarding slow fashion consumption.

Objective 1: To investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions of slow fashion consumption.

Objective 2: To investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' attitudes towards slow fashion consumption.

Objective 3: To determine millennial slow fashion consumers' perspectives on the role of slow fashion towards sustainability in the local clothing industry.

#### **1.5 Research methodology**

##### **1.5.1 Research paradigm**

The intention of the study was to retrieve in-depth knowledge regarding the topic, based on the experiences of individuals. This study used a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach in research is used when the researcher intends to gain a 'richness and depth of data', which cannot be quantified as it analyses subjective information from an individual or group's lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln 2008:14; Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014:173). Because this study intended to analyse a specific type of consumer's perception and their attitude-driven behaviour in relation to slow fashion in terms of sustainable consumption, it utilised a qualitative approach.

##### **1.5.2 Research design**

The constructs of an exploratory research design were applied in this study. An exploratory research design is aimed at identifying the key factors that are to be found

within the confines of the “environment in which the problems, opportunities or situations of interest are likely to reside” (Van Wyk 2012). This study aimed to retrieve information on the subject of slow fashion consumption through the perspectives and attitudes of several participants who fulfilled the criteria of a slow fashion consumer, as defined in the context of the study. The key elements that this study intended to explore have been researched on a global scale; however, there is a lack of information within the South African context. This study therefore adopted the constructs of an exploratory research design, as it aimed to explore information related to slow fashion consumption locally.

### **1.5.3 Sampling**

The study population was millennial slow fashion consumers of slow fashion. Purposive and snowball sampling were applied in this study. Purposive sampling is the method used whereby the researcher has identified a specific person or group of people with knowledge relevant to the study, from whom data will be retrieved (Corbin & Strauss 2008:153; Creswell 2013). Snowball sampling occurs when participants suggest other possible participants for the study, often occurring when the sample type is difficult to find (Glen 2014).

The criteria for selection was the following:

- Male and/or female participants who were born between 1981 and 1996 (millennial consumers).
- Participants had to form part of the slow fashion consumption movement as opposed to the alternative of fast fashion consumption. These consumers need not purchase solely from slow fashion suppliers to be considered, but could also be socially and environmentally conscious clothing consumers who purchase slow fashion clothing.

To source applicable participants for this study, a proposal requesting relevant participants was sent out on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. This request specified the criteria by which the target participant was to be identified. The request was therefore open to and shared with individuals countrywide, however all respondents happened to be from various parts of Johannesburg only. In total, there were eleven participants who met the criteria, and who took part in this study.

This sample size was considered adequate as compared to other research studies carried out in this niche field (Bly et al. 2015; Harris et al. 2016). The final number of interviews was decided on after it was determined that data saturation had been reached.

#### **1.5.4 Data collection**

Qualitative interviews have been explained as a method of data collection which aim to “see the world through the eyes of the participants” (Creswell et al. 2016:93). This form of data collection did indeed assist in fulfilling the objectives of the study, which intended to gain an understanding of slow fashion consumers’ perceptions of and their attitudes to slow fashion in relation to sustainable consumption. The method used to retrieve the required data was through face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended interviews with slow fashion consumers.

The interviewer is allowed space to interpret the responses and behaviour from the participants with minimal restriction, by using semi-structured interviews (Denzin & Lincoln 2008:129). It has been noted that restrictions such as pre-categorisation of the participants could potentially create limitations in the field of study. Participants were able to comment on aspects further than the constructs of the questions presented, should they choose to do so. These comments proved to be informative to the study. The interview schedule comprised a brief introduction, in which the motivation behind the interview and the estimated time frame were mentioned to the participant. This was followed by the semi-structured questions which were constructed, based on content analysis of similar studies done internationally, guided by the aim and objectives of this study, leading to the conclusion of the interview. Due to the fact that the participants were from various parts of Johannesburg, interviews were carried out at locations suggested by the participants, which were convenient for them. The locations were always pre-checked to ensure that it proved to be suitable to the requirements of an interview, in terms of noise levels at said location. A mobile phone was used to record data from the interview, which were transcribed verbatim.

#### **1.5.5 Data analysis**

The purpose and outcome of data analysis is to reveal to others, through fresh insights, what was observed and discovered about the human condition (Saldaña 2011). Saldaña (2011) states that content analysis is identified as one of the most suitable

data analysis methods for transcripts of interviews with open-ended questions and was used in this study to analyse the interview transcriptions. It is a systematic way of reorganising and reflecting on qualitative data (Saldaña 2011). Open and axial coding were the methods of coding used to analyse the data. Open coding is the first level, which intends to dissect the data line-by-line to identify prominent patterns and themes, and these patterns and themes are ultimately intended to find regularities in the data and to make sense of the data (Theron 2015; Cassell et al. 2018). Interpretation of the patterns and themes leads to the emergence and identification of categories and subcategories, according to the axial coding method, and is linked to the framework of the study and the larger research literature (Theron 2015; Cassell et al. 2018).

This study adhered to the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to ensure the trustworthiness of the data.

## **1.6 Ethical considerations**

The proposal for the project was sent to the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences' ethics committee for approval. Only after approval was granted an invitation letter was given to all participants, prior to each interview, briefly informing them of the aim of the study and detail of the topic to be discussed during the interview. A consent letter was also given to all participants, requesting consent for their participation in the interview. The letter explained the way the interview would be conducted and recorded, as well as the manner in which the information will be used, should they formally give consent to participate. It was made clear that the participants' information will be kept confidential, and that they will not be required to present any personal information. It was also communicated to them that they could withdraw from the project at any given point in time, should they wish, without penalty. Voluntary participation was required.

## **1.7 Limitations**

Because the project was qualitative in nature, the results were not generalisable to the millennial population at large. It was, however, not the aim of the project to provide results that can be generalised, but rather to provide an in-depth understanding of the topic at hand. A further possible limitation is that the project employed purposive

sampling. In order to gain a true reflection of the topic at hand, from the average consumer, a random sampling strategy is preferred (Cherry 2020b). However, as with the nature of the research, in order to investigate millennial South African consumers' perceptions and attitudes regarding slow fashion's impact on sustainable consumption, it proved feasible to use purposive sampling. It is therefore recommended that future research regarding this topic should incorporate a quantitative and or mixed methods approach with a random sample in order to generalise the findings to the millennial South African consumer.

Limitations resulting from the data collection method could also be anticipated. The matter of biased responses from the participants could prove to be a limitation to the study. In an attempt to avoid this, it was made clear to participants that their honest opinions would be appreciated, and that there were no right or wrong answers, with the aim of putting the participants at ease and promoting honest and truthful accounts of the topic. However, it is still possible that participants answered questions according to them believing it was the correct answer, rather than giving an honest and truthful response.

## **1.8 Contributions**

The contribution of the project can be regarded as two-fold, namely a theoretical contribution as well as a practical contribution. The results of the study add to the body of literature in terms of the slow fashion movement, explained from the theoretical foundation of the voluntary simplicity movement. This topic can still be regarded as under-researched, specifically in the context of the millennial slow fashion consumer in South Africa. Through gaining a theoretical understanding of the topic in question, the results were interpreted and recommendations made to the fashion retail industry. The contributions of the study could be found in data that can be translated into practical solutions that might mediate some of the negative effects of the fast fashion industry in an acceptable manner within the growing consumer culture of slow fashion.

## **1.9 Chapter outline**

An outline of the following chapters which make up this study will be discussed in this section:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction
- Chapter 2 – Literature Review
- Chapter 3 – Research Methodology
- Chapter 4 – Presentation of Findings Part 1
- Chapter 5 – Presentation of Findings Part 2
- Chapter 6 – Conclusion

Chapter 1 provides the background and validation of this study. It briefly presents the issues related to the fashion industry in terms of consumption and fast fashion and addresses aspects of slow fashion, which forms the primary focus of the study. The research aims and objectives of this study are presented, followed by the research methodology and design, which were formulated to fulfil those aims and objectives. The ethical considerations and limitations of the study are thereafter discussed, followed by the contributions this study might offer.

Chapter 2 describes in greater detail the ills of environmental pollution, often encouraged by consumption behaviour. Fast fashion is discussed as a contributor to the problem of irresponsible consumption and disposal of clothing. The realms of slow fashion are explored as a possible alleviation to the issues that seep from the fast fashion industry, when looked at through the lens of the voluntary simplicity movement, which forms the theoretical framework of the study. The role of the consumer plays an integral part in the overall context of the study, as discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 defines the research design and methodology followed to retrieve data necessary to contribute towards fulfilling the aim and objectives of the study, which are to investigate South African millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards slow fashion and to determine their perspectives on the role sustainable consumption plays in the clothing industry, from a millennial slow fashion consumer's perspective, and within a local context. The research design, methodology, data gathering and analysis methods, as well as aspects pertaining to the quality of the data, such as the trustworthiness of the data, are discussed in this chapter, followed by the ethical considerations of the project.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 discuss the findings derived from the qualitative data, gathered through interviews with millennial slow fashion consumers. The objectives and conceptual framework of this study are distinctively focused at fulfilling the aim of the study, which is to investigate consumers' perceptions of and attitudes towards slow fashion consumption. The process of coding the interview transcripts was used as a way to analyse the data. Themes were identified by referring to the conceptual framework, from which meaningful categories emerged. From those categories, subcategories were identified. These themes, categories and subcategories are discussed extensively in relation to each objective it intended to fulfil.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions as directed by the constructs of this study. The conclusions are categorised under each objective, to address the outcome of the research pertaining to that objective in particular. Limitations, contributions and recommendations are discussed. The chapter concludes with possibilities for further research.

### **1.10 Conclusion**

Chapter 1 presented a brief introduction and overview of the study, in relation to the global fashion industry at large, with the intention of formulating a greater wealth of information pertaining to the South African clothing industry and its consumers. Research related to the South African slow fashion consumer is limited and is one of the motivating factors behind the aims and objectives of this study. This chapter provided a brief introduction to the fashion industry, the issues found within and the slow fashion industry in relation to it, with the intention of exploring all of these aspects from a South African perspective, as a means to explain and justify the relevance and significance of the study to follow.

## CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

*“The wisdom of nature continues to teach humanity that the material ... is immaterial.” – Jason Versey (Goodreads n.d.[c]).*

### 2.1 Introduction

The fashion industry is regarded as one of the greatest environmental polluters universally, second only to the oil industry (Anastasia 2017:7). Clothing production and consumption are both contributing factors to this pollution, while the current society is becoming infamous for excessive consumption practices. South Africa is no stranger to the woes of overconsumption either (WWF 2013). The increasing amounts of consumption of clothing in particular have had an impact on the speed at which the clothing is being produced, as a means to enable new trends to appear in stores at a fast pace, creating a shift in the fashion cycle (Falkiewicz 2019). There are a number of negative effects which stem from the very beginning of the product life cycle; the production of textiles, through the production, consumption and disposal of the clothing item once it has fulfilled its purpose (Anastasia 2017; Kant 2012). To counter the ills of fast fashion, slow fashion was birthed, with a product and life cycle that takes on a slower paced and more sustainable role (Fletcher 2010). The following chapter unpacks all of these elements, including the role of the consumer and the position that the Voluntary Simplicity Movement might fulfil as a framework.

### 2.2 The practice of consumption

When trying to establish the underpinnings of societies consumption practices, it might be beneficial to identify the foundations of the consumers' need to consume. According to Barber (2018), “despite having too much, we are tormented by the desire for more knowing that other people are a lot better off than we are”. It appears as if the evolution of the consumer and the need to overconsume have significant psychological foundations, whereby people consume to fulfil a desire for a certain lifestyle ideal or for social status (Gondor 2009; Barber 2018). Known as the ‘throw-away culture’, it has been identified that consumers purchase items to use for a limited period, before discarding them in order to purchase a newer version (Cooper 2016). Cooper (2016) explains that consumers' needs have changed over the years, in that they no longer

favour items with a long lifespan but prefer products that can be replaced quickly. This constant need to consume drives an increase in production and consumption, culminating in an increase of waste, particularly regarding the fashion industry, all occurring in a short space of time.

The culture of overconsumption is a global phenomenon, and although South Africa is seen as an emerging economy, the consumption patterns of this developing nation are already expanding at an alarming rate (WWF 2013). In 2013, it was estimated that it would take 2.2 planets to replenish the world's resources, if the world consumed at the rate South Africa did (WWF 2013). In other words, South Africans consume more than double the amount of available resources (WWF 2013). The Global Footprint Network released information stating that 29 July 2019 marked the day that the planet had used up its renewable resource 'budget' for the year, reflecting that, globally, the planet's resources are being used up 1.75 times faster than the ecosystem is able to regenerate it (Earth Overshoot Day 2019). Consumption is therefore considered "one of the greatest drivers of resource use and environmental degradation globally", according to Gulati and Naude (2017). Consumers need to be cognisant of their overconsumption practices and take responsibility for their behaviour. In order to promote environmental sustainability, consumers should play their part in the consumption of sustainable products, especially including clothing consumption practices (Lang & Armstrong 2018).

By definition, *consumption* is focused on the utilisation of resources, for example, until the resource is depleted (Merriam-Webster 2018). On the other hand, *overconsumption* is said to be resultant of three different social factors applicable to the consumer, namely: consumption for leisure, consumption for lack of accountability and consumption for social validation (Schor 2001). The first factor refers to the busy individual who has minimal time for leisure outside of work. The second factor is a lack of accountability for, or knowledge of, the harmful environmental effects of overconsumption, since the individual does not have to physically account for the damage to the environment. The third factor is related to one's need for social validation or a desire to fit into a certain social status, which is connected to an excessive lifestyle with a surplus of possessions. All three of these reasons result in the overconsumption of resources by the consumer, both renewable and non-

renewable. Stark (2017) agrees that status plays a large role in many consumers' needs to have 'more' but reveals contradictory results from studies done to determine if monetary freedom and consumption could bring fulfilment. The results revealed that even though financial income can bring happiness to those who are financially challenged, an increase in happiness was documented when those who were financially stable gave their possessions away. In conjunction, Proschle (n.d.) states that, after the basic human needs are met, consumption for pleasure cannot bring fulfilment, because the constant need for more is insatiable. Proschle (n.d.) aptly concluded her findings with a quote from Aristotle that states: "True happiness flows from the possession of wisdom and virtue and not from the possession of external goods."

As consumption practices are increasing globally, South Africa's consumption levels are also increasing at an alarming rate. The graph below shows the increase in South African consumer spending behaviour between 2015 and 2018 (Trading Economics 2018).



**Figure 2.1: South African consumer spending (Trading Economics 2018)**

The South African consumer spending report forecasted that spending will have increased to R2 034 918 by the year 2020 (Trading Economics 2018). This figure proves beneficial for the various industries that will profit from such spending behaviour. The problem, however, lies in the matter of the waste that these products may become or leave behind. The Department of Environmental Affairs (South Africa

2012) reported that 108 million tonnes of waste were generated in South Africa in 2011, of which 98 million tonnes were disposed of at landfills. Statistics show that an increase in consumption could prove to be detrimental to the environment and its resources. According to Baudrillard (2016), “waste is always considered a kind of madness, of insanity, of instinctual dysfunction, which causes man to burn his reserves and compromise his survival conditions by irrational practice”.

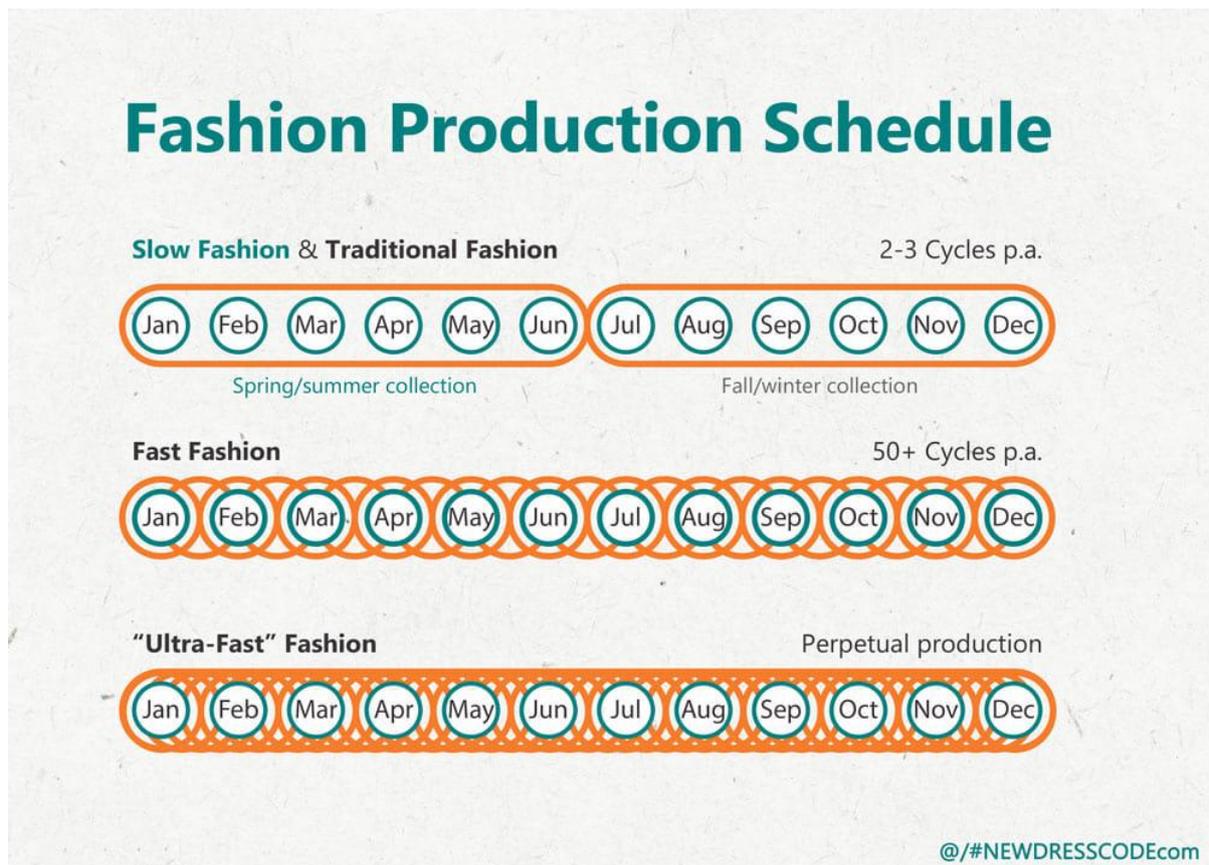
One of the key areas that promote overconsumption and that contribute to the degradation of the environment is that of the fashion industry. While clothing can be seen as essential, from body coverings for modesty to safety reasons, i.e. protection from the elements (Fletcher 2007), fashion goes beyond the point of mere clothing consumption. Fashion is a form of communication and can be distinguished as a language in itself (Barthes 1983). Barthes (1983) explains that clothing acts as a sign or symbolism and therefore enables the wearer to speak and relate or portray messages through the fashion that they adorn. It is regarded as a means for the individual to communicate one’s individuality and identity or to feel as though you are a part of a certain social circle, such as those favoured by fashion trend followers. This is especially true for millennials or Generation Y consumers, where research has found that the consumption of fast fashion clothing resonates specifically with this cohort (Kibbe 2014). However, further studies note that 90% of millennials are more likely to buy from and spend extra on clothing from socially and environmentally responsible clothing sources (The Fashion Law 2018), although they do engage in fast fashion consumption. Millennials are therefore regarded as key influencers in the movement towards ethically sound clothing consumption. Therefore, in the context of this study, one must establish the South African millennial fashion consumer’s stance regarding clothing consumption and its impact on the environment. In order to establish the fashion consumer’s stance, one must understand what drives the consumer, in the context of fashions paradigms.

### **2.3 Fashion consumption**

Fashion is understood as a cultural expression of one’s individualism and identity (Hogenboom 2016). Kawamura (2018) explains that there is a distinct difference between fashion production and consumption, and clothing production and consumption. Fashion is regarded as immaterial whereas clothing is a material object,

used as the 'raw material' to translate a fashion or the basis from which a fashion is created. It has been established that an item of clothing is not regarded as fashion by the recognition received from one individual, but must be socially accepted or adopted as such by a group of people to be deemed a fashionable item of clothing (Kawamura 2018).

To gain a deeper understanding of the cycles of fashion adoption, it could be beneficial to define some of the terms distinctively. A *fad*, often confused with the term fashion, is "a general direction or movement" which tends to have a very short lifespan (Solomon & Rabolt 2009). The term *trend* describes a style that has been adopted by many different designers at one point in time as fashion-forward (Solomon & Rabolt 2009). If the style continues to grow in interest, it is subsequently socially accepted as a trend. *Fashion*, on the other hand, is known to have the longest lifespan and is established when a style or trend experiences widespread, lasting acceptance (Solomon & Rabolt 2009). The length of time each of these aspects takes to become established as either a fad, trend or fashion is, however, varied. Each aspect has its own fashion production cycle or life cycle, which illustrates the length of time from beginning to end of that particular facet (Solomon & Rabolt 2009). Fashion can then also be subdivided into various time periods and encompasses different types of fashion, as depicted in Figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.2: Fashion production cycle (Falkiewicz 2019)**

Sproles (1974) explains that a clothing fashion is only deemed such when it is culturally approved or accepted as a style and has the ability to change and evolve within social systems. The element of change plays a key role in the fashion industry, as well as the pace in which the change occurs. Such components of the clothing industry play a pivotal part, as will be uncovered in this study. To understand the reasons behind the consumer’s need to consume, it could prove beneficial to identify the motivating factors behind these needs.

## 2.4 Humanistic understanding of needs versus wants

A.H. Maslow illustrated his theory of motivation through a hierarchical structure that categorised the various human needs, according to their significance (Cherry 2019).



**Figure 2.3: Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (Kremer & Hammond 2013)**

As illustrated in Figure 2.3, physiological needs are found in the first tier, followed by safety, social, esteem needs and finally self-actualisation, which will be discussed in greater detail in the section to follow, subsequently followed by the implications that clothing has on such needs.

#### **2.4.1 Physiological needs**

Physiological needs make up the first, most basic and vital need. These needs have been described as food, water, air, clothing, shelter, sex and warmth (Maslow 1943; Kremer & Hammond 2013; Cherry 2019; Bradley 2010). Sex has also been included since procreation is a requisite for the expansion of human life. The physiological needs have all been described as vital for survival. Maslow (1943) explains it as follows:

*A person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else. If all the needs are unsatisfied, and the organism is then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may become simply non-existent or be pushed into the background. It is then fair to characterize the whole organism by saying simply that it is hungry, for consciousness is almost completely pre-empted by hunger. All capacities are put into the service of hunger-satisfaction, and the organization of these capacities is almost entirely determined by the one purpose of satisfying hunger.*

These primary needs should essentially be met before any other needs are addressed.

#### **2.4.2 Safety needs**

Safety needs usually arise after the basic physiological needs are gratified (Maslow 1943). These needs include both financial and physical security and safety. It also comprises people's need for order and structure in their lives (Cherry 2019). It has been said that safety and security needs arise as a yearning to secure the fulfilment of one's future physiological needs (Kremer & Hammond 2013; Bradley 2010).

#### **2.4.3 Love needs**

Maslow (1943) determined that, after the first and second levels of needs are met, the need for love arises. The love need has been interpreted as a social need, because it also entails a need for acceptance and belonging (Cherry 2019; Kremer & Hammond 2013; Bradley 2010). People tend to crave a certain level of intimacy with a life partner, friend, child or social group, such as a church group, at a certain period in their life. In this context, the term 'intimacy' should not be mistaken for sex, which has been determined as a physiological need (Maslow 1943). Intimacy is needed in the context of social communion or oneness. When this need is met, it could result in an individual whose esteem becomes a dominant motivator of behaviour (Cherry 2019).

#### **2.4.4 Esteem needs**

The need for esteem encompasses the individual's need to accomplish or be accomplished, for self-respect, self-worth and to be valued (Maslow 1943; Cherry 2019). It includes the individual's desire for status, prestige, reputation and appreciation (Bradley 2010). Maslow explains (1943) as follows: *"Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world. But thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness and of helplessness."*

#### **2.4.5 Self-actualisation**

The last need described in the hierarchy is that for self-actualisation. This need arises after the physiological, safety, love and esteem needs have been met. A need for self-actualisation has been described as people's need to discover and/or reach their full potential to be who they were created to be (Maslow 1943; Cherry 2019). Maslow (1943) explains it as follows:

*Even if all these needs are satisfied, we may still often (if not always) expect that a new discontent and restlessness will soon develop, unless the individual is doing what he is fitted for. A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately happy. What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization.*

It is a need for self-fulfilment or self-realisation and can also be recognised as a desire for personal growth (Maslow 1943). The lower level needs are regarded as the foundations for the higher level needs, which also means that the individual that attempts to accomplish higher level needs in the hierarchy, such as self-actualisation, before satisfying lower level needs, such as security, is at risk of creating instability within the hierarchy as a whole (Maslow 1943).

According to Maslow (1943),

*... to say, the person who thinks he is hungry may actually be seeking more for comfort, or dependence, than for vitamins or proteins. Conversely, it is possible to satisfy the hunger need in part by other activities such as drinking water or smoking cigarettes. In other words, relatively isolable as these physiological needs are, they are not completely so.*

This statement explains that, even though it is possible to explain human motivation by categorising human needs in a hierarchical manner, it is important to note that some of those needs can be satisfied through means which cross the boundaries within the hierarchy (Maslow 1943). For example, eating disorders are said to occur as a result of an unhealthy emotional state, and are often the result of low self-esteem (Parekh 2017). The individual is therefore capable of using certain gratifiers to satisfy needs, by gratifying the fruit and not the root of the deficiency.

#### **2.4.6 Clothing as a gratifier of needs**

It has been determined that esteem needs, among others, can be satisfied through the consumption of a physiological factor. Clothing is considered as a basic physiological need for individuals to cover their bodies as a means of protecting their modesty, as well as for physical protection against the elements (Fletcher 2010; Fox 2016). Fox (2016) has furthermore established that clothing can be recognised as a means to fulfil needs in every layer of Maslow's hierarchy. As depicted in Figure 2.4,

clothing can be categorised with each of the five needs, namely physiological, safety, love, esteem and the need for self-actualisation.



**Figure 2.4: Maslow's hierarchy of needs related to clothing (Fox 2016)**

The most widely recognised use is for physiological needs. Clothing fulfils the need for an individual to cover the body, for modesty and protection against the elements, such as a raincoat or snow jacket, which are used to protect one's body against rain, snow and wind (Fox 2016; Fletcher 2007). Clothing can also be used to fulfil safety needs in the second tier (Fox 2016). Items such as firefighter uniforms are equipped to withstand heat and protect the wearer from flames. The third tier is the individual's need for love and to feel a sense of belonging or acceptance. Maslow (1943) determined that this need encompasses a desire to both give and receive love. Items such as jewellery or clothing can be used as symbols of love, from one individual to another, and can therefore be regarded as a means to fulfil this need (Fox 2016). Clothing can also be a symbol of where one finds oneself within the social hierarchy of society. By dressing in a certain manner, you may symbolise membership of a certain reference group, thereby emphasising the social connection of group membership (Barthes 1964; Akdemir 2018). Barthes (1964) contends that fashion and clothing is a type of language and speech, since it can be used as a way of communicating without the use of verbal words. An individual can answer the question of "Who am I?" by talking through the clothing he or she wears. An example given to illustrate this idea is of costume as the 'language' and clothing as the 'speech' that communicates the language (Barthes 1964).

The fourth tier is the need for esteem. It refers to the individual's need for stature, prestige, respect and reputation, among other things. Clothing has often been recognised as a means to gain respect or maintain a certain level of stature or reputation (Fox 2016). The semiotics<sup>2</sup> discourse of clothing establishes that clothing can be used as symbolism, or to convey a message (Barthes 1983). Through the use of a good quality business suit or luxury and branded clothing, the wearer can obtain a certain level of prestige or even favour in certain circles. As previously mentioned, it is a means of communicating one's personal or social identity. People can thereby use this means of communication to fulfil a need for self-esteem by communicating who they are and who they want to be associated with or accepted by on a social level (Barthes 1964; Akdemir 2018). Clothing can thereby be considered a means by which one could fulfil the need for esteem.

The final tier in the hierarchy, which acknowledges the human need for self-actualisation, is understood as the level on which individuals seek to unlock or fulfil their highest potential in various areas of their lives. This includes their roles associated with their career or in their family, among other groups. Fox (2016) explains that the individual seeks to develop an outfit formula in this phase. Steve Jobs is seemingly one of the individuals who made use of an "outfit formula" by wearing jeans, sneakers and a black turtleneck every day as a means to minimise time spent on choosing clothing in order for maximum time to be spent on more important undertakings (Fox 2016). The foremost example was Steve Jobs who wore his signature black turtleneck with jeans and sneakers every single day. The outfit formula is one way to spend less time on clothes and more time on more important endeavours" (Fox 2016). An outfit formula can therefore be explained as a typical set of clothing that could be used daily, purposed to fulfil a need or function, so as not to take away from the goal of productivity. The approach, reasons and manner of application of clothing may differ, but ultimately it can be concluded that clothing fulfils various human needs on various levels. It could therefore be interpreted that clothing fulfils all levels of needs within the hierarchy of Maslow's motivation theory.

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<sup>2</sup> Semiotics is the study of signs, symbols and sign using behaviour (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2019).

## **2.5 The rise from traditional fashion to that of fast fashion**

In the early 1900s nearly half the population were equipped with sewing skills, enabling them to make their own garments (Strasser et al. 1992:10; Claudio 2007:451). Clothing was made to last and thereafter be reused for other purposes. Industrialisation, however, brought great change to this norm with the advancement of the textile industry, among others (Rose 2007:1). The clothing, textile and accompanying supporting trades employ one-sixth of the world's population, including the growing of crops for fibre and the finishing of garments (Brown 2013). The growth of the textile industry was centred on the production of clothing in large quantities, at a lower price, making clothing more accessible to a greater number of individuals with varying earning potential (Rose 2007:2). The textile industry has since grown rapidly and contributes greatly to many national economies worldwide (Wang et al. 2017). In 2000, statistics already revealed that US\$1 trillion had been spent on clothing by consumers worldwide. The estimated value of the global apparel industry is said to reach nearly US\$4 trillion in 2020 (Lu 2018).

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) (2012) predicted that the clothing industry would expand by approximately 15% per annum from 2012 to 2016, making this one of the fastest growing industries in South Africa. This growth was predicted to reach an estimated R60 billion by 2016 (PWC 2012). Statistics from 2014 have revealed that the average South African household spent an approximate average of R373 per month on education and a surprisingly larger amount, in the region of R582, on clothing and footwear (Flanders Investment and Trade 2014). In 2017, the country's retail sales amounted to R1 trillion, 18% of which was spent in the clothing and textiles industry (South Africa. Stats SA 2018). This amounts to a total of R180 billion that was spent on clothing and textiles. These statistics reveal that South Africa has a strong fashion consumer base, which has been growing steadily over the years and will most likely continue to do so.

The growing clothing industry can be attributed to the consumer's escalating interest in fashion and the rapid growth of the emerging middle-class consumer (PWC 2012). In order to understand why the fashion industry has such great appeal to consumers, one must identify what fashion means to the consumer. Howell (2017) argues that fashion is not only a means by which individuals can express their identity or their

social rank or class, but its quick-paced, ever-changing nature can be somewhat of a sport, whereby followers find pleasure in following it as it unfolds like their favourite sport team or soap opera. Studies have identified that an increasing number of young black South Africans consume fashion, based on the status symbol attached to certain styles and brands (Cronje et al. 2016:1). This has been referred to as status or conspicuous consumption (Definition of “conspicuous consumption” 2019). Along with the decreasing costs of clothing and increased consumer spending behaviour over the years, fashion has been turned into an accessible form of leisure and self-expression (Remy et al. 2016). The twofold increase in clothing production between 2000 and 2014 proves that the consumption of fashion in South Africa is on the rise.

One of the outcomes of the increasing consumption of fashion over the years is the drastic reduction in lead time<sup>3</sup>. According to Shambu (2015:63), nearly two decades ago big retailers introduced a new business strategy, intended to radically decrease the price of clothing items. The consequence of the strategy was shorter lead times for clothing production, enabling new collections of clothing to enter stores at a surprisingly rapid and frequent pace. The term ‘micro-seasons’ is used to describe this frequency, which differs from the seasonal and periodical periods, in which new collections of clothing are introduced into stores (Shambu 2015:63; Khan 2016:7), as illustrated in Figure 2.2. As a result, clothing became increasingly accessible to a wider consumer base. The purpose of this strategy was to prompt recurrent consumer sales, by encouraging consumers to enter stores more frequently, through the enticement of new trends on display every two to three weeks (Shambu 2015:63; Khan 2016:7; Anastasia 2017:2). Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a higher turnover over a shorter period of time (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010:165). This strategy resulted in the system subsequently dubbed as ‘fast fashion’.

It has been mentioned that higher profit margins are the sole intention of the fast fashion industry (Dani n.d.; Muthu 2019). Ultimately, the industry intends to maintain a competitive edge among other competitors, by remaining trend-relevant at a more affordable price than other brands. The intention of obtaining trend relevance is to make trending styles of clothing available to the consumer, faster than a competitor,

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<sup>3</sup> Lead time is the lapse of time between the initial idea or design of a product and the manufacture of the product (*Webster’s new world college dictionary* 2010).

as a way to fulfil customer demand and maintain a competitive edge (Muthu 2019). *Ultra-fast fashion* is recognised as the advancement of fast fashion in terms of its shorter production and life cycle (Falkiewicz 2019). Where it takes fast fashion giants, such as Zara, approximately five weeks for a design to be produced and available for purchase in online and physical stores, ultra-fast fashion providers, such as Boohoo and Misguided, are able to achieve this within a period of two to four weeks (Falkiewicz 2019; Leong 2019; Leong 2018).

Fast fashion has been described as “the accelerated cycle of fashion production and consumption that puts pressure on fashion brands to manufacture garments as quickly and cheaply as possible” (Khan 2016:7). Keiser et al (2017) concisely explain it as follows:

*Millennials have been loyal to fast fashion purveyors who put out clothes that mimic runway fashions, are available in the same season as the designer clothes from which they were inspired, at rock bottom prices, and oftentimes of a quality that lasts no more than a season.*

The abovementioned authors specifically point out millennial consumers due to the fact that they are the largest and most influential of the consumer population. The millennial consumer is said to be driven by an insatiable desire for instant gratification through the frequent acquisition of cheap clothing, which is soon thereafter disposed of to make room for the new trend on the market (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010:170). Retailers demand the frequent arrival of new clothing ranges in their stores on a regular basis to encourage rapid sales and to obtain consumer loyalty and brand relevance in the industry (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010:165; Turker & Altuntas 2014). The global economic success of fast fashion is undeniable, with statistics showing that 7% of the total world exports were in clothing and textiles in 2000 already (Gardetti & Torres 2013).

South Africa’s textile and clothing manufacture industry has been repressed as a result of the increase of cheaper imports from China (SA aims to patch up threadbare clothing industry 2018). Many textile and clothing manufacture factories have shut down over the years and the effects are unfortunately found in the drastic decrease in job availability in the local clothing industry during the last 15 years (Dibb 2017; May

2019). Records show that there has been a severe decline, from 200 000 to 19 000 jobs available in this 15-year period (Dibb 2017; May 2019). The deterioration of the South African clothing industry is a clear contributor to the country's current unemployment rate of 29% (SA aims to patch up threadbare clothing industry 2019; South Africa. Stats SA 2019). Local fashion designers are also affected by the lack of availability of local textiles and are therefore required to source textiles internationally, with high costs attached to the process (May 2019). This expense also has an overall effect on the pricing of local designer clothing.

Regardless of the aforementioned, the South African clothing retail sector is seeing steady increases in the consumption of apparel throughout the entire socioeconomic spectrum. H&M reportedly experienced a 39% increase in sales in South Africa in 2017 (Dibb 2017). Considering the demographics of South Africa, a country infamously known for having one of the most unequal income distributions on a global scale, it is an interesting occurrence that the international fashion brands are thriving (Flanders Investment and Trade 2016:14). It is thereby evident that the fast fashion industry is making an extensive impact on consumers, from First through to Third World countries.

## **2.6 The textile and clothing industry**

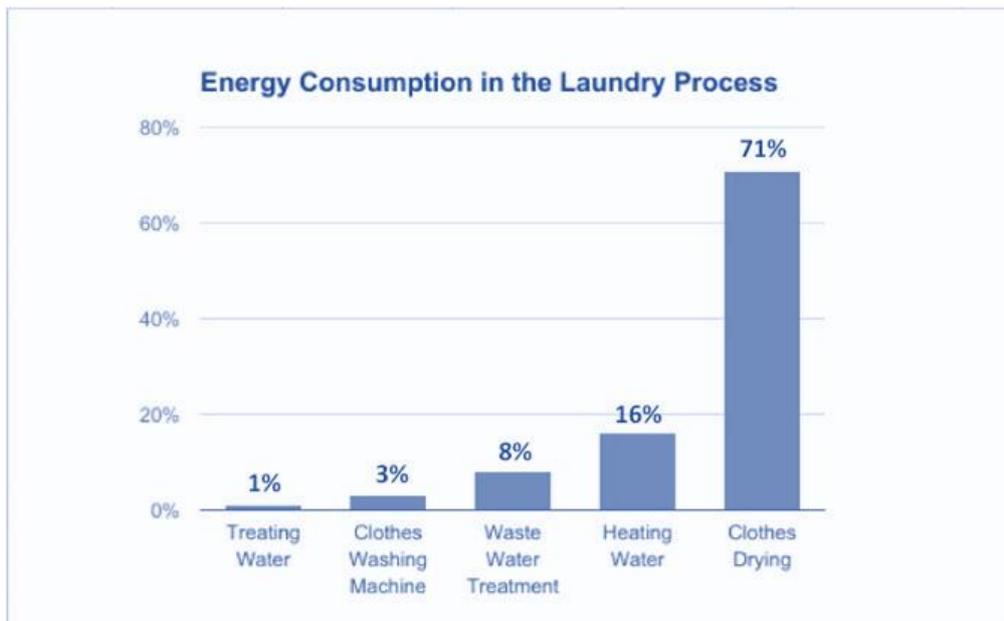
When discussing the fashion industry and its practices, it is necessary to examine one of clothing production's beginning phases, namely textile production. The production of textiles begins with the cultivation or chemical production of fibre. The fibre is thereafter put through processes such as cleaning, sorting and dyeing, before it is used to make textiles (Kadolph 2010). Studies have revealed that most of these processes contribute towards a growing environmental footprint, be it to produce either synthetic or natural fabrics (Momborg 2012:18; Remy et al. 2016:6).

Cotton, one of the most used natural fibres, is estimated to use only 3% of the world's farmlands but 25% of the world's pesticides (Chen & Burns 2006:249; Claudio 2007:450). Approximately 10 000 litres of water is required to grow one kilogram of cotton, which is the amount of cotton required to produce a single pair of denim jeans (Anastasia 2017:9). This is equal to the amount of drinking water for a single person for the duration of ten years (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change 2018). The effluents from the production of cotton and other textiles are said to contain toxic matter that can be harmful to living organisms. These effluents are often found to be disposed of negligently, posing the threat of contamination to drinking water sources (Claudio 2007:450). The manufacturing of nylon and rayon, the most used synthetic fibres, are said to be partly responsible for depleting the earth's ozone layer, as a result of the nitrous oxide emitted during the manufacturing process (Chen & Burns 2006:251). The processes of growing natural fibres or producing synthetic fibres, and manufacturing these into a textile, is only the first stage in the production of a fashion item, with a few equally harmful processes to follow.

The textile dyeing and finishing industry is regarded as one of the largest polluters of clean water worldwide, second to agriculture (Kant 2012:23). The dyeing and finishing phase of textile production emits approximately 200 billion tonnes of effluent annually (Anastasia 2017:7). Wastewater from the dyeing and finishing processes often finds its way to rivers and thereafter to the ocean, consequently contaminating drinking water. Records reveal that marine fauna and flora are subsequently affected by the contamination of their habitat, as the oxygen levels of the water decrease, with the increase of harmful toxins, as stated by Kant (2012:23). This author mentions that many human illnesses have been traced to effluents from textile production, with the potential to harm even unborn children, among others, if there is exposure to air toxified by the evaporation of this lethal wastewater. One could deduce that the increase in consumption of clothing could be outweighing the capacity of the natural environment to accommodate its by-products.

After the garments are manufactured, the following stages in the product life cycle also have detrimental consequences to sustainability. In the United States alone, 847 445 million gallons of water is consumed for the washing of clothing, while 241 000 GWh of electricity is used for the washing and drying processes (Soluna Collective 2017). Figure 2.5 reveals the distribution of energy used in the different stages of the laundry process:



**Figure 2.5: Energy consumption in the laundry process (Soluna Collective 2017)**

Washing and drying of clothing account for over 26% of greenhouse gas emissions in the clothing’s life cycle (Berendt 2018). It may be regarded by consumers that the life cycle of garments from the fashion industry ends with the discarding of the item; however, this is an erroneous assumption as the impact of fashion waste continues.

The indecorous method in which clothing is disposed of is as damaging to the environment as is the mass consumption of the clothing. A report based in the UK, compiled by Morley et al. (2006:18), revealed that 1 812k tonnes of domestic textile products were purchased in the UK in 2003. The potential amount of latent waste by the consumer and industry is estimated at 397k tonnes, with 1 165k tonnes making up the total weight of disposed items. It was documented that the average American disposes of nearly 35 kilograms (76 pounds) of clothing and shoes annually (Anastasia 2017:10). Much of the wasted fashion items end up in methane producing landfills, where synthetic fibres can take hundreds of years to decompose (Anastasia 2017:10; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 2018). Godfrey and Oelofse (2017) documented that landfilling is still the dominant method of waste disposal in South Africa, implying that locally discarded clothing mostly ends up in landfills as well.

Another threat regarding the disposal of clothing is the contamination of the groundwater through the release of chemical leftovers from the manufacturing process

that remain in the fabric. The increase in fashion waste proves to be a progressively alarming matter, with detrimental environmental effects (Claudio 2007:451; Wang et al. 2017). Furthermore, in order to ensure the 'elitist' status of fashion brands, some companies choose to destroy their excess clothes, rather than selling or donating it, in order not to dilute the image and exclusivity of their brands. Of their finished products and accessories, Burberry destroyed 18.8 million pounds' worth in 2016, 26.9 million pounds' worth in 2017 and a staggering 28.6 million pounds' worth of finished products and accessories in 2018 (Howcroft 2018). There are limited statistics reflecting the percentage of waste pertaining to textiles and apparel in South Africa; however, it is assumed that similar findings may be revealed if such studies were done within the South African context. This nevertheless points to irresponsible and perhaps even unethical behaviour in terms of discarding and/or destroying apparel products that require non-renewable resources in the production thereof, which could otherwise still have been used, in this instance merely for the purpose of fashion consumption.

In an attempt to identify the root of environmental pollution from the textile and clothing industry, focus has historically been placed on a progressive increase of the population size in a relatively short period of time, estimating that the environment is unable to accommodate such inhabitancy (Princen et al. 2002; Dauvergne 2010). Other suggested perpetrators were insufficient or inadequate strategies, such as textile recycling, which should be put in place to manage the excessive waste being produced (Larney & Van Aardt 2010). Textile recycling was also found to lack cost-effectiveness. An article in the online *Business Report* (Second-hand clothing, the next big eco trend 2019) stated that there is a definite growth in the South African second-hand clothing market as a possible result of the country's strained economy. Online websites such as OLX and Gumtree are recognised as common platforms where consumers seek to purchase second-hand wedding gowns, matric-ball dresses and other items. The article states that the negative stigma of second-hand clothing is undergoing a change with the current consumer market recognising it as "smart, savvy and eco-friendly". Many international designers such as Stella McCartney, among others, are also promoting the idea of selling one's garments after use, rather than disposing of them, with the intention of extending its lifespan and minimising fashion consumption. It can be assumed that the excessive consumption of products that materialise into excessive waste is the root cause of the problem. Princen et al. (2002) state:

*The economy produces goods and goods are good so more goods must be better. There is little reason to investigate consumption, except to estimate demand functions. Consumers, after all, will only purchase what is good for them and producers, as a result, will only produce what consumers are willing to pay for. When reviewing the possible roots of the problem of excess waste, the angle of consumption associates the consumers' need to consume as a result of the need to purchase more than is needed.*

The consumer's need to consume, which is facilitated by the retailer's provision of disposable and replaceable products, is proving to be a perilous threat to the environment (Leonard 2007). When analysing the clothing industry holistically, every aspect contributing to its function, from cultivation of raw materials for textile production, to manufacturing, through to consumption and disposal, has an impact on the environment. It would seem that the problem does not lie in the processes itself, but in the unprincipled manner in which its processes are often carried out. The quality of the clothing production processes seems to be compromised as a result of the speed in which it is expected to run (Cortez et al. 2014:4). According to the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU), it is imperative that the future of the local clothing and textile industry is based on sustainable practices that pose no threat to the environment and society (PETCO 2019). Ultimately, fast fashion needs to be slowed down (Fletcher 2007) and this movement needs consumer buy-in in order to be successful.

## **2.7 The slow fashion approach**

Slow fashion, the antithesis to fast fashion, approaches clothing manufacture from a standpoint of accountability. It is said to have found its origins in the 'slow food movement' of 1980, which emerged as a form of critique to the fast-food favouring culture (Leslie et al. 2014:228). The slow food movement aims to counter the fixation on speed in production and consumption and later developed into the 'slow cities movement'. Similarly, the slow cities movement supports a higher quality of life through refinement (Slow Movement 2018). It can be said that the objective of movements promoting slow food, slow living, slow cities and slow fashion is intended to promote quality over quantity, by taking the emphasis off the desire for 'fast' and placing it on the value of the process and product.

A quality item of clothing could be described as fashion intended to fulfil a long-term function rather than having an expendable nature. It could be mistaken that high-end products, which exude quality and luxury, could elude the crux of fast fashion, which is found in its cheap and disposable nature, as stated by Friedman (2017). The author endeavoured to explore online shopping platforms, which retail high-end clothing, and their attempts at reducing the time lapse between the consumer clicking to purchase and taking delivery of a product. The author's observation poses the argument that the speed of acquiring a high-end luxury garment somehow taints the ideals of quality and longevity associated with these garments. The idea of speed in this context is said to negate the ideals of luxury items, placing them in the same category as disposable fast fashion. In contrast, 'investment fashion' is the term used to describe items of clothing made to last, as noted by Friedman (2017:1) as well as by Jung and Jin (2014:517). These authors all state that the consumer of investment fashion acknowledges and respects the time required for the process to run its course in order to produce an item of excellence. The psychological impact being that the consumer will consequently evaluate the item as one that is made for endurance, in this way adding value to it. If the consumer can identify a product as one of value, through the exclusion of instant gratification, it is possible that the disposability factor will become somewhat redundant.

When considering the aspect of speed, the terms 'fast' and 'fashion' seem to have a somewhat symbiotic association with each other. Hence, one could question if the ideals of slow fashion could be regarded as an oxymoron (Clark 2008:428). It is important to analyse this element of speed in its relation to fast fashion and therefore the polluting by-products of the textile and clothing industry. Fletcher (2010:260) argues that the speed of the process is not necessarily the cause of the infamous side-effects of fashion, but the lack of transparency and therefore the irresponsibility behind the practices used to achieve this required speed. Fast fashion, in essence, is a business strategy intended to acquire continual economic growth, which in itself is a goal that cannot be criticised from a global standpoint. The aim of the slow fashion movement is therefore not a means to slow down the economically successful processes of fast fashion. Slow fashion is a part of the global fashion industry that fulfils the needs of a smaller segment, as does recycled and eco-friendly fashion. It also serves as a beacon which draws attention to the need for transparency and

accountability in the industry as a whole. It is therefore highly relevant, because the consumer's interest in the transparency and ethically sound production phases of fashion is also growing (Keiser et al. 2017).

Slow, sustainable, eco, ethical, upcycled and recycled fashion have all been identified as a means to holistically solve some of the problems created by poorly managed clothing production systems, as well as the consumption and poor disposal of fashion (Selina's inspiration 2018). These aspects have been researched as separate entities (Selina's inspiration 2018), but all aim to achieve a single goal, which is a positive and more sustainable fashion system from beginning to end, even though it may be through different channels.

Several classifications of a more sustainable fashion product have emerged recently and are briefly described below, namely, *sustainable and eco-fashion*, which is concerned with the environmental impact of clothing manufacture. Eco-fashion products are made using recycled, re-purposed or organic fibres and materials (Wetzel n.d). It intends to limit the use of harmful or toxic dyes and chemicals while using sustainable, low-impact solutions to produce the clothing, as much as possible (Wetzel n.d.).

The concept of *ethical fashion* was developed as a way to obtain transparency in clothing manufacture plants, focusing on enforcing and upholding human and animal rights in the industry (Tseëlon 2011; Brown 2013). Ethical fashion entails the production of clothing with strict anti-child labour policies, fair wages, and healthy and safe working conditions for employees.

*Upcycled and recycled fashion* can be seen as the means by which clothing is repurposed to create new items by using old items (Lusiardi 2019; Francelova 2017). The intention is to extend the life of clothing, thereby minimising the effects of consumption on the environment. Recycling is the process whereby a used product is broken down or 'downcycled' to a raw material, which is then used to create a new product (Lusiardi 2019). The process of downcycling can, however, have its own set of consequences in the form of energy consumption (Lusiardi 2019). Brands also take on initiatives such as recycling clothing from goods donated by consumers; however, this has been recognised as somewhat of a farce (Francelova 2017). H&M, a popular

fast fashion retailer, marketed such an initiative as a way to contribute towards sustainable fashion, but it was confirmed that only 1% of the clothes donated were recycled, as some fabrics do not degrade as well as others. Furthermore, consumers who donated old clothing were given vouchers for discounts on clothing purchases from the store, which encouraged greater consumption (Francelova 2017). Upcycling, on the other hand, is the process whereby materials from old items are reused to make a new item, without going through the process of degradation, as occurs during recycling (Han et al. 2016; Lusiardi 2019). Upcycling would therefore seem like a suitable method in which to add length to the life of clothing and minimise consumption in the process (Han et al. 2016). Chao (2019), however, explains that when one considers that the USA is producing 12.7 million tonnes of textile waste and China 26 million tonnes of textile waste per year, it is unlikely that recycling and upcycling could have a significant impact on the problem of excessive waste. She does, however, state that the greatest impact can be made through the conscious efforts of manufacturers not to overproduce clothing and through the efforts of consumers to consume mindfully (Chao 2019).

*Slow fashion* is the conscious adoption of mindful fashion consumption practices. It entails quality clothing produced through ethically and environmentally responsible methods (Kowalski 2018). These factors serve as the primary factors behind slow fashion and disregard the ideals of trend following (Kowalski 2018). Slow fashion clothing are quality items made for longevity (Kowalski 2018; Jung & Jin 2014). The ideals of longevity consequently result in lower consumption levels, because the individual will own garments that can be worn for periods longer than those dictated by the fast-fashion life cycle (Kowalski 2018). Ultimately, slow fashion encourages improving the quality of processes and products in the fashion system.

Jung and Jin (2014) state that the longevity of slow fashion is the primary reason consumers purchase these products. A study was conducted, aimed at identifying the constructs of slow fashion from a theoretical perspective. This was achieved by categorising how a clothing label can be classified as a product of slow fashion and by exploring what attracted consumers to slow fashion (Jung & Jin 2014). The results yielded from the study revealed that consumers of slow fashion were not only concerned about environmental and social sustainability, but also the quality of the

item which speaks to the length of its life cycle. It can be established that slow fashion therefore intends to address all the problems connected to fast fashion production and consumption cycles.

Additional studies by Jung and Jin (2016:540) identify the position of slow fashion in the global clothing industry. Slow fashion is a substantial contributor particularly to the economic growth of a small business entity (Jung & Jin 2016). The premise of slow fashion is not to rival fast fashion, as this would be an unrealistic feat, due to the fact that these two entities represent different scales in the industry. Fletcher (2010:263) explains that “slow cannot break the cycle of fast fashion, because change is not perceived deep enough” (by consumers). Slow fashion should be viewed as a part of the global constructs of fashion as a whole, together with fast fashion, both of which possess different economic and business strategies and processes, as well as different worldviews. Slow fashion is an ‘invitation’ to consider changes in the systems, worldviews and strategies that currently prevail.

It is important to recognise that factors and models that may contribute to slow fashion on international platforms may not be as effective or relevant in South Africa, considering that South Africa is a developing country. It must be considered that slow fashion clothing does come with a higher price tag as a result of the higher levels of quality invested in the textiles sourced, as well as in the finishing and construction methods used to produce these garments (Davis 2019). The demographic profile of the country plays an important role in the success of a product, from the standpoint of a consumer. In terms of household income, Head (2018) revealed that 46% of South Africans earn an average of R1 000 monthly, while the lower end (which makes up 10%) lives off R345 per month. It can be assumed that the higher prices of slow fashion could be more relevant to international markets rather than the local mass market. Even environmentally conscious consumers have been known to be sensitive to price, which often has a primary impact on their purchase decisions (Pookulangara & Shephard 2013). Dibb (2017), however, indicates that a hindrance to the growth of the slow fashion movement is also found in the stigma attached to the pricing. South Africans tend to assume that slow fashion clothing is unaffordable (Dibb 2017). However, research reveals that pricing of many slow fashion brands is often similar to and sometimes lower than product equivalents found in fast fashion stores such as

Zara and Topshop (Dibb 2017). As previously mentioned, South Africa has seen a substantial increase in consumption of fast fashion apparel from popular international retailers such as H&M, which implies that the notion of slow fashion being unaffordable could be as a result of a lack of knowledge or convenient access to slow fashion clothing (Dibb 2017).

Saricam and Okur (2019) aptly state that increased and widespread knowledge of slow fashion will increase slow fashion consumption. This knowledge could be spread through both formal and informal learning methods. Nygren et al. (2019) explain that formal learning is the intentional learning in an institution, guided by a facilitator, to be assessed and graded according to the standards of a qualification. Formal learning, in the context of this study could take place through avenues such as tertiary institutions. Informal learning is described as unstructured and unplanned learning through daily life interactions, and is arguably more effective than formal training since it influences lifelong learning (Nygren et al. 2019). Dr Desiree Smal, senior fashion design lecturer at the University of Johannesburg, claims that the distribution of knowledge and information on the ills of fast fashion is imperative to support the growth in slow fashion production and consumption in the country, lest the information remains “isolated” (May 2019). At present, South African fashion designers could be recognised as the only channel of slow fashion production in the country and should therefore be endorsed as a means to promote the slow fashion model in the country (May 2019). Local designers could employ informal learning techniques to educate their consumers about slow fashion. Other sources reflect similar information, ultimately expressing the relevance and necessity of the local fashion designer as a representative of local production and its significance to the country (Dibb 2017; May 2019). It would seem that the South African government recognises the value of locally produced textiles and clothing and is in the process of implementing a revival programme in the local industry (Naicker 2017). This could prove to be fundamentally beneficial to the growth and development of slow fashion in South Africa. A growth in the slow fashion market could also see a reduction in pricing, as has been experienced by the organic food market over the years. Davis (2019) states that the organic food market saw a gradual decrease in pricing by 2.5% between 2014 and 2018, due to the increase in demand. The result was that larger retailers saw that there was a market for organic food and

began to stock such produce. It can be determined that such potential also lies in the slow fashion industry, should the interest in the market increase.

## **2.8 Voluntary simplicity movement: a theoretical framework**

The voluntary simplicity movement (VSM) is undoubtedly in favour of slow fashion for its positive and responsible constructs. However, the VSM can be applicable and maintained in the refinement of clothing and fashion consumption as a whole. A consumer who chooses a life of simplicity would be trading in the ideals of fast fashion for garments that are made to last and are not trend-dependent. This means that the consumer will purchase a garment for both functionality and aesthetic appeal, while making use of it for a longer period of time due to its superior quality and irrelevance to trends. Consumers who choose to adopt a lifestyle of simplicity through reduction in consumption will not have an easy path to follow, according to Alexander and Ussher (2012), as it would require the reconsideration of every aspect of their being. Seeing that a life of minimalism can be described in itself as a luxury, it can be maintained that a simple and uncomplicated existence can be a rewarding one (Grigsby 2004). Minimalism is a familiar term that embraces very similar concepts to that of voluntary simplicity, in terms of reducing one's material goods and decluttering one's lifestyle and life. Gottberg (n.d.) was, however, one of the few authors to express a comprehensible distinction between minimalism and the VSM. The author explains that minimalism focuses on external solutions for improved lifestyles, whereas the ethos of simplicity is centred on attaining internal harmony through various means, including minimising possessions down to the necessities (Gottberg n.d.). This study uses the approach of the voluntary simplicity movement as its framework. The matter of consumption seems to be one of the prevailing motivators behind the movement towards simplicity. Consumption is concurrently regarded as an adversary of the simplicity movement, particularly in the fashion industry (Zrałek 2016).

The voluntary simplicity movement (VSM), also referred to as 'downshifting', is a movement towards a simpler lifestyle. It was initially known to be a movement adopted by religious extremists living in small isolated communities (Zrałek2016). Its reputation has, however, developed over the years, gaining recognition for its different dimensions, which have social, environmental and financial associations. The term 'voluntary simplicity' was coined by Richard B. Gregg, an American social philosopher

(Calvert 2009; McGouran & Prothero 2016). Gregg drew much of his inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi and is widely recognised as the individual who brought Gandhi's philosophies to the USA by publishing some of Gandhi's earliest work (Calvert 2009). According to Gregg (1936),

*Voluntary simplicity involves both inner and outer condition. It means singleness of purpose, sincerity and honesty within, as well as avoidance of exterior clutter, of many possessions irrelevant to the chief purpose of life. It means an ordering and guiding of our energy and our desires, a partial restraint in some directions in order to secure greater abundance of life in other directions. It involves a deliberate organization of life for purpose.*

The intolerance of clutter could be understood as both literal and metaphorical concepts, in that physical clutter seems to have a link with mental and emotional clutter. Gregg (1936) recognised that the increased complexity in lifestyles, resulting from the global development of mass production, and the international delivery systems for mass produce, trade, scientific and technological advancements, all countered the ideals of simple living (Gregg 1936; Doherty & Etzioni 2003; Zrałek 2016).

The matter of simplicity can be seen as relative in its nature. What is simple living for an individual in Europe might be regarded as regular living for an individual in Asia. Therefore, individuals must decipher what a life of simplicity entails for them on a personal level (Gregg 1936). It is imperative that individuals who choose this lifestyle recognise the values of it and allow those revelations to drive their daily decisions, rather than having the opinions of others influence their way of thinking. The term '*psychological hygiene*' has been used to describe the individual whose clutter-free lifestyle results in internal wholeness and mental freedom (Gregg 1936). The decisions people have to make on a daily basis, influenced by the complexities of work and home environments, are recognised as stress and anxiety stimulants. A simpler existence, with fewer aspects to be concerned about, could enable psychological hygiene and an existence whereby fulfilment and satisfaction are acquired on a more permanent basis.

Simple living has been associated with the endeavour to fulfil one's purpose in life and achieve one's goals. Gregg (1936) argues that individuals who adopt this lifestyle will

most likely find that they have more resources in the form of time, mental clarity and focus to accomplish their ultimate purpose for existence. The distractions of a complicated lifestyle will not be able to play the role of a diversion, as these individuals will be solely focused on living to their highest potential. It is notable that Maslow's (1943) fifth tier is focused on the same principle, namely that of self-actualisation. He determined that when an individual's physiological and social needs are gratified, the ultimate desire thereafter is a desire to find and fulfil his purpose and accomplish his highest potential in life. The individual that reaches this state, while having all other needs gratified, is regarded as a person who is likely to have a healthy emotional and mental state. To explain this through simplicity in clothing, Steve Jobs's uniform is a good example. He simply wore jeans and a black turtleneck, which allowed him to focus on his product developments and reach his full potential. Many people do not reach this level and spend much of their existence trying to fulfil social and psychological needs, such as getting esteem through healthy or unhealthy means. Individuals who fulfil the fifth and final tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs could be seen as organic adopters of simple lives, since they predominantly place less focus on material things, and more on the quality of their lived experiences (Maslow 1943; Gregg 1936; Doherty & Etzioni 2003; Fox 2016). If such a philosophy could be applied to a clothing consumer, a healthy, simplified existence would be evident in the consumer's consumption of clothing solely for functional and practical use. It can be assumed that the clothing these consumers would use would be intended to fulfil a long-term purpose.

The title of 'simplifier' was given to the followers of this movement. Simplifiers are participants who reject a lifestyle driven by a need to acquire excessive material goods, due to the fact that their ethos is founded on acquiring fulfilment through internal harmony (Kennedy et al. 2013). Simplifiers are encouraged to adopt 'new identities' with ethical standpoints, which reject the partialities of a culture founded in a world driven by consumption (Sandlin & Walther 2009). The VSM is expressed as a manner to exist in a state described as being "outwardly simple and inwardly rich" (Elgin & Mitchell 1978). Elgin and Mitchell (1978) explain that,

*... this way of life embraces frugality of consumption, a strong sense of environmental urgency, a desire to return to living and working environments*

*which are of a more human scale, and an intention to realize our higher human potential - both psychological and spiritual - in community with others.*

Three types of identities have been recognised and categorised according to their level of involvement in the VSM, namely downshiffters, strong simplifiers and holistic simplifiers (Etzioni 1999).

Downshiffters is the title given to commonly wealthy consumers who seek to reduce their consumption practices through minimal change. These individuals tend to replace certain luxury items with cheaper versions, while still retaining their high-end lifestyles for the most part (Etzioni 1999). Downshiffters are known to make changes that are just enough to make a statement, without compromising their status of wealth and prestige. They tend to be somewhat conscious consumers, often for a limited period of time, as their adoption of the VSM could be recognised as somewhat fickle. However, even a small reduction in consumption should not be disregarded, as all contributions are valuable to the cause of minimising consumption in an attempt to promote environmental wellbeing.

Strong simplifiers are the high-profile, high-earning individuals who leave their careers to take on jobs that pay far less, as a means to simplify their lifestyles. Strong simplifiers are therefore those who make conscious decisions to give up power, money, prestige and their socioeconomic ranking, in order to acquire less income and a higher quality of living through simplicity (Etzioni 1999). These individuals have also been known to retire early, to enable them to spend an additional period of time embracing the pleasures of a lifestyle that does not encompass the woes of their occupation. Ovchinnikov (2017) explains that simplifiers would consider clothing consumption purchases as necessary only if there is a real need for it. These simplifiers would more than likely favour quality clothing, for the longevity that is connected to it.

Holistic simplifiers are individuals who will make drastic changes in their lifestyles and environment to accommodate simple living. Their philosophies usually drive their decisions, such as resigning from jobs or relocating to a quieter, slower city or environment. Unlike downshiffters and strong simplifiers, they are the type to relinquish all financial and social niceties in order to achieve a quality life through simplicity

(Etzioni 1999; Zralek 2016). It is likely that holistic simplifiers would be less concerned with the quality of a clothing item but focus more on quantity reduction. Such simplifiers favour second-hand, simple and functional clothing, while using the option to repair clothing in order to extend its length of life (Ovchinnikov 2017).

The VSM has been widely researched and a vast range of information has been established around the movement. The common thread that surfaces as a result of the adoption of this lifestyle is the aspect of one's wellbeing (McGouran & Prothero 2016). Wellbeing is often the goal behind the shedding of excessive things in the form of material goods, extra work shifts, higher pay and the fast pace of city living. It is of value to identify whether improved wellbeing is in fact the result of a simplified lifestyle. McGouran and Prothero (2016) attempted to find the answer to this under-researched aspect, by carrying out empirical research in studying the outcomes from consumers they had selected and encouraged to adopt a simpler form of living. These 'beginner voluntary simplifiers' were expected to become simplifiers by reducing their consumption of material goods (including clothing or fashion) and by limiting certain day-to-day practices, like regular visits to the hairdresser. In essence, the VSM is intended to reduce the consumption levels of material goods as a means to contribute to environmental wellbeing, but is also intended to contribute to the simplifiers' wellbeing. The results revealed that not all of the participants experienced individual wellbeing, but showed an increase in anxiety and discontent. The beginner voluntary simplifiers explained that the inability to consume according to their common and familiar practices was unsatisfying, inconvenient and in many ways challenged their self-esteem and reputation, since their physical appearance was altered as a result of having no access to their usual beauty regimes.

Leonard-Barton identified three types of groups, all in support of the VSM, but inspired by different motivating factors. The names given to these groups are conservers, crusaders and conformists (Leonard-Barton 1981).

Conservers are the individuals who were raised in frugal homes with very strict regulations on anti-waste. Individuals who also fit this category are those who were raised in developing countries or experienced poverty or financial constraints in adolescence (Leonard-Bolton 1981). Such factors tend to motivate or direct conservers to continue a lifestyle of simplicity, as a result of their familiarity with such

a lifestyle. These individuals are likely to favour second-hand clothing and to repair damaged clothing to extend its lifespan, such as holistic simplifiers would. However, unlike holistic simplifiers, some of these conservers may make such lifestyle choices out of compulsion and for a lack of options.

Crusaders are those who have also been raised in a home that is driven to conserve, but their motivating factors are not based on a lack of finance or an intention to save money (Leonard-Bolton 1981). Crusaders are motivated by a desire to serve as a role model or an example with the intention of educating or influencing those around them about environmental conservation. Crusaders share motivations similar to that of strong and holistic simplifiers, but differ in that they are driven by a desire to influence others as well. Their clothing consumption practices would more than likely be similar to that of strong and holistic simplifiers. They would more than likely be consumers of second-hand clothing and practise mending clothing as a means to extend the lifespan of their garments. It is most unlikely that crusaders would sport branded or luxury clothing, even if they had the means to afford it.

Conformists could be considered the category which hosts variables. Conformists are those who apply voluntary simplicity in certain aspects of their lives, but it does not reform their entire way of being. Their simplicity practices are known to be inspired by influence from outside parties or purely from the guilt of living in affluent homes (Leonard-Bolton 1981). This group is partial to external factors, causing their voluntary simplicity practices to take on a short-term or temporary nature. It is possible that conformists practise flexibility in their clothing consumption practices, depending on the influence or lack thereof from external factors. Conformists who experience guilt because of their wealthy upbringing or lifestyles might avoid luxury fashion and high-end clothing brands as a means to signify their new philosophies of simplicity.

It is important to note the existence of involuntary simplicity and its connection to the VSM and therefore to this study. The occurrence whereby the individual or group is exposed to a lifestyle of restraint and low consumption, as a result of lack of financial means, is regarded as involuntary simplicity. Voluntary simplicity occurs when the individual is financially capable of living in extravagance but chooses not to in response to an awareness and consciousness regarding environmental concerns.

Those who live simply for a lack of options will not be considered as simplifiers in the context of this study (Leonard-Bolton 1981).

Gregg (1936) reports on a conversation with Mahatma Gandhi, during which he discussed his struggle to relinquish his treasured book collection. In response Gandhi explained that it was reason to hold onto his books, as letting go of something before one is ready or has received a revelation to do so, will result in an unhealthy, often insatiable desire to re-acquire said item. As a result, each individual should adopt a simplified life according to his or her needs, pace and capabilities in order to achieve long-term results. This could explain the findings from the study carried out by McGouran and Prothero (2016). Because the beginner voluntary simplifiers took on the role as requested and not as a result of self-determination, it was unsuccessful. However, the single participant who was already a voluntary simplifier continued to remain one, even after the study was concluded, further solidifying this notion. Clarity could be found in Etzioni's (1999) interpretation of the VSM, when he explains that it is the choice made freely by the individual to limit their dependence on consuming material things and seek and strive toward a fulfilling life apart from these things. It is important to note that the choice to follow VSM has to be made freely, as an inability to consume material goods and services as a result of lack or poverty, would be regarded as involuntary simplicity (Gregg 1936; Doherty & Etzioni 2013). It would seem that the lifestyle of the VSM has to be adopted as a choice, based on a number of reasons, understandings and beliefs in order for it to make any impact on society, the environment and the individual as a long-term commitment.

Elgin and Mitchell (1978) determined five elements that encompass the core values of the VSM, namely, material simplicity, self-determination, human scale, ecological awareness and personal growth.

### **2.8.1 Material simplicity**

Material simplicity is one of the core values of the VSM. The movement encourages a lifestyle that places minimal to no value on material possessions as contributors to the quality of one's life. In fact, Gregg (1936) gives an account of the introduction of a telephone to his list of belongings and the impact thereof. The telephone enabled convenience as a means of communication, which assisted in many day-to-day activities; however, it also seemed to challenge the ideals of simple living. It was found

that merely having the telephone opened a desire for communication that was not essential to his ease of living. Many calls were unproductively made and received for leisure, thereby reducing the amount of time in a day that could be spent on more constructive and purposeful activities. Material simplicity encompasses the shedding of and reduction in consumption of possessions that are not vital to everyday functioning (Etzioni 1999). Possessions are regarded as temporary satisfiers, which are contradictory to the intention of the VSM, to acquire permanent fulfilment in life through conscious efforts towards simplicity (Elgin & Mitchell 1978; McGouran & Prothero 2016). In terms of clothing consumption, material simplicity would be interpreted by minimising consumption for trend-following or leisure, while adopting the ideals of purchasing clothes for its functionality (Ovchinnikov 2017).

### **2.8.2 Self-determination**

Self-determination is defined as an individual's ability to make a decision or alter their way of thinking or behaving, while being un-influenced by external factors (*Collins dictionary* 2019). In the context of the VSM, self-determination is expressed as the individual's need to become self-dependent and self-reliant. It describes the determination to have "greater control over one's personal destiny" by not being attached to debt, costs from lifestyle maintenance and by being free of the need to adhere to people's expectations of oneself (Elgin & Mitchell 1978). People are expected to be materially self-sufficient by learning to make or grow their own produce to fulfil needs, rather than indulge in consumption practices as encouraged by marketing organisations, among others. The consumer who is found to be rich in self-determination in this context would more than likely not favour fashion trends, which are often intended to influence social status (Howell 2017). These individuals would deem functional clothing as relevant to their existence, as it would fulfil a purpose of practicality for that specific individual, without the stimulus of external factors such as social gratification. The VSM has been expressed as an ideal that will not be fruitful for individuals unless they are self-motivated and committed to a reformed lifestyle, initiated by downsizing.

### **2.8.3 Human scale**

Human scale refers to the reduction in size of living and working environments. Large organisations are encouraged to scale down sectors into smaller ones of a more

human scale, enabling employees to see their contribution to the organisation and the value of it, from a less complex and more comprehensible scale (Elgin & Mitchell 1978; Gregg 1936; Doherty & Etzioni 2003). Complexity is attached to the grand scale of living and working environments in terms of their make-up, products and processes. In terms of fashion and clothing, a human scale derivative pertaining to clothing and fashion could be found in the simplicity and practicality of clothing as a means to fulfil a need. Complexities could be related to the maintenance and taxing efforts involved in trying to be fashionably relevant by adopting fashion trends as they are released.

#### **2.8.4 Ecological awareness**

The aspect of ecological awareness also embraces social awareness, in terms of the depth of enlightenment the VSM adopter is likely to have. Knowledge is widely understood as an integral tool in living an empowered life, because it has the potential to change and motivate human behaviour (Fabrigar et al. 2006). This is deemed to be likely by Okur and Saricam (2019), who determined that an increase in the exposure of consumers to sustainable products has increased consumption of sustainable products. Elgin and Mitchell (1978) state: "A sense of ecological awareness which acknowledges the interconnectedness of people and resources is central to voluntary simplicity." A basic understanding of the problems being faced in society and in the environment has been determined as a motivator to change behaviours and attitudes, driven by a shift in values. These motivators tend to influence clothing consumption, among other consumption practices. When the individual is aware of the ill effects of clothing consumption and poorly disposed garments on the environment, it is possible that this knowledge would encourage responsible clothing consumption and disposal practices.

#### **2.8.5 Personal growth**

Personal growth has been connected to self-determination theory, which suggests that self-actualisation and the seeking of greater fulfilment in life reflect personal growth and encourage even greater growth, to reach one's optimal potential (Cherry 2019). It is seen as an individual's desire to develop one's inner self, often by an alteration of external factors that contribute to their cause (Rich et al. 2017). The VSM would suit someone seeking personal growth because simplifiers have been recognised as "outwardly simple, inwardly rich" (Elgin & Mitchell 1978). Once again, Steve Jobs's

previously discussed clothing formula illustrates that of an individual seeking accomplishment in life, while minimising his focus on aspects that may act as a distraction to his cause, rather than a contributor, in this case fashion.

## **2.9 Consumer intentions**

Before attempting to understand the elements that motivate a consumer to become a slow fashion consumer or a simplifier, it is necessary to understand what the role of consumers is in the fashion industry, by analysing their buying motivation.

The consumer is often regarded as the driver behind the production of goods, commonly dictating the goods to be produced. Much effort is put in by product developers and retailers to identify who their potentially regular customers are or will be (What is consumer behavior in marketing? 2018). Demographic and psychographic variables play an important role in analysing and identifying one's market segment (Keiser et al. 2017).

Keiser et al (2017) explains that demographics comprise aspects such as age, gender, marital status, income and regional data, which look at the census, based on specific countries or regions within a country, whilst psychographics is the study of the social and psychological aspects that affect and inspire a consumer's lifestyle, because these aspects influence buying behaviour. In this respect, psychological aspects such as personality, attitude, motivation behind buying behaviour and class consciousness are considered. Class consciousness refers to consumers' need to enjoy a certain social status, which is an aspect that influences their social circles, place of residence and buying behaviour (Keiser et al. 2017). The marketing team's duty regarding a brand is to determine who their market segment is, by identifying their age, and the price range the segment is willing to pay, based on demographics (Keiser et al. 2017). It also identifies general lifestyle characteristics and purchase behaviour. All these aspects are considered before forecasting the trends or products to be developed, for the target market in question (What is consumer behavior in marketing? 2018). Due to the fact that celebrity influence is an integral factor among fashion consumers, the brand's fashion icons must also be identified, to inform the trend forecasting process within the design development process (Hani et al. 2018).

A consumption situation is determined by factors, apart from the characteristics of the consumer, which affect the way they consume. Behavioural and perceptual factors describe situations whereby consumers tailor their buys to special occasions, or as a result of how they feel at a specific point in time. Because these are influential factors that affect consumer consumption decisions, retailers manipulate the release of certain products, such as during popular holiday periods that are known to encourage shopping. The store layout, ambience, lighting, smell, decor and music are also tailored to stimulate positive emotions from the consumer, while staying in keeping with the brand's themes or image (Solomon & Rabolt 2009). These aspects stimulate the consumer's desire to shop, purely because it serves as a leisurely experience, from which one could attain pleasure.

### **2.10 Motivation for consumption**

Solomon and Rabolt (2009) identified five reasons why consumers shop, namely for the social experience, sharing of common interests, interpersonal attraction, instant status and "the thrill of the hunt".

The social experience speaks to people who find themselves in places such as shopping malls, not necessarily to make purchases, but more for the social experience of interacting with others in the same setting (Solomon & Rabolt 2009). This could also be linked to the aspect of consumption for leisure, discussed earlier, whereby individuals' consumption practices are prompted by the experience of shopping and socialising (Schor 2001).

Sharing of common interests is similar to the first aspect, except here consumers seek a social experience, particularly in stores where they could socialise with others around common interests, such as specialised items like those found in a game store or in high-end couture shops or boutiques (Solomon & Rabolt 2009).

Interpersonal attraction refers to the use of shopping malls as a place of meeting among teenagers and other groups, purely for social gatherings (Solomon & Rabolt 2009). It has also been known to accommodate others who use it just to pass time or who walk around malls as a workout regimen, as it is considered a safe and controlled environment.

Instant status refers to people who enjoy shopping purely due to the experience of being served or waited on by the salesperson (Solomon & Rabolt 2009). As a result, those who work in sales are often encouraged to remember the previous purchases of regular customers, or in the case of clothing stores, the customer's size, as this makes a person feel significant and encourages a customer to visit the store frequently. In this regard, the consumer would purchase clothing purely for the experience of being served, which is in no way linked to a need for the item of clothing, or a desire to purchase for trends.

'The thrill of the hunt' is a reference to the consumer who finds a thrill in finding bargains or haggling to get a better price for items in store (Solomon & Rabolt 2009). It can be considered as somewhat of a sport to consumers who are in this way motivated to shop. It has, however, been documented that discounted clothing has been determined as a stimulus for overconsumption (Rudenko 2018). Some consumers find pleasure in hunting for bargains or finding bargains on sales racks. These purchases are most commonly made spontaneously, and it can be assumed they are often purchased to fulfil a want rather than a need.

These categories reveal traits of consumers who consume to fulfil their social and esteem needs, as discussed in Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (1943). These categories exclude consumption based on physiological needs. To acquire a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour, one must understand not only the motivating factors behind consumption, but also identify the attitudes that drive consumer behaviour.

There are five categories that segment consumers, based on their general attitudes towards consumption. These categories are: the economic consumer, the personalised consumer, the apathetic consumer, the recreational consumer and the ethical consumer (Solomon et al 2016).

The economic consumer refers to the thrifty consumer who looks to get the maximum value for money (Solomon et al 2016). These consumers might not consider the quality or longevity of the clothing item as an integral aspect of the purchase, but would rather centre their decisions on the price of the garment. Personalised consumers are those who tend to shop where they are known by the store employees (Solomon et al 2016).

This aspect could be linked to the motivation for consumption categorised as *instant status*, whereby individuals shop at a specific place where they are served or waited on and are often loyal to that store. The apathetic consumer is a person who shops out of necessity but does not enjoy the act of shopping (Solomon et al 2016). The apathetic consumer could possibly fulfil some of the aspects of the VSM, as it can be derived that clothing consumption practices are centred on practicality and functionality rather than trend and leisure. The recreational consumer considers shopping as a recreational activity, from which to get great pleasure in leisurely practising it (Solomon et al 2016). This consumer would be considered the obvious opposite of the apathetic consumer. The ethical consumer is likely to shop locally and to oppose retail giants (Solomon et al 2016). This is the consumer who is most likely to shop at slow fashion retailers and is therefore the type of consumer that this study intends to understand, in order to fulfil its objectives.

### **2.11 The slow fashion consumer**

The ethical consumer, who makes up one of Solomon and Rabolt's (2009) five categories of consumers, based on their attitudes, can be considered a conscious consumer, due to the fact that their consumption behaviour is motivated by social and environmental awareness. These consumers show characteristics that are in line with some of the values of simplifiers in that they choose to support local manufacturers rather than the large retailers, whose merchandise is based on mass production. A consumer of locally made clothing is in fact regarded as a slow fashion consumer, because the slow movement encompasses locally produced and manufactured goods on a small (human) scale production model (Fletcher 2010). It is imperative to gain an understanding of slow fashion consumers with regard to their attitudes and perspectives, as this influence their purchase intentions and consumption behaviour. Such information could contribute to the goal of promoting a sustainable culture and slow consumption within the South African fashion industry.

Kerner (2018) identified common characteristics of female slow fashion consumers to add to what she considers to be an under-researched dimension in slow fashion research. The slow fashion consumer's persona is said to be a creative individual with a desire to explore. The person is an individual that finds pleasure in nature and life experiences rather than material possessions (Kerner 2018). This facet fulfils one of

the core values of the VSM, namely material simplicity. Inward richness and quality living have been described as achievable through external simplicities as a result of minimal possessions. The slow fashion consumer often indulges in reading as a way to gain knowledge on new topics of interest (Kerner 2018). Gregg (1936) encourages the growth of knowledge by stating:

*We must try, of course, to understand intellectually all the implications of the new desires, but further than that, make the imagination dwell upon them in spare moments, and just before going to sleep and just after awakening. Read books or articles dealing with them.*

The value of increased knowledge is determined to be strongly acknowledged and respected in understanding the complexities of our existence to thereby slow it down by simplifying it.

The themes that determine the influencers behind the slow fashion consumers' purchases are consciousness, quality over quantity, shoppers of small boutiques, trust and aesthetics (Kerner 2018) and are discussed in more detail in the section to follow.

### **2.11.1 Consciousness**

Consciousness refers to consumers' awareness of environmental threats (Kerner 2018). Such awareness influences them to make conscious decisions in their everyday lives, to contribute towards environmental wellness instead. These consumers tend to prefer natural, organic, ethically sound products and choose to avoid brands or retailers that show any attributes of unethical business practices or that might use irresponsible methods to produce or dispose of products (Solomon & Rabolt 2009). It has been discussed that the spreading of knowledge concerning the negative impact of environmental threats ensuing from fast fashion and consumption to other consumers, might prove sufficient to increase slow fashion consumption (Kerner 2018).

### **2.11.2 Quality over quantity**

The slow fashion consumer favours quality clothing over quantity (Kerner 2018; Solomon & Rabolt 2009). They have stated that they are willing to pay extra for an item of clothing that is of a better quality as it will ensure that the product lasts longer and, as a result, reduce their level of consumption. These consumers are not trend

followers, but shop only when they have a need for a new item. Longevity, as a consequence of the high quality of slow fashion, is a fundamental aspect of slow fashion (Jung & Jin 2016).

### **2.11.3 Shoppers of small boutiques**

Slow fashion consumers prefer shopping at smaller boutiques rather than large shopping malls (Kerner 2018). They prefer a shopping experience in an environment considered to be more of a human scale, as it contributes to the leisurely act of shopping. These consumers do not want to contribute to the grand scale organisations, hosted in malls that produce and promote mass production and consumption. Human scale is regarded as one of the core values of the VSM, as a means for individuals to have their living and working environments on a comprehensible scale (Elgin & Mitchell 1978; Doherty & Etzioni 2003).

### **2.11.4 Trust**

The aspect of trust is vital for slow fashion consumers (Kerner 2018). They will only purchase from a store or brand that has gained their trust. These consumers are avid researchers who value knowledge of the product, the material composition it is made from and the production journey it has taken from beginning to end of the production process. They tend to trust stores and brands that are transparent and that share this information with their consumers, either on their websites, through marketing and shop displays or merely by their staff who have ample in-depth knowledge of the product and its make-up (Miller 2017). Such transparency is the means by which these consumers gain trust in brands and stores, often producing brand loyalty. Counterfeit products, or products that are mislabelled, are disregarded by slow fashion consumers and the brand is thereby considered to be disreputable (Solomon & Rabolt 2009).

### **2.11.5. Aesthetics**

Aesthetics are important to slow fashion consumers because this is the first aspect they seek when looking to purchase clothing (Kerner 2018). These consumers search for clothing that fits into their style category and is reflective of their identity. The clothing generally has a muted palette and can fit in with the clothing that they already own. The item must have the potential to be a trans-seasonal garment, minimising the wearer's need to shop seasonally or for trends. Sachs (2019) determined that aesthetics is an integral feature of the slow fashion movement.

## **2.12 Millennials as fashion consumers**

The consumer cohort on which this project focused was millennials. Also known as Generation Y, millennials are identified as persons born between 1981 and 1996 and account for 66% of the South African population (Loria & Lee 2018; The 'ennial tribes 2018). They were expected to have the greatest buying power in 2018, since \$200 billion was spent by millennials in 2017 in the US alone (Shroeder 2017). Of the 29 million consumers aged 15–35 years, two-thirds live in urban areas and are responsible for 55% of the spending power in South Africa (The Media Online 2017). That percentage equates to over R100 billion per annum. Along with their spending power, millennials have also been found to be keen fashion consumers (Kibbe 2014). They are also recognised as the generation who expects the brands and stores that they frequent, to give back to society (Keiser et al. 2017). It can be deduced that the millennials are therefore an influential consumer group and relevant information could more than likely be acquired from this group to meet the objectives of this study.

## **2.13 Conclusion**

This chapter provided information regarding the relevant literature concerning the current project, namely that the VSM could prove to be an answer to the problem of overconsumption of clothing, and particularly relating to fashion consumption, if participants were to shop for clothing from a position of accountability. This means that the 'simplifier' is likely to purchase clothing out of necessity and at a pace that is not dictated by fashion trends, and would rather purchase timeless garments made in South Africa. The VSM-based consumer is also likely to purchase clothing with a record of accountability and a high standard of quality that intends for the garment to be worn over a long period of time.

It can be assumed that an answer to the problem of overconsumption could be found in the voluntary simplicity movement. The adoption of this movement by the millennial consumer may allow for the wellbeing of the individual, while simultaneously trying to mediate overconsumption by such a large consumer segment and by implication may address the environmental concerns that we are faced with. It could also influence one of the country's infamous dynamics: the unequally distributed wealth and the extremes regarding poverty versus wealth, found in some parts of the population. As Gregg (1936) mentions, a life of simplicity for those who can afford to live in excess could

bring balance to a society, by allowing for more resources made available to those who are unfortunate enough to be living in involuntary simplicity.

Although there are various levels of simplifiers, the reduction in consumption practices, regardless of the amount associated with it, should be regarded as a starting point for a voluntarily simplified lifestyle. This is especially necessary in a market such as fashion, which contributes substantially to environmental degradation throughout the entire product life cycle, from conception of the idea to long after the product has been discarded.

The following chapter will discuss the methodology used to address the aim and the objectives stated for the current research project.

## CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*“It is ... through the world of the imagination which takes us beyond the restrictions of provable fact, that we touch the hem of truth.”*

— *Madeline L'Engle* (Goodreads n.d.[d]).

### 3.1 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to explain the research design and methodology followed to obtain data necessary to contribute towards fulfilling the objectives of the study. The aim of this project was to investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions, attitudes and awareness regarding slow fashion consumption. The three specific objectives are:

- To investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions of slow fashion consumption.
- To investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' attitudes towards slow fashion consumption.
- To determine millennial slow fashion consumers' perspectives on the role of slow fashion towards sustainability in the local clothing industry.

The research design, methodology, data gathering and data analysis methods, as well as aspects pertaining to the quality of the data, such as credibility and trustworthiness, together with the ethical considerations of the project are discussed in this chapter. The following section gives detail about the research paradigm and research design selected to address the objectives of the study.

### 3.2 Research paradigm and design

#### 3.2.1 Research paradigm

This study followed an interpretive or constructivist paradigm because the participants' subjective understanding, interpretations and construction of meaning are highly valued and significant (Leavy 2017). The significance is found in the investigation of South African millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions, attitudes and awareness regarding slow fashion consumption. A qualitative approach in research is

used when the researcher intends to gain deeper and more profound data, which cannot be quantified as it analyses subjective information from an individual or group's lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln 2008:14; Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014:173; Leavy 2017). The intention of the study was to retrieve in-depth knowledge regarding the topic, based on the experiences of individuals. This study therefore used a qualitative approach, as it intended to analyse the millennial slow fashion consumer's perception and attitude in relation to slow fashion in terms of sustainable consumption, a topic in which there is a dearth of in-depth research.

### **3.2.2 Research design**

In this qualitative study, the constructs of an exploratory research design were applied. An exploratory research design intends to identify the significant aspects that are to be found within the boundaries of the environment in which the matters of interest are likely to be found (Van Wyk 2012). This specific research design is commonly used when there is uncertainty around the subject, or if there is little research to be found on the matter. Dudovskiy (2016) states that exploratory research does not propose to find conclusive answers to the subject of research, but intends to explore the subject matter with varying levels of complexity. Ultimately, the aim is to use the information gained from the group being studied to find regularities which can contribute to social theory. Slow fashion is a niche product, therefore slow fashion consumers are not the regular mainstream fashion consumers (Štefko & Steffek 2018). An exploratory research design is therefore suitable to study the matter of slow fashion in relation to sustainable consumption of millennial slow fashion consumers in South Africa. This study aimed to retrieve in-depth information through the perspectives and opinions of several participants who could be considered millennial, slow fashion consumers.

## **3.3 Data collection**

### **3.3.1 Units of analysis**

The study population was millennial consumers of slow fashion, but also included socially and environmentally conscious consumers.

### **3.3.2 Sampling**

Two sampling methods were adopted in this study, namely: purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is the method used whereby the researcher

has identified a specific person or group of people with knowledge relevant to the study, from whom data will be obtained (Corbin & Strauss 2008:153; Creswell 2013). Snowball sampling occurs when participants suggest other possible participants for the study, often employed when the sample type is difficult to find (Glen 2014).

The criteria for selection was the following:

- Male and female participants who were born between 1981 and 1996 (millennial consumers).
- Participants had to form part of the slow fashion consumption movement, as opposed to the alternative of fast fashion consumption. These consumers need not purchase solely from slow fashion suppliers to be considered, but could also be socially and environmentally conscious clothing consumers who purchase slow fashion clothing.
- The participants were selected, based on their knowledge of and participation in the area of research. The area of research in this instance was slow fashion and the participants were selected, based on their familiarity with and consumption of slow fashion.

As a way to source applicable participants from across the country for this study, a proposal requesting relevant participants was sent out on social media platforms, namely Facebook and Twitter. This proposal was also posted in a particular Facebook group which was created for the promotion and advancement of recycling, upcycling and re-purposing of clothing, amongst other things, by individuals. This request specified the criteria by which the targeted participants were to be identified, namely that most of their clothing must be purchased from a slow fashion retailer. There were no responses to this request; however, there were questions from certain individuals asking for an explanation as to the allowed frequency of their slow fashion consumption, according to the criteria. After explaining that most of their clothing purchases were to be sourced from slow fashion retailers, all said individuals declined to participate as they stated that they did not meet the requirements because they purchased from a variety of retailers, including but not limited to slow fashion retailers.

Due to receiving no response to the call to participate in the study, the spectrum of the slow fashion consumer was broadened to also accommodate socially and environmentally conscious clothing consumers who purchased slow fashion. The

criteria to participate in the research were then broadened to accommodate consumers who did not only consume slow fashion, but also ethically sound and environmentally friendly clothing, as well as consumers whose clothing consumption practices were influenced by the ideals of slow consumption, making them socially and environmentally conscious consumers. A second call was put onto social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp as a status, explaining the new criteria for participants, to which approximately six individuals responded. Other participants were found through the process of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is the method by which participants refer the researcher to other potential participants (Naderifar et al. 2017). This method is considered most effective when participants who meet the criteria of the research are not easily found.

A sample size of ten participants was considered adequate, as it was found to be satisfactory in other research projects carried out in this niche field (Bly et al. 2015; Harris et al. 2016; Tripathy & Tripathy 2017), provided that data saturation was reached at this point. However, after ten participants were interviewed it was determined that, in order to confirm that data saturation had indeed been met, more participants needed to be interviewed. Two additional participants were identified through snowball sampling as another participant referred them. One of those two participants did not meet the criteria in terms of age. The interview did take place to enable the researcher to gain a greater body of knowledge in relation to the slow fashion consumer. Information from this interview was, however, excluded because this participant did not meet the criteria of a millennial consumer, which is an integral contributor to the aim and objectives of the study. No further participants were required as it was determined, with certainty, that data saturation was reached after the eleventh interview. Of the eleven participants, seven participants were fashion designers, two participants were sustainable and slow trend fashion designers and two participants were academically involved in local fashion design institutions. This is not a rare occurrence as it has been noted in research that individuals who studied or worked in the apparel industry are more likely to be familiar with the slow fashion movement (Jung & Jin 2014). The criteria pertaining to the participants were kept in mind throughout the sampling process and therefore the main interview questions were based on the premise that these participants were slow fashion consumers and not necessarily fashion designers. The participants were fully aware that the request

for participants was for slow fashion consumers and they responded as consumers, not designers.

### **3.4 Methodology**

#### **3.4.1 Research instrument**

Qualitative interviews have been explained as a method of data collection which aims to view the subject or matter through the lens of the participant (Creswell et al. 2016:93; Leavy 2017). This form of data collection assisted in fulfilling the objectives of the study, which intended to gain an understanding of slow fashion consumers' perceptions, attitudes and ultimately their behaviour in relation to sustainable consumption. The method used to collect the data required was through face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to the participating millennial slow fashion consumers. The interview questions were developed using the aim and objectives as a framework (refer to Appendix D). Each question in the interview schedule was constructed with the intention of gaining information to fulfil the objective from which it was derived, as depicted in Table 3.1 below.

A semi-structured interview schedule allows the interviewer space to interpret the responses from and behaviour of the participants with minimal restriction (Denzin & Lincoln 2008:129; Leavy 2017). It has been noted that restrictions such as pre-categorisation of the participants could potentially create limitations within the field of study. In so choosing, participants were able to comment on aspects further than the constructs that the questions presented. These comments proved to be beneficial and informative to the study.

Initially fourteen open-ended questions were compiled, which related to the aim and objectives of the study, with the intention of meeting these objectives by retrieving information from relevant consumers. However, the questions were adapted to accommodate a wider group of possible participants, who included not just slow fashion consumers, but also socially and ethically responsible clothing consumers. The reason for this was that there was no response to the call for consumers who solely purchased slow fashion items from slow fashion producers. The questions were therefore adapted to the widened spectrum, which accommodated consumers who not only consumed slow fashion items, but also consumed clothing in a socially and

environmentally responsible manner. Twelve questions were modified to formulate the adapted list of open-ended questions (refer to Appendix D).

### 3.4.2 Operationalisation

Table 3.1 indicates the operationalisation of the semi-structured interview questions.

**Table 3.1: Operationalisation of semi-structured interview questions**

\*S1 = Section 1: Demographics analysis

\*S2 = Section 2: Questionnaire for millennial slow fashion consumers

Section and question	Question	Objective
S1Q1	Demographics analysis.	Question intended to recognise sample make-up and to verify sampling standards, i.e. personal information pertaining to aspects of sample criteria.
S2Q1	Consumer behaviour related to the frequency of their clothing consumption.	Question intended to recognise sample make-up and to verify sampling standards, i.e. actual consumption behaviour.
S2Q2	Retailer or supplier from which clothing is predominantly consumed.	Question intended to recognise sample make-up and to verify sampling standards, i.e. awareness regarding their retailer of choice.
S2Q3	Familiarity with the term <i>slow fashion</i> .	Objective 1 – Investigate millennial slow fashion consumers’ perceptions of slow fashion consumption.
S2Q4	Familiarity with the classification of their retailer or supplier of clothing.	Question intended to recognise sample make-up and to verify sampling standards, i.e. awareness regarding their retailer of choice, as well as to have them reflect on their loyalty to a brand or store.
S2Q5	Reasoning behind classification of their retailer or supplier of choice.	Objective 1 – Investigate millennial slow fashion consumers’ perceptions of slow fashion consumption.
S2Q6	Reasons for purchasing clothing.	Objective 2 – Investigate millennial slow fashion consumers’ attitudes towards slow fashion consumption.
S2Q7	Self-awareness regarding their classification into types of consumers.	Objective 2 – Investigate millennial slow fashion consumers’ attitudes towards slow fashion consumption.

S2Q8	Awareness of the fundamentals of slow fashion.	Objective 1 – Investigate millennial slow fashion consumers’ perceptions of slow fashion consumption.
S2Q9	Perspective regarding the relevance of slow fashion to the South African fashion industry.	Objective 1 – Investigate millennial slow fashion consumers’ perceptions of slow fashion consumption.
S2Q10	Perspective regarding their relevance as a consumer to the South African clothing industry and attitude towards their ability as a consumer to make an impact on the South African clothing industry.	Objective 3 – To determine millennial slow fashion consumers’ perspectives on the role of slow fashion towards sustainability in the local clothing industry.
S2Q11	Opinion regarding what measures to take to promote slow fashion and responsible clothing consumption in South Africa.	Objective 3 – To determine millennial slow fashion consumers’ perspectives on the role of slow fashion towards sustainability in the local clothing industry.
S2Q12	Perspective on the role of the fashion designer in the South African fashion industry, in relation to factors such as Chinese importation.	Objective 3 – To determine millennial slow fashion consumers’ perspectives on the role of slow fashion towards sustainability in the local clothing industry.

### 3.4.3 Data collection

Because participants happened to be from various parts of Johannesburg, even though a request for participants was sent out nationwide, interviews were held at locations that proved convenient for the participant in terms of travelling. The researcher also suggested that the participants choose the location of the interview as it was assumed that the participants would select a location at which they felt comfortable to meet. The participants chose locations such as familiar coffee shops or restaurants in and around their places of work or residence. The location also had to be suitable to the requirements of an interview. The ideal conditions for interviews were determined to be a relaxed environment such as a coffee shop with minimal noise, allowing for the recording of the interview to be clear and without interference. The interviews were recorded on a mobile phone, using a voice recording application. The recorded data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Said recordings have been stored on various devices, namely two personal laptops and a mobile

phone, to ensure safety in the likelihood that a device becomes inaccessible as a result of unforeseen circumstances.

Participants who responded to the call and consented verbally to participate were given a participant information sheet and consent letter (refer to Appendix B). The participant information sheet detailed the relevant information pertaining to the study, the interview and the rights of the participant. The consent letter was signed by the researcher and then by the participant, who gave consent to participate in the interview and to be recorded digitally. Prior to each interview, while at the location of choice for the interview, a questionnaire was given to the participants in person (Appendix C), which consisted of questions pertaining to their demographic profile. A questionnaire is described as an instrument to gather or extract relevant information regarding a specific topic that could retrieve valuable information related to a specific group of people, if it is structured and administered correctly (Tripathy & Tripathy 2017). The demographic questions were intended to contribute further to the data by contextualising not only the demographic information of the participants, but also identifying and contextualising their consumption and spending behaviour, additional to the information derived from the interviews, which followed the questionnaire.

A pilot interview was carried out to test the quality of the questions, pertaining to their ability to yield information that met the objectives of the study. The information of the pilot interviews were not added to the data of the project, but merely used to test the validity of the research instrument, and to see whether the questions in the interviews addressed the objectives of the research project. As guided by the pilot interview, slight changes were made to some of the questions as the responses that emerged from the pilot interview helped to point out the repetitive nature of some of the questions. The repetitive questions were eliminated, and it was ensured that the remainder of the questions addressed the objectives of the study.

The interview schedule comprised a brief introduction letter, in which the justification behind the interview, the questions and estimated time frame of the interview were mentioned to the participant. This was later adapted as a result of the outcome of the pilot interview. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) regard piloting the questions for an interview as crucial, because it is a means by which unclear or repetitive questions can be eliminated. Pickard (2017) encourages the use of pilot interviews as one of the

most certain ways to pick out the weaknesses in one's questions. The "assembly and flow" of the questions, directly affecting the flow of the conversation, was tested and altered accordingly through pilot testing.

The credibility of the information retrieved from the pilot interview in this study appeared to be compromised, since the participant seemed to have done research on the aspect of slow fashion, prior to the interview. This was indeed confirmed by the researcher. In doing so, the research done by the participant prior to the interview seemed to have blurred the lines between what would have been the participant's true response, unthwarted by new information gathered particularly for the purpose of the interview. The interview schedule was thereafter adapted, excluding the list of questions prior to the interview. This was followed by the demographic questionnaire, which the participants were requested to complete in person, prior to the interview. The semi-structured interview followed, which was partly directed by the open-ended questions, based on content analysis of similar studies done internationally, and further guided by the aim and objectives of this study, leading to the conclusion of the interview.

Pickard (2017) states that, when data gathered bring forth repetitive information with no new ideas, data saturation is reached and further gathering of data becomes redundant. The collection of data was concluded after interviewing the eleven participants, with the exclusion of the twelfth interview, which did not meet the sampling criteria, and as it was established that data saturation was indeed achieved after the eleventh interview.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

The purpose and outcome of data analysis is to reveal to others through fresh insights what was observed and discovered about the human condition (Saldaña 2011). Saldaña (2011) states that content analysis is identified as one of the most suitable data analysis methods for transcription of interviews with open-ended questions and it was therefore used to analyse the interview transcriptions. It is a systematic way of reorganising and reflecting on the qualitative data (Saldaña 2011; Pickard 2017).

Open and axial coding are methods often used to categorise and analyse data in a qualitative research study and were the methods of choice in this study (Theron 2015;

Cassell et al. 2018). Open coding is the first level of analysis, whereby the data is dissected line-by-line, permitting the emergence of patterns and themes (Theron 2015; Cassell et al. 2018). The second level is axial coding, which aims to identify prominent categories and subcategories in the data (Theron 2015; Cassell et al. 2018). Interpretation of the patterns and themes is then linked to the framework of the study and the larger research literature (Cassell et al. 2018).

In the same way, to achieve familiarity with the data, the researcher read through the transcribed interviews numerous times, while having the main concepts of the theoretical framework in mind. Through the process of open coding, themes emerged from the data. These themes were colour coded to differentiate one from the other. Following this process, the second level of coding, namely axial coding, was carried out by reading through each colour-coded theme, whereby categories emerged, which were relevant to the framework of this study. The colour-coded categories served as the 'codebook' and is a familiar characteristic of the deductive coding process (Yi 2018).

The coding processes, together with the rest of the data analysis processes were done electronically. Thereafter, a table, illustrating a colour assigned to each category was copied and pasted onto the first page of each transcribed interview. The data of each interview were then colour coded according to the relevant category. There was information in the data that proved irrelevant to the framework of the study and the overall research question, and was therefore not included in the findings; however, this made up a very small percentage of the data. There were also data found to be relevant to more than one category. The colour coding was then applied in parts to each sentence. Thereafter, a table was created for each interview, with one category pasted into each row. Verbatim text from the interview transcript was then copied and pasted into the row of the relevant category. Following this process, a final table was created, tabulating verbatim responses from all the interviews, per category. To analyse the data through the process of deductive coding, each colour-coded category was separating the data into its relevant subcategories. This was also achieved by copying and pasting the information from the previous tables, per interview transcribed, into the final table that segmented all the data in one document. Finally, content analysis was done on the data in the subcategories, which formulated the

findings of this study. The findings are presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of the study.

### **3.6 Trustworthiness of data**

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, it is important to adhere to certain standards, as set out for qualitative research. The trustworthiness of a study's data is recognised by the actions or applications undertaken when carrying out research (Statistics Solutions 2018b; Nowell et al. 2017). Trustworthiness concerns the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the data involved and is crucial to any research project. These aspects have been classified as the categories by which the reader could successfully assess and determine the integrity of the data in qualitative research (Pickard 2017; Lincoln & Guba 1985). Each aspect is discussed in more detail in the section to follow.

#### **3.6.1 Credibility**

Credibility implies truthfulness and relates to the methodology, in other words: the amount of time spent in the field, the number of participants interviewed, the analytic methods used, and the thinking process applied to reach conclusions (Saldaña 2011; Reid et al. 2016). Member checks are regarded as a sound method of ensuring credibility and were used in this study (Creswell et al. 2016; Lincoln & Guba 1985), by sending a copy of the transcribed interview to all participants, requesting their confirmation of accuracy of the transcription. Participants were asked to correct errors if any were found. To further ensure credibility, data collection was continued until data saturation was confirmed.

#### **3.6.2 Transferability**

Transferability is a reference to the possibility that the results of the study could be replicated in a different context, using different participants but following the same methods and procedures followed in this study (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Coghlan & Brydon-Miller 2014). Transferability can be achieved through the means of thick description. Thick description refers to the detailed accounts and rich description of the setting and surrounding factors that occurred during the data collection phase and to the actual data being analysed and discussed (Leeds-Hurwitz 2019). To achieve transferability using thick description, a detailed and robust account is given of the

surrounding circumstances during the data collection processes. The interviews were also in-depth in nature to allow for a thorough understanding of the millennial participants' perceptions and attitudes towards slow fashion, further contributing to thick description.

### **3.6.3 Dependability**

In order to enhance dependability in the study, an inquiry audit was done by an external researcher, to verify the accuracy of the findings of the study. Coding the data multiple times and by multiple coders contributed to reduced researcher bias and enhanced dependability (Creswell 2013). The supervisors of the research project assisted in this process, implying that three independent parties confirmed the results that emerged from the interviews and thereby ensuring dependability of the findings.

### **3.6.4 Confirmability**

The last aspect that needs to be adhered to regarding trustworthiness in qualitative research, is that of confirmability. The data collected during a study should speak to the findings and conclusion in a manner that is unquestionably accurate and logical. Confirmability is achieved by ensuring a logical flow from data collection, through to interpretation and finally to the conclusions (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014). Confirmability also refers to the researcher's objective account and interpretation of the data (Kara 2015). Confirmability can be achieved by using an audit trail. An audit trail is the process by which the researcher documents steps, thoughts, perceptions and reasoning behind the decisions made in the research process (Nowell et al. 2017). To ascertain that the findings of the study were accurately interpreted, according to the participants' responses, an audit trail was developed to establish confirmability (Statistics Solutions 2018a). Accompanying information, such as the inclusion of direct quotations (verbatim responses) from participants in the study, reflects the authenticity and confirmability of the interpretation of said data, in an objective manner (Statistics Solutions 2018a). The confirmability of this study has therefore been achieved through the development of an audit trail, inclusive of documented notes and descriptions behind the chosen processes and reasonings throughout the development of the study. The direct quotations of participants in this study were incorporated in table format into the different sections of the two findings chapters of this dissertation, to

allow the reader to contextualise the findings through the data from which it was derived, in an unbiased manner. This further reinforces the confirmability of the study.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

After trustworthiness has been ensured in terms of the data for the study, it is imperative to adhere to the relevant ethical considerations of a research project that involves human participants in particular (Pickard 2017). The proposal for the project was approved by the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences' ethics committee. After ethical approval was granted, a call was sent out on social media platforms, inviting participants to participate in the study, should they meet the criteria as stipulated. An invitation letter was thereafter given to all potential participants via email, inviting them to take part in the study. Both Pickard (2017) and Lazar et al (2017) discuss the importance of giving participants as much information as possible about the processes involved before, during and after the interview and in relation to the study as a means to make them feel more informed and therefore comfortable with the process. Therefore, individuals who responded to the invitation were given an information sheet prior to each interview, briefly informing them of the aim of the study and detail of the topic to be discussed during the interview. It is advised that consent letters requesting formal approval or consent for participation are signed by both the researcher and participant, as these forms will act as a point of reference confirming a mutual understanding between all parties involved (Pickard 2017, Lazar et al 2017). Participants were therefore also given a consent letter requesting written consent for their participation in the interview. The consent letter explained the way in which the interviews were conducted and recorded, as well as how the information will be used. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of the data, as well as their personal information and that any personal identifying information will not be disclosed in any way, resulting in the anonymity of the data being discussed. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the project at any given point in time, should they wish, without reason and/or penalty.

The ethical aspects regarding a research project that involves human participants were therefore kept in mind throughout the entire research project, from conceptualisation, through to implementation and completion of the project.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter established the research design and methodology of the study. The methods used to sample the potential participants and the subsequent methods to gather and analyse the data were also discussed. This chapter concluded with the credibility, trustworthiness and ethical considerations behind the abovementioned elements. The intention is to demonstrate that appropriate methods were undertaken to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis approaches and systems. This chapter is followed by two chapters dealing with the findings, namely Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, in which the interpretation of the data is discussed.

## CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS (Part 1)

*“For me, I am driven by two main philosophies: know more today about the world than I knew yesterday and lessen the suffering of others. You'd be surprised how far that gets you.” – Neil deGrasse Tyson (Goodreads n.d.[b]).*

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with the presentation of the demographic profile of the participants. The discussion then continues with the findings derived from the qualitative data gathered through interviews. The objectives and conceptual framework of this study are distinctively focused at fulfilling the aim of the study, which is to investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions, attitudes and awareness regarding slow fashion consumption. Findings related to Objectives 1 and 2 in particular are discussed in this chapter. The voluntary simplicity movement (VSM), which promotes lower consumption, forms the conceptual framework of this study. The interview transcripts were organised into themes that align with the objectives of the study. The data were coded into categories identified from the conceptual framework and additional, meaningful categories and subcategories related to each theme emerged. The themes, categories and subcategories related to all three objectives of the project are presented in this chapter and the chapter that follows.

The discussion presents direct quotes (verbatim) from the transcribed interviews, pertaining to the identified categories and subcategories. At the end of the discussion of each category, a table presents the list of verbatim responses relevant to the category and its subcategories. The heading of each section specifies the theme of that particular segment.

The following table (Table 4.1) presents the results from the demographic questionnaires filled in by each participant.

**Table 4.1: The demographic profiles of the participants**

Participant	Age	Highest qualification	Employment	Average expenditure on clothing per annum
1	22-26	University qualification in Fashion Design	Permanent	Approximately R12000
2	27-31	University qualification in Fashion Design	Self employed	Under R4000
3	27-31	University qualification in Fashion Design	Self employed	Under R4000
4	32-36	University qualification in Fashion Design	Contract lecturer	Approximately R1000
5	32-36	University qualification in Fashion Design	Contract lecturer and self-employed	Approximately R6000
6	32-36	University qualification in Fashion Design	Contract lecturer	Approximately R1500
7	32-36	University qualification in Fashion Design	Permanent	R150 in 6 months Approximately R300
8	22-26	University student of Fashion Design	Self-employed	Approximately R2000
9		University qualification in Fashion Design	Self-employed	R1 000 per annum

	27-31			
10	27-31	University qualification in Fashion Design	Self-employed	R300-R400 in 2 months Approximately R2400
11	27-31	University qualification in Fashion Design	Self employed	Approximately R24000

As shown in Table 4.1, all of the participants were female, between the ages of 22–36 years old. All of them had completed or were in the process of completing tertiary education in fashion design. Ten of the participants resided in different parts of Johannesburg, while one participant resided in Pretoria. Seven participants were self-employed, one of which was also contractually employed as a fashion design lecturer. These self-employed participants were employed as fashion designers. Two participants were contractually employed as fashion design lecturers at different institutions in Johannesburg and Pretoria, excluding the participant previously mentioned as both self-employed and contractually employed. Two participants were permanently employed in a retail clothing store. Their average expenditure on clothing varied from R300 per year to R24000 per year. The fact that all of the participants had an education in fashion design was not part of the criteria; however, as discussed by Jung and Jin (2014), it is a common occurrence that those who are familiar with the slow fashion movement are mainly individuals who have been or are connected to the clothing industry through their studies or place of employment. It is however important to note that the fact that most of the participants are fashion designers, could possibly affect their annual expenditure on clothing since a designer is able to make their own clothing and is therefore less likely to purchase at the same rate as a slow fashion consumer who cannot make their own clothing. Furthermore, Štefko and Steffek (2018) determined that the niche consumer market in support of slow fashion is known to be “well-schooled women” who are in favour of fair, local trade, as well as ethically and environmentally responsible business practices. Likewise, all the slow fashion

consumer participants in the study may have been influenced in and through their fields of study or work in the fashion industry, which was likely to have made them knowledgeable on the topic of slow fashion.

The first objective was to investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions of slow fashion. Perception refers to an individual's understanding or interpretation of a thing or person (Cherry 2020a). The millennial slow fashion consumer's perception was therefore investigated with the intention to understand their notions of fashion, including their level of awareness of the negative impact the fast fashion industry has caused, from which the slow fashion movement was born.

## **4.2 Consumer perceptions of fashion**

Fashion refers to the broader concept that comprises fast and slow fashion. In an attempt to explain slow fashion and its constructs, it proved relevant to discuss the constructs of fast fashion in comparison, in order to achieve an ease of understanding. This theme relates to Objective 1; the following categories arose from the data:

- Consumer perceptions of fast fashion
- Consumer perceptions of slow fashion
- Consumers' awareness of ecological issues pertaining to overconsumption of fashion.

### **4.2.1 Consumer perceptions of fast fashion**

To fully understand the concept of and need for slow fashion, knowledge about the constructs of fast fashion is necessary. Fast fashion has been described as “the accelerated cycle of fashion production and consumption that puts pressure on fashion brands to manufacture garments as quickly and cheaply as possible” (Khan 2016:7). The data revealed that participants did understand the concept of slow fashion, although they did not refer to it as slow fashion. Since they are all involved in the fashion industry, it is likely that they have some knowledge on the topic of slow fashion as mentioned previously. In many circumstances the participants made sense of slow fashion by discussing it as an antonym of fast fashion. Four subcategories emerged to describe consumer perceptions of fast fashion, namely (1) pollution, (2)

overproduction, (3) overconsumption, (4) a money-driven industry and (5) poor quality. These subcategories will be discussed further.

**Table 4.2: Verbatim quotations related to consumer perceptions of fast fashion**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Pollution	P1	"I hate fast fashion. I hate it because the garment industry's one of the top polluters in the world."
	P6	"... producing in an ethical way and you are not producing a lot of waste and like causing the least amount of harm."
Overproduction	P1	"there's no sustainable way of making so much clothing ... in terms of production of it ..."
	P2	"... that's a new collection every 2 weeks, that's [Retailer D] and [Retailer E] and all those things and they overproduce crazy, crazy amounts ..."
	P5	"The first thing I think about is [Retailer C] and their report on having so much stock that didn't sell ... [Retailer C] with their stock that's not selling they cater for those people who are into fast fashion."
Overconsumption	P9	"I think it's like a by-product of mass, mass production."
	P2	"the more you buy the more the retailers gonna produce."
	P4	"Fast fashion is almost like the mindless consumption and just churning, churning, churning, it's almost like as the clothes come out of the factory. I wear it and I toss it."
Money-driven industry	P2	"the [fast fashion] retailer's always gonna go for money."
	P7	"... a money-making scheme for them ... [retailers] need money so they will always put in fast fashion"

	P9	buying to keep customers coming in and keep buying to keep money coming in.” “Something about the mentality of these big retailers ... we need to sell because we need to make this money, we’re chasing.”
Poor quality	P6  P10	“you going to wash [fast fashion items] once and it's going to fall apart.” “[Slow fashion is] the opposite of fast fashion, meaning its good quality.”

Pollution produced by the clothing industry, the first subcategory, was revealed as a key issue connected to fast fashion. As indicated in Table 4.2, Participant 1 strongly stated, *“I hate fast fashion. I hate it because the garment industry’s one of the top polluters in the world.”* The fashion industry is in fact unanimously considered to be one of the greatest environmental polluters, second only to the oil industry (Anastasia 2017:7). Participant 6 also by implication mentioned the harmful effects of fast fashion by expressing the positive aspects of slow fashion, stating that it is *“... producing in an ethical way and you are not producing a lot of waste and like causing the least amount of harm”*. Anastasia (2017) confirms that unethical and irresponsible practices during and after the manufacturing processes of clothing leave a negative effect on the environment in terms of pollution.

The overproduction of clothing, which results in large amounts of clothing not being sold, was highlighted as a subcategory (refer to Table 4.2) under the category of consumer perceptions of fast fashion, as it was mentioned a few times by different participants. Participant 1 claimed, *“There’s no sustainable way of making so much clothing ... in terms of production of it.”* Participant 2 discussed overproduction by stating *“... that’s a new collection every two weeks, that’s [Retailer D] and [Retailer E] and all those things and they overproduce crazy, crazy amounts ...”* Likewise, Participant 5 mentioned: *“The first thing I think about is [Retailer C] and their report on having so much stock that didn't sell ... [Retailer C] with their stock that's not selling they cater for those people who are into fast fashion.”* This implies that retailers are often overstocked, resulting in flash sales and discounted clothing as a way to get rid

of those items, which ultimately promotes overconsumption (Rudenko 2018). Participant 9 explained, “*I think it's like a by-product of mass, mass production,*” referring to the increasing number and size of landfills that often serve as a dumping ground for discarded clothing, which is a by-product of overproduction.

The next subcategory, overconsumption, has been linked to overproduction, as it can be understood that consumers are consuming as fast as the clothing is being produced. Participant 2 stated in relation to the link between overproduction and overconsumption: “*The more you buy the more the retailers gonna produce.*” As indicated in Table 4.2, Participant 4 concisely explained how fast fashion is linked to overconsumption by stating: “*Fast fashion is almost like the mindless consumption and just churning, churning, churning, it's almost like as the clothes come out of the factory I wear it and I toss it.*” Consumption of fast fashion has been linked to the negligent disposal of clothing items, in anticipation of the next item to be purchased (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). Fast fashion is said to encourage overconsumption as a result of the fast in, fast out model, which has been deemed unsustainable (Crumbie 2019). As a result, mass production of fast fashion is considered a practice employed solely for economic gain, through its high levels of consumption (LAC Conveyors and Automation 2018).

Fast fashion has also been perceived by participants in the fourth subcategory as a money-driven industry, with monetary success being its only goal. As shown in Table 4.2, Participant 2 stated that “*the [fast fashion] retailer's always gonna go for money*”. Participant 7 expressed her opinion about fast fashion as “*... a money-making scheme for them ... [retailers] need money so they will always put in fast fashion buying to keep customers coming in and keep buying to keep money coming in*” (refer to Table 4.2). Likewise, Participant 9 stated: “*Something about the mentality of these big retailers ... we need to sell because we need to make this money, we're chasing.*” Dani (n.d.) contends that the various decisions made in the fast fashion industry are purely to cut the cost of production, to increase financial profits. It can be understood that the participants perceived profit and monetary gain to be at the heart of fast fashion.

Fast fashion has also been stigmatised as relatively low in quality by two of the participants, as shown in Table 4.2. Participant 6 explains “*you going to wash [fast*

*fashion items] once and it's going to fall apart*”, implying that the poor quality of the fast fashion items meant they would not withstand maintenance and therefore lacked longevity. Similarly, Participant 10 stated, “[*Slow fashion is] the opposite of fast fashion, meaning its good quality.*” With this statement the participant makes reference to the fact that fast fashion is indeed synonymous with poor quality. Research shows that fast fashion clothing is known to be of poor quality since they are produced at minimal cost, meaning the quality of the fabric and construction is compromised, to enable faster production of the garments in mass quantities, intended to maximise profits from lower margins (Pixelpool 2019).

The ideals behind fast fashion, however, seem to create a path for a deeper understanding of slow fashion. It can be established, as per the data findings in this section, that the participants share a somewhat negative perception toward aspects of fast fashion.

#### **4.2.2 Consumer perceptions of slow fashion**

Three out of the eleven participants had never heard of the term ‘slow fashion’ before, but were familiar with the constructs of sustainable fashion. As mentioned previously, they were all familiar with the concept of slow fashion, even though they may not have been familiar with the term. The participants, however, explained that in their understanding of slow fashion at the time, they then realised that they had always known what it was, but were not familiar with the term ‘slow fashion’. Through an analysis of the data pertaining to the participants’ understanding of slow fashion, a few common perceptions emerged, which are reported in four subcategories. These subcategories are (1) slow production, (2) slow trends (longevity), (3) consumption out of necessity and (4) high quality (longevity).

**Table 4.3: Verbatim quotations related to consumer perception of slow fashion**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Slow production	P1	“It's more slow production in fashion.”
	P10	“[slow fashion] won't be manufactured in volumes ...”
	P11	“... slower, it's longer, the process is longer ...”
Slow trends	P1	“... not following trends and fads ...”
	P8	“... not bringing out clothing once a week ...”

	P5	"... designs that are timeless and in essence have a longer lifespan ..."
Consumption out of necessity	P2	"[I buy] only when I need a new pair of jeans."
	P4	"[I buy] mostly when I need stuff say if I need a specific item."
	P6	"if I buy something, I have to buy it because I know I need it."
	P7	"If now we gonna go into Winter I need a jacket I would buy."
	P9	"A buy for me ... it has to be something I need."
	P3	"... shopping when you need and it's a necessity it's not a want."
	P5	"... fundamentals of slow fashion, I think slow fashion should meet basic needs."
	P8	"... not bringing out clothing once a week only bringing out when there's sort of a need for it."
High quality (longevity)	P1	"I think to promote slow fashion in South Africa, they can promote ... the longevity of the items."
	P2	"... something that will last forever."
	P4	"Quality is a big thing [that] I looked for, and I feel like it last longer."
	P5	"I think [minimalism] could also be a great starting point to embrace slow fashion because minimalism means that you could embrace better quality."
	P6	"[Retailer A] could be considered a slow fashion retailer due to the high-quality garments they sell" "I hate the fact that you just buying stuff to have stuff and that you going to wash [fast fashion items] once and it's going to fall apart."
	P9	"... clothing that is made better with better fabrics."

P10	“[Slow fashion is] the opposite of fast fashion, meaning its good quality.”
P11	“... the focus of slow fashion is quality.”

Most of the participants perceived slow fashion to be the opposite of fast fashion, in terms of the speed in the process of manufacture and frequency of new trends being released. Participant 1 explained her understanding of slow fashion (refer to Table 4.3) by stating, *“It’s more slow production in fashion.”* Participant 10 likewise understood that slow fashion *“won’t be manufactured in volumes,”* implying that mass production is also a reflection of the speed of the production process (Davis 2019). Participant 11 explained that it was *“... slower, it’s longer, the process is longer”*. The production processes of slow fashion are known to contrast with that associated with fast fashion. Slow clothing production processes enable a more accountable and responsible approach to both society and the environment (Leslie et al. 2014).

The next subcategory, slow trends, emerged as a common aspect discussed by the participants. In opposition to fast fashion, which is trend driven, slow fashion was developed for clothing to serve a long-term purpose for its consumers (Jung & Jin 2014). As stated in Table 4.3, Participants 1 and 8 understood slow trends as follows: *“not following trends and fads”*, *“does not embrace immediate trends”* and *“not bringing out clothing once a week”*, in reference to the clothing retailer. Participant 5 explained slow fashion as *“designs that are timeless and in essence have a longer lifespan”*, which speaks to the aspect of slow trends. These statements by the participants demonstrate that they do not associate slow fashion with frequent style changes. The slow trends of slow fashion have also been referred to as ‘timeless’ design (Leslie et al. 2014). As a result, longevity is also connected to the ideals of slow trends.

Consumption out of necessity is the third subcategory that emerged from the data. The data revealed that a slow fashion consumer can also be recognised as someone who purchases clothing when there is a need for it and not out of impulse (Kerner 2018). The term ‘relevance’ in relation to the significance of an item of clothing has surfaced in numerous interviews. As stated in Table 4.3, Participants 2, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10 all declared that they only purchase clothing when they have a need for the item of clothing. Participant 2 stated, *“[I buy] only when I need a new pair of jeans.”*

Participant 4 mentioned, “[I buy] mostly when I need, stuff say if I need a specific item.” Participant 6 claimed: “If I buy something, I have to buy it because I know I need it.” Participant 7 stated, “If now we gonna go into winter I need a jacket I would buy.” In the same way Participant 9 shared that “a buy for me ... it has to be something I need”. Participant 3 referred to slow fashion as “shopping when you need and it's a necessity it's not a want”. Likewise, Participant 5 noted the “fundamentals of slow fashion, I think slow fashion should meet basic needs”. Participant 8 understood the production cycle of slow fashion as “... not bringing out clothing once a week only bringing out when there's sort of a need for it”. These participants' statements fall in line with Kerner's (2018) analysis that slow fashion is about consuming out of necessity and not out of want. The result of this behaviour is that slow fashion consumers tend to consume less and therefore alleviate pressure on the environment due to clothing overconsumption (Štefko & Steffek 2018).

High quality is the fourth subcategory that indicated the participants' perceptions of slow fashion. Slow fashion garments are synonymous with a higher quality of fabric and construction techniques than often found in fast fashion clothing items (Kerner 2018). The perceived high quality of slow fashion garments is linked to the longevity of the garment, because slow fashion items are intended to supersede trends and last for a longer period of time. In this regard, many participants discussed longevity as an aspect of slow fashion clothing. As indicated in Table 4.3, Participant 1 stated, “I think to promote slow fashion in South Africa, they can promote ... the longevity of the items.” The longevity of the item was referred to by the participant as a core value of slow fashion. Participant 2 referred to slow fashion as “... something that will last forever”. Likewise, Participant 4 explained that “quality is a big thing [that] I looked for, and I feel like it last longer” in reference to her clothing preferences. Participant 5 mentioned, “I think [minimalism] could also be a great starting point to embrace slow fashion because minimalism means that you could embrace better quality.” Participant 6 explained that she thought, “[Retailer A] could be considered a slow fashion retailer due to the high-quality garments they sell”, expressing the idea that high-quality garments are perceived to be directly linked to slow fashion make-up. As seen in Table 4.3, Participant 6 went on to express her feelings towards fast fashion's lack of quality in contrast to that of slow fashion by stating, “I hate the fact that you just buying stuff to have stuff and that you going to wash [fast fashion items] once and it's going to fall

apart.” Participant 9 referred to “*clothing that is made better with better fabrics*” to be a derivative of the slow fashion movement. Participant 10 contended that slow fashion is “*the opposite of fast fashion, meaning its good quality*”. Participant 11 stated in a direct manner that “*the focus of slow fashion is quality*”. Accordingly, and in unison with these eight participants, Štefko and Steffek (2018) express the view that a core value and key factor in slow fashion is the higher quality of clothing, ensuring a longer lifespan. The authors state that quality is one of the distinguishing factors between a fast and slow fashion item, therefore slow fashion producers should place great emphasis on creating high quality garments.

#### **4.2.3 Consumer’s awareness of ecological and social issues pertaining to fast fashion consumption and production**

Consumers’ awareness of ecological and social issues emerged as the third category describing the theme consumers’ perception of fashion. Ecological awareness is one of the five elements that form the core values of the VSM (Elgin & Mitchell 1978) and was identified from the conceptual framework for this study.

Various aspects arose in respect of participants’ awareness of environmental and social issues related to overconsumption of fast fashion. These aspects formulated the subcategories under the category of ecological and social awareness, which were: (1) awareness of problems related to overconsumption, (2) awareness of problems related to production and overproduction of clothing, (3) awareness of the effect of caring on the environment and disposal of clothing and (4) awareness of social issues.

**Table 4.4: Verbatim quotations related to ecological and social issues pertaining to fast fashion consumption and production**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Awareness of problems related to overconsumption	P1	“... we’re starting from the seed where the fertilization, chemicals to control pesticides, water that is used to water the cotton for instance ... a lot of water goes into [viscose] and also because they cutting down rain forests for that so overconsumption.”

	P9	<p>“We’re in a seriously consumerist behaviour when it comes to fashion so I know like it's a real issue people are always buying and buying and buying and buying and landfills are getting filled up with empty clothes and left overs.”</p>
Awareness of problems related to production and overproduction of clothing	<p>P2</p> <p>P4</p> <p>P8</p>	<p>“The increase in scale of landfills with discarded clothes is also linked to overproduction.”</p> <p>“... I think it's like a by-product of mass, mass production.”</p> <p>“It's a dying world and we are adding to that ... so within manufacturing later on I found that in manufacturing we are also just continuing the pollution ...”</p> <p>“Basically, we’re making too much clothing and not enough people are actually buying the clothing so there’s a lot of waste in the production of it.”</p>
Awareness of the effect of caring on the environment and disposal of clothing	<p>P4</p> <p>P6</p> <p>P7</p>	<p>“Most items often land up in landfills and that’s where they go to waste and they don’t decompose it's literally waste until it's burned which becomes CO2 and methane gas whatever.”</p> <p>“It's going to fall apart and you’re gonna throw it away ... you can't even donate it to other people and it's just going to go into a landfill and half of it is not gonna biodegrade.”</p> <p>“If you buy so many items [of clothing] you gonna dry clean them, how does that affect the climate and everything else? You complain it's too hot, it's too cold but we are putting that pressure into the climate with everything that we buy.”</p>
Awareness of social issues	P1	<p>“Definitely in terms of ethically as well, the amount, there’s no sustainable way of making so much clothing so quickly on the lives who make the clothes.”</p>

	P6	“People have to work under terrible conditions to produce your product.”
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Excessive consumption has been considered “one of the greatest drivers of resource-use and environmental degradation globally” (Gulati & Naude 2017). Participant 1 expressed her knowledge on issues related to subcategory 1, overconsumption, by explaining, “... *we’re starting from the seed where the fertilization, chemicals to control pesticides, water that is used to water the cotton for instance ... a lot of water goes into [viscose] and also because they cutting down rain forests for that so overconsumption.*” Participant 9 also stated, as shown in Table 4.4, “*We’re in a seriously consumerist behaviour when it comes to fashion so I know like it’s a real issue people are always buying and buying and buying and buying and landfills are getting filled up with empty clothes and left overs.*” These participants indicated a sense of awareness relative to the environmental effects of overconsumption, pertaining to the pollutive effects of irresponsible farming of fibre for fabrics and the waste leftover from disposal of clothing, resultant from overconsumption.

Participants also showed an awareness of ecological issues connected to the production and overproduction of clothing, as in subcategory 2. Participant 9 expressed her understanding of the matter by stating, “*The increase in scale of landfills with discarded clothes is also linked to overproduction, ... I think it’s like a by-product of mass, mass production.*” Participant 4 explained, “*it’s a dying world and we are adding to that ... so within manufacturing later on I found that in manufacturing we are also just continuing the pollution ...*” Her reference to the pollutive effects could be relative to the production and/or disposal of clothing. Participant 8 shared this idea: “*Basically we’re making too much clothing and not enough people are actually buying the clothing so there’s a lot of waste in the production of it.*”

Another issue raised was the effects of waste and poor disposal of garments which affects the climate immediately or after a period of time. As stated in Table 4.4, Participant 4 explained what she understood about clothing waste by stating, “*Most items often land up in landfills and that’s where they go to waste and they don’t decompose it’s literally waste until it’s burned which becomes CO2 and methane gas, whatever.*” Participant 6 also responded very strongly in this regard when she

explained what happens to poor quality clothing after a few wash cycles: *“It's going to fall apart and you're gonna throw it away ... you can't even donate it to other people and it's just going to go into a landfill and half of it is not gonna biodegrade.”* Likewise, Participant 7 stated, *“If you buy so many items [of clothing] you gonna dry clean them, how does that affect the climate and everything else? You complain it's too hot, it's too cold but we are putting that pressure into the climate with everything that we buy.”* Likewise, Rudenko (2018) estimated that 12.8 tonnes of clothing are sent to landfills annually. Other participants did have an idea of the concern of waste as a by-product of overconsumption, but not all the participants communicated their knowledge in respect of the topic in depth.

Mass consumption and production have often been linked to the poor working conditions and exploitation of workers in clothing manufacturing factories (Crumbie 2019). Awareness of social concerns (subcategory 4) also emerged from the data. Anastasia (2017) explains that some unethical practices during and after the manufacturing processes of clothing do not only have a negative environmental impact, but also have implications socially, as they affect the workers in garment manufacturing plants. Some participants referred to the social impact of overproduction and overconsumption. Participant 1 stated, as shown in Table 4.4: *“Definitely in terms of ethically as well, the amount, there's no sustainable way of making so much clothing so quickly on the lives who make the clothes.”* Participant 6 explained that *“people have to work under terrible conditions to produce your product”*, implying that overproduction of clothing often has dreadful consequences for the labourers in clothing manufacturing factories. The participants' statements confirm that they are aware of the social impact affecting the workers in garment manufacturing plants, as found by Anastasia (2017).

This category allows for a greater depth of understanding the level of awareness the participants appeared to have in relation to the ecological and social issues pertaining to fast fashion consumption and production. It can be understood that the issues raised under this category formulate some of the foundational reasons why slow fashion has developed. It is likely that an increased awareness about issues pertaining to fast fashion, as well as the positive basis of slow fashion, can bring growth to the slow fashion industry (Okur & Saricam 2019).

Objective 1 intended to investigate and understand how South African millennials perceived slow fashion. The data revealed that many participants shared their understanding of fast fashion, as an antithesis to slow fashion, to explain what slow fashion is not. Consumer perceptions of fast fashion were related to pollution, overproduction and overconsumption, and they pointed to the fast fashion industry being a money-driven industry, developed purely for financial gain to those in the industry. Participants understood slow fashion to encompass slow production, slow trends, consumption out of necessity and high quality (longevity) in terms of the construction methods and the types of fabric and trims used to produce slow fashion clothing. As such, the participants revealed positive perceptions toward the process involved in the production of slow fashion. The participants' awareness of ecological and social issues pertaining to fast fashion consumption and production were raised, implying a certain level of awareness in these areas. Within this area of discussion, awareness was raised about problems related to overconsumption, production and overproduction of clothing, as well as about caring and disposal of clothing and, finally, about an awareness of social issues. It was evident that participants showed a somewhat negative perception toward some of the issues pertaining to fast fashion.

The following section will discuss the second objective and the categories related to this objective. These categories communicate the participants' personal ethos regarding the matter of fashion consumption, as well as their actual fashion consumption behaviour.

#### **4.3 Consumers' attitudes and behaviour in relation to fashion consumption**

The second objective was to investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' attitudes towards slow fashion. The term *attitude* refers to one's stance or positioning regarding a matter and therefore a person's attitude affects his or her behaviour (Cambridge dictionary 2019). The data are therefore presented in terms of attitudinal components as well as actual behavioural components of slow fashion consumption. The objective served as the theme when coding the data. From the conceptual framework, based on the VSM, the following concepts were used as categories to code the data:

- Material simplicity
- Self-determination

- Motivation behind choice of retailer
- Motivation behind consumption, and
- Actual clothing consumption behaviour.

#### 4.3.1 Material simplicity

Material simplicity forms one of the five core elements of the VSM and has likewise surfaced as a category in the data. Subcategories which emerged were (1) minimalism, (2) quality of life and lived experiences, and (3) improved spending habits.

**Table 4.5: Verbatim quotations related to material simplicity**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Minimalism	P1	"I went into a more minimalist wardrobe and tried to use minimalism to combat fast fashion."
	P2	"[Society is going] back to minimalistic lives."
	P5	"I am minimalistic in my approach I don't necessarily go for trends ... I think that could also be a great starting point to embrace slow fashion."
Quality of life and lived experiences	P2	"[Lifestyles are] more about experience ... I'd be more happy if I have an experience with people so I think that's also changing the way we live".
	P3	"It's your life and ... its experience ... it's not as materialistic."
Improved spending habits	P1	"... slow down my own spending habits which were bad".
	P7	"I don't think I'm adding much into the economy ... cause I'm not spending too much."

Many participants seemed to favour a minimalist lifestyle. Participant 1 stated, *"I went into a more minimalist wardrobe and tried to use minimalism to combat fast fashion"*, implying that minimalism, which has similar traits as the VSM, can be used to simplify, if not slow down, one's fashion consumption. Participant 2 stated, as shown in Table 4.5, *"[society is going] back to minimalistic lives,"* suggesting that there is a growing interest in the simplification and decluttering of one's life. Participant 5

mentioned that she considers her approach to fashion minimalistic and stated, *“I think that could also be a great starting point to embrace slow fashion.”* The minimalist behaviour discussed by these participants had an influence on their wardrobes when they began to consume less and by recognising the items they already had as sufficient. Minimalism does therefore share values of the slow fashion movement. Minimalism is about simplifying one’s life by retaining only the material possessions that are relevant, necessary and that bring happiness to the individual (Hara 2017). It does not specify that one should never make new purchases, but rather that purchases made should be deliberate and mindful. In the same way, slow fashion embraces the prospect of clothing that serves a long-term purpose and that enforces consumption out of necessity and not for trends or leisure.

Subcategory 2, quality of life, is described in terms of life experiences and not by material possessions (Gottberg n.d.; Hara 2017). As reflected in Table 4.5, Participants 2 and 3 acknowledged that a life of simplicity takes precedence over a lifestyle fulfilled by material objects. According to Participant 2, lifestyles are *“more about experience ... I’d be more happy if I have an experience with people so I think that’s also changing the way we live”*. Participant 3 agreed by suggesting, *“It’s your life and ... its experience ... it’s not as materialistic.”* Pozin (2016) correlates an improved lifestyle, or better living (subcategory 2), with consciousness of spending habits on material objects (subcategory 3), suggesting that improved quality of living comes through the fulfilment of lived experiences instead.

Consumers’ awareness of their spending habits was the third subcategory that emerged from the data, confirming Pozin’s (2016) abovementioned correlation for slow fashion consumers, who likewise became conscious of their spending habits regarding material objects. Jung and Jin (2014) state that *“slow fashion is about designing, producing consuming and living better by slowing down the fashion cycle”*. The implication in this quote, in the context of this subcategory, connects spending with consumption. According to Participant 1 (refer to Table 4.5), she needed to *“... slow down my own spending habits which were bad”*. Participant 7 mentioned, *“I don’t think I’m adding much into the economy ... cause I’m not spending too much.”* One of the concepts of slow fashion is founded on awareness of and responsibility in one’s consumption practices (Jung & Jin 2014). One could infer that a trait of the slow

fashion consumer is an awareness of spending habits or an apprehension towards spending money on material items, such as clothing, for any purpose except that of a need for the item.

### 4.3.2 Self-determination

The Collins dictionary (2019) defines *self-determination* as individuals' ability to make a decision or alter their way of thinking or behaving, while disregarding external factors. In the context of this study, self-determination, which also makes up one of the core elements of the VSM, refers to an individual's decision to consciously live a simplified life, whereby they choose to reduce their daily consumption activities (Taljaard & Sonnenberg 2019). The subcategories that emerged under the category of self-determination were (1) conscious consumption, (2) consuming out of necessity, and (3) personal growth.

**Table 4.6: Verbatim quotations related to self-determination**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Conscious consumption	P1	"It's just encouraging more conscious consumers ... I feel like if I can't make a conscious effort to do it why would anybody else."
	P4	"Before I would buy stuff and I would never wear... now if I am a little unsure of something, I don't know if this [retailer] was [ethical], so I'll rather [not purchase it] ... slow fashion is more that to me the conscious decision."
	P5	"The difference is just making a conscious decision ... at the same time you still care about what you look like and what you wear, but you just doing it within those limitations."
Consuming out of necessity	P5	"I don't feel like I need to buy more clothes because I don't need more clothes ... it's a sustainable thing in terms of my cupboard and maintaining my wardrobe."
	P8	"... do I actually need this?"

	P9	“When I have to make that purchase, I stand and I’m like, but I don’t need this, I like it ... but I don’t need it.”
	P10	“If I buy what I need and not just what I want ... I think I can make a difference.”
Personal growth	P1	“I think the change came about when I started doing my Honours [degree] ... what drove me to it is seeing the impact that I could have as a consumer.”
	P2	“I did follow trends ... and then I just completely changed my mind about it. I’m still trying to focus on being unique but sustainable in a way that you wouldn’t have to buy this item again.”
	P4	“I didn’t think where clothing came from and what happened to it afterwards and how many times, I wore it, whereas now that fuels my entire purchase decision. It fuels my entire consumption and disposal.”

Conscious consumption encompasses consuming with a purpose, referring to one’s awareness of the influence your consumption has on the environment or on society (Kerner 2018; Taljaard & Sonnenberg 2019). The consumer with conscious consumption habits will consume mindfully and will therefore only do so out of necessity. Self-determination is required to make conscious decisions to consume or not to. Several participants made mention of their grit to consciously consume less, resulting in them making decisions not to purchase while in a store, once they reflected on the irrelevance of the intended purchase. Participant 1 stated, “*It’s just encouraging more conscious consumers ... I feel like if I can’t make a conscious effort to do it why would anybody else.*” Participant 4 explained the mental changes that have occurred, which now determine her decisions and consumption behaviour: “*Before I would buy stuff and I would never wear ... now if I am a little unsure of something, I don’t know if this [retailer] was [ethical], so I’ll rather [not purchase it] ... slow fashion is more that to me the conscious decision.*” Participant 5 similarly mentioned (refer to Table 4.6),

*“The difference is just making a conscious decision ... at the same time you still care about what you look like and what you wear, but you just doing it within those limitations.”* It was found that an awareness of the issues behind consumption is what drives conscious consumption decisions.

Participant 5 was one of a few participants who identified that their conscious consumption practices were motivated by a necessity for the item (see Table 4.6), which is the second subcategory identifying self-determination. She stated that, while she was pregnant at the time, she was determined to control her weight gain to ensure that the clothing purchases made during her pregnancy will still be suitable for use after giving birth. She went on to state, *“I don't feel like I need to buy more clothes because I don't need more clothes ... it's a sustainable thing in terms of my cupboard and maintaining my wardrobe.”* Participant 8 revealed that her purchase decisions and consumption patterns are driven by the question *“do I actually need this?”* In the same way, Participant 9 explained her motivation or lack thereof for purchasing an item: *“When I have to make that purchase I stand and I'm like, but I don't need this, I like it ... but I don't need it.”* Participant 10 stated, *“If I buy what I need and not just what I want ... I think I can make a difference.”* It could be interpreted that conscious consumption, or mindful consumption, is demonstrated by consumption out of necessity and not out of trend following or leisure materialism.

Personal growth is also one of the core elements of the VSM; however, it makes up subcategory 3 under the category of self-determination, due to the fact that personal growth can be related to an individual's self-determination. According to Cherry (2019), *“Self-determination theory suggests that people are motivated to grow and change by innate psychological needs.”* In this context, the participants reflected on their personal growth in terms of their consumption habits, which influenced the requisite of this category.

Three of the participants made mention of the growth they have experienced in their lives, which has influenced their consumption habits. Their statements reveal that these participants have not always been conscious consumers but changed their attitudes over time. Participant 1 stated, *“I think the change came about when I started doing my Honours [degree] ... what drove me to it is seeing the impact that I could have as a consumer.”* The implication here is that exposure to knowledge can have

an impact on a person’s perspective and bring about personal change and growth, which can then be reflected in consumption behaviour. In this regard, Participant 1 was influenced by knowledge gained during her study towards an Honours degree that focused on sustainability. Likewise, Participant 2, a fashion designer, stated that the personal growth she has experienced over time influences the way she creates and consumes clothing. As stated in Table 4.6, Participant 2 explained, *“I did follow trends ... and then I just completely changed my mind about it. I’m still trying to focus on being unique but sustainable in a way that you wouldn’t have to buy this item again.”* Participant 4 stated, *“I didn’t think where clothing came from and what happened to it afterwards and how many times, I wore it, whereas now that fuels my entire purchase decision. It fuels my entire consumption and disposal.”*

The participants explained that they were not always slow fashion or conscious consumers, but the change started mentally before it influenced their behaviour. Elliot (2019) goes as far as to state that knowledge is the most valuable entity in the world. The participants’ statements imply that creating awareness of a need for the reduction of consumption and the availability and concepts of slow fashion may change consumers’ fashion consumption behaviour. This finding is confirmed by Čábyová (2018), who argues that educating the consumer about the harmful effects of the fast fashion clothing industry could alter consumer consumption practices.

### 4.3.3 Motivation behind consumption behaviour

In an attempt to understand the participants’ actual consumption patterns, they were questioned about the stores where they shop, their reasons for shopping at those stores, as well as if they considered the stores to be fast, slow or sustainable fashion retailers. Subcategories that emerged as reasons for their choice of retailer were identified as (1) affordability, (2) quality and longevity, (3) convenience, (4) sustainable or ethically sound manufacturers, and (5) locally manufactured.

**Table 4.7: Verbatim quotations related to motivation behind choice of retailer (consumption behaviour)**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Affordability	P1	“[I shop] mostly from the store I work at because I get an employee discount.”

	P4	"I must say I pay a little bit more than for the items when I do feel that that is the only way we can get the industry to sit up and realise that this is what we are looking for."
	P9	"... the right price is a factor for me."
Quality and longevity	P1	"I guess like the price bracket goes with the longevity of the item ... [Retailer A's] items, so in terms of longevity it's definitely there."
	P6	"I know that things that I buy are going to be quality items that will last a long time."
Convenience	P2	"... we purchase from there cause its easy."
	P3	"[Retailer A is] always there, it's always going to be there it's easy whereas local designers you actually have to go find them."
	P11	"Apart from that convenience I've never actually really liked the clothes. It was just for convenience."
Sustainable or ethically sound manufacturers	P4	"[they have a little bit of transparency within their brand ... do they have eco-friendly aspects related to them.]"
	P6	"I don't shop at places that I know are unethical."
Locally manufactured	P1	"my kind of resolution for the year was to only shop locally."
	P2	"mostly local not retail, small designers."
	P4	"I'd rather go through the effort to buy something by looking for a manufacture that does this locally and rather support them."

Affordability and pricing have been recognised as important contributors to consumers' choice of retailers. Research shows that even environmentally conscious consumers are indeed sensitive to price, which often has a primary impact on their purchase decisions (Pookulangara & Shephard 2013; Saricam & Okur 2019). Participants 1, 2 and 9 mentioned affordability as a factor that motivated their consumption choices.

Participant 1 clarified, “[I shop] mostly from the store I work at because I get an employee discount.” Participant 2 stated that affordability was one of her reasons for purchasing from her choice of retailer. According to Participant 4, “I must say I pay a little bit more than for the items when I do feel that that is the only way we can get the industry to sit up and realize that this is what we are looking for.” Here she implied that purchasing from sustainable or slow fashion producers, even though they carry a higher price, will promote slow fashion through market sales. Participant 9 concisely stated, as shown in Table 4.7, “The right price is a factor for me.” The price and affordability of the item seem to be a vital aspect of consumption preferences. In fact, Pookulangara and Shepard (2018) noted that consumers reported that the biggest deterrent to supporting the slow fashion movement was economic restraints, since slow fashion clothing was above their affordability bracket.

The quality and longevity of the product have been recognised as important aspects behind the consumption of clothing items, as discussed in the data. Jung and Jin (2014) have identified that longevity, as a consequence of the high quality of slow fashion, is a fundamental aspect of slow fashion as a whole. It would therefore be fitting that these participants favoured longevity, which is related to the quality of the item. Participant 1 stated that “[Retailer A’s] items, so in terms of longevity it’s definitely there,” in reference to quality of clothing being one of her reasons for favouring this store as a retailer of choice (refer to Table 4.7). Likewise, Participant 6 claimed, “I know that things that I buy are going to be quality items that will last a long time”, expressing her reasons for purchasing from her retailer of choice. The ideals of quality speak to the longevity of the item, eluding the concept of purchasing for trends or fads (Gwozdz et al. 2017). As previously mentioned, quality and longevity are important attributes of slow fashion clothing and is certainly considered by the participants when choosing a retailer.

The convenience or ease of access to a store or to an item that will most likely be found in an easily accessible store arose as an important factor for participants when choosing a retailer. Participant 2 stated, “we purchase from there cause its easy”, referring to her choice of retailer (see Table 4.7). Participant 3 explained that, “[Retailer A] ... it’s always going to be there, it’s easy whereas local designers you actually have to go find them.” Participant 11 stated, “Apart from that convenience I’ve never actually

*really liked the clothes. It was just for convenience*”, referring to her reasons for shopping at her retailer of choice. Ease of access and convenience may play a greater role in the participants’ choice of retailer than their requirements concerning slow fashion, sustainable or local manufacturers. Fromm (2019) confirms that convenience is a crucial factor which guides the brand or product loyalty (and subsequent choice of retailer) of millennial consumers.

Sustainable and ethically sound manufacturers were often mentioned and favoured by participants. Participant 4 clearly stated in relation to her choice of retailer, “[they] *have a little bit of transparency within their brand ... do they have eco-friendly aspects related to them*”, explaining how transparency in ethical manufacturing motivated her choice of retailer. Participant 6 clarified (see Table 4.7), “*I don’t shop at places that I know are unethical.*” A study by Label Insight (2016) revealed that 94% of consumers were more likely to become loyal to a brand that presented complete transparency, while 74% stated they would be prepared to pay more for a product that offers complete transparency in all aspects.

A few participants purchased from local designers or manufacturers (subcategory 5) as a conscious effort to add value to the local clothing industry, while contributing to slow fashion. Several participants mentioned that they favoured local brands and manufacturers. As previously mentioned, Participant 1 stated that she made the following decision: “*... my kind of resolution for the year was to only shop locally*” (refer to Table 4.7). Participant 2 said that her choice of retailer was “*mostly local not retail, small designers*”. Participant 4 stated, “*I’d rather go through the effort to buy something by looking for a manufacturer that does this locally and rather support them.*” According to Naicker (2017), South African consumers are realising the importance and value of locally produced clothing and various organisations are getting involved in the revival of the local clothing and textile industry. The findings of this study seem to support this finding by Naicker (2017), who also mentions that the value of the local textiles and clothing industry is now being recognised and promoted by the South African government.

#### **4.3.4 Motivation behind consumption**

This section deals with the objective to investigate the attitudes and behaviour of consumers towards slow fashion, which was also the theme used when coding the

data. According to Jung and Jin (2016), a reduction in the production and consumption cycle by producers and consumers of fashion is one of the core intentions of slow fashion. As the participants in this study were purposefully selected to be slow fashion consumers, their reasons for consuming clothing goods emerged as an important category to understand their attitudes and behaviour towards fashion consumption. The subcategories that emerged under this category were (1) necessity, (2) markdowns, (3) longevity, (4) priority purchases, and (5) aesthetics. Subcategories such as *necessity* and *longevity* of the product have also emerged under previously discussed categories. Consumption out of necessity was also found under section 4.3.2, discussing self-determination, and longevity was discussed in section 4.3.3. The participants expressed the opinion that these elements are fundamental to the slow fashion movement and it also proved evident in their consumption practices, as will be discussed in the proceeding paragraphs.

**Table 4.8: Verbatim quotations related to motivation behind consumption**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Necessity	P2	"I live in [my shoes] ... until I have to buy a new pair cause it's old now or ... you can't walk anymore."
	P4	"... mostly when I need stuff, say if I need a specific item."
	P5	"I think in the last 2 months I had to buy a few pairs of new shoes because I needed shoes because the previous ones were either worn out or not, I can't wear them anymore."
	P6	"If I buy something, I have to buy it because I know I need it ... I'll go and look for that specific thing out of necessity."
	P7	"If you don't need it don't buy it if now, we gonna go into Winter I need a jacket I would buy."
	P9	"It has to be something I need."
	P10	"I shop when I need something."

Markdowns	P4  P7  P9	“Sometimes if something is on sale I would purchase, that's more my impulse purchase.”  “If I see something on sale and then like it makes sense for me to buy then I'll buy.”  “I'm like a sale shopper, almost in that like I always wanna compare prices.”
Longevity	P6  P8	“If I buy something ... I know I'm going to have it for a long time, and it fits in with the things that I've got.”  “I feel like it's when I see something ... that can actually be in my wardrobe for the rest of my life, then I can purchase.”
Priority purchases	P5	“... because I'm a mother of a child ... I think money could be spent towards the child instead of myself.”
Aesthetics	P5  P8	“I buy clothes for the for the sake of being ... stylish as my profession calls for it.”  “... if it's not something I need ... I have to really like this thing.”

The data revealed the key aspects that motivated the participants' consumption of clothing goods. The most consistent subcategory, in terms of participants' responses in favour of this was that of necessity. Participant 2 stated (refer to Table 4.8), “*I live in [my shoes] ... until I have to buy a new pair cause it's old now or ... you can't walk anymore.*” Likewise, Participant 4 mentioned, “*mostly when I need stuff, say if I need a specific item*”, explaining what motivates her consumption of clothing. Similarly, Participant 5 stated, “*I think in the last 2 months I had to buy a few pairs of new shoes because I needed shoes because the previous ones were either worn out or not, I can't wear them anymore.*” Participant 6 also stated (refer to Table 4.8), “*If I buy something, I have to buy it because I know I need it ... I'll go and look for that specific thing out of necessity.*” Participant 7 expressed her disdain in reference to consumers who shop as a hobby: “*If you don't need it don't buy it if now, we gonna go into winter I need a jacket I would buy.*” In the same way, Participant 9 indicated what encourages

her clothing consumption practices: *"It has to be something I need."* Participant 10 said, *"I shop when I need something"*, making mention of the fact that she is not a trend follower. The participants who voiced their opinion on this matter said that their purchases were most commonly influenced by a need for a new item and this was their primary reason for consumption. As discussed under section 4.2.2, dealing with consumer perceptions of slow fashion, Kerner (2018) explains that it is a common characteristic of slow fashion consumers to consume clothing out of necessity for an item. Štefko and Steffek (2018) confirm that the lower consumption levels of slow fashion consumers assist in lessening the strain of consumption on the environment.

Three of the participants, however, remarked that even though the purchase had to make sense or have significance, they were also influenced by marked-down items in a sale. Participant 4 said (see Table 4.8): *"Sometimes if something is on sale I would purchase, that's more my impulse purchase."* Similarly, Participant 7 stated, *"If I see something on sale and then like it makes sense for me to buy then I'll buy."* Likewise, Participant 9 claimed, *"I'm like a sale shopper, almost in that like I always wanna compare prices."* This reveals that sale items could motivate impulse consumption, resulting in consumers either purchasing an item they would not ordinarily purchase spontaneously, if at all. On the other hand, Participant 7 mentioned that, even though an item is on sale, she will still consider the necessity of the garment before purchasing. This driver of consumption is interesting, since marked-down clothing is a direct result of the overproduction of most common fast fashion items. Such impulse purchases of discounted clothing have been determined as a stimulus for overconsumption (Rudenko 2018). It can therefore be derived that even conscious slow fashion consumers can be swayed by the temptations of a marked-down or cheaper priced item; therefore, the aspect of price sensitivity should not be overlooked. Affordability was recognised as one of the biggest deterrents in keeping consumers from supporting the slow fashion movement (Pookulangara & Shephard 2013). The findings of this study support Pookulangara and Shephard's (2013) findings that even consumers who have a high level of awareness about ethical issues are price sensitive.

The aspect of longevity of items also arose as a motivation for fashion consumption. Participant 6 stated, *"If I buy something ... I know I'm going to have it for a long time,*

*and it fits in with the things that I've got.*" Participant 8 confirmed (refer to Table 4.8), *"I feel like it's when I see something ... that can actually be in my wardrobe for the rest of my life, then I can purchase."* Longevity is a fundamental aspect of slow fashion, often derived from the higher quality of these items (Jung & Jin 2016).

It can then also be interpreted that lower levels of clothing consumption could be as a result of prioritising other needs above that of personal clothing, or clothing for themselves. Participant 5 explained, *"Because I'm a mother of a child ... I think money could be spent towards the child instead of myself."* It can be assumed that this participant consumes less clothing for herself, because she now prioritises the purchase of clothing and/or other items for her child. This change in priority may result in an overall reduction in consumption of clothing.

Participant 5 stated, *"I buy clothes for the for the sake of being ... stylish as my profession calls for it"*, implying that she buys appropriate clothing to emphasise a level of style as is expected of a fashion designer and fashion design lecturer, in her opinion. Likewise, Participant 8 claimed that if an item was aesthetically pleasing and could have long-term value, she would purchase it. She stated, as shown in Table 4.8, *"If it's not something I need ... I have to really like this thing."* This implies that aesthetics also influences a consumer's buying behaviour and is therefore an important element in the production of slow fashion clothing. Slow fashion clothing should not only be sustainable and have an ethically sound supply chain, it should also be of a high quality and be aesthetically pleasing (Sachs 2019). None of the participants, however, mentioned that their consumption was motivated by current trends, therefore supporting Kowalski's (2018) understanding of trend relevance being irrelevant to the ideals of slow fashion.

#### **4.3.5 Actual clothing consumption behaviour**

The following category links to the participants' motivation behind the consumption of clothing, as it analyses the actual consumption behaviour of the consumer, in terms of the frequency of clothing consumption (subcategory 1). This category also links to the disposal of clothing (2), which formulates the second subcategory.

**Table 4.9: Verbatim quotations related to actual clothing consumption behaviour**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Frequency of clothing consumption	P1	“once or twice a month”
	P6	“once every 2 months”
	P2	“once in 6 months”
	P7	“once in 6 months”
	P8	“I purchase clothing every two to three months, ... in the last year I didn't purchase a single item of clothing.”
	P3	“I don't really purchase clothes like if I make something that I like then I'll take one.”
	P4	“[I do not buy clothing] very often.”
	P5	“I do not buy every month ... I think when I need.”
	P9	“The last time I purchased clothing was like a year ago.”
	P11	“Last year I used to purchase a lot [of clothing], right now this year not so much.”
Disposal of clothing	P2	“... things that I don't fit in anymore and I give it to someone that would fit into it.”
	P9	“I wear exactly what I have, until it is finished.”

The frequency of clothing consumption formulates the first subcategory. When analysing the participants' actual consumption behaviour, it is evident that the majority did not consider themselves to be frequent shoppers; however, their interpretation of frequency varied. The frequency of buying varied from “*once or twice a month*”, referring to Participant 1, to “*once every two months*”, as mentioned by Participant 6, to “*once in six months*”, applicable to Participants 2 and 7. Participant 8 stated, as documented in Table 4.9, “*I purchase clothing every two to three months, ... in the last year I didn't purchase a single item of clothing.*” Participant 3, who was also a sustainable fashion designer, stated, “*I don't really purchase clothes like if I make something that I like then I'll take one.*” It was not specified how often she took

garments from her own design venture or for how long she kept them. However this comment does express that the expenditure on clothing by the participants is likely varied since most of them are designers and are therefore able to make clothes for themselves. Participant 4 mentioned, “[I do not buy clothing] *very often*.” According to Participant 5, “*I do not buy every month ... I think when I need*.” Participant 9 indicated, “*The last time I purchased clothing was like a year ago*.” Participant 11 explained, “*Last year I used to purchase a lot [of clothing], right now this year not so much*.” This variation in frequency of clothing purchases could be as a result of several different internal or external factors, which fall outside the scope of this study.

The disposal of clothing makes up subcategory 2. Participant 2 mentioned the manner in which she disposed of clothing items that she no longer found a need for. She stated: “... *things that I don't fit in anymore and I give it to someone that would fit into it*.” By passing the clothing onto someone else, the lifespan of the clothing is extended. This practice is linked to the ideals of an aspect of slow fashion, discussed in section 4.2.2, consumer perceptions of slow fashion, under the subcategory of high quality and longevity. Participant 9 stated: “*I wear exactly what I have, until it is finished*.” The way a garment is disposed of is important because the poor disposal methods of fast fashion have detrimental effects on the environment. Slow fashion consumers are therefore encouraged to mend their garments or recycle them as fabric if they are beyond repair (Sachs 2019). The remarks made by these participants therefore reflect the common attributes of a slow fashion consumer, namely, a desire for clothing to last and serve a purpose for a long time (Jung & Jin 2016).

Objective 2 aimed to establish millennial slow fashion consumers' attitudes towards slow fashion. The prevalent theme which surfaced was the consumers' attitudes which affected their behaviour in relation to fashion consumption. The categories which surfaced under this objective were material simplicity, self-determination, motivation behind choice of retailer, motivation behind consumption and actual clothing consumption behaviour. Material simplicity and self-determination are both regarded as core philosophies of the VSM. They encompass the simplification of one's external environment, encouraged by an internal driver in the form of self-determination. The participants' reasoning behind their choice of retailer and their drive to consume was discussed and related to their actual consumption behaviour. Actual clothing

consumption behaviour proved to have a great variation of frequency between participants and could be influenced by any number of external and internal factors. It can therefore be established that for the most part, millennial slow fashion consumers' attitudes towards consumption are congruent with their actual consumption behaviour, with the exception of a few variables, such as the favouring of sale items of clothing, synonymous with overconsumption.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

Chapter 4 presented the findings intended to fulfil Objectives 1 and 2. Objective 1 focused on investigating the millennial's perception of slow fashion. The participants' perceptions of fast fashion and consumption were first explored, as it is commonly considered to be a contributor to the development of slow fashion. Slow fashion was often depicted as the antithesis to fast fashion and reflected very positive perceptions from participants. Participants' awareness of consumption and overproduction was also explored, yielding a greater knowledge of and insight into their awareness of related environmental and social impacts.

Objective 2 looked at the millennial's attitude towards slow fashion, while also identifying behavioural characteristics, as it was determined that attitude is influential in behaviour. Many of the core elements of VSM supporters were identified in participants, such as material simplicity, self-determination and personal growth, which in turn seemed to have an impact on their attitudes towards consumption and their behaviour in this regard.

Chapter 4 presented the findings in relation to the first two objectives of the study, while the following chapter, Chapter 5, will present the data regarding the third and final objective of the study, as a continuation of the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS (Part 2)

*“It is the absence of facts that frightens people: the gap you open, into which they pour their fears, fantasies, desires.”*

— *Hilary Mantel* (Goodreads n.d.[b]).

This chapter presents the findings that surfaced as a result of the analysis of data, retrieved through the data collection processes discussed in Chapter 3, pertaining to the final objective of the research project. The third and final objective of the study was to determine millennial slow fashion consumers’ perspectives on the role of slow fashion towards sustainability in the local clothing industry, through analysing the South African millennial slow fashion consumer’s perspective on the matter. This is therefore the driver behind the themes, categories and subcategories to be discussed in this chapter.

The findings are presented according to the themes, categories and subcategories that emerged through the coding process. Following the discussion of each category, direct quotes from the participants, relevant to the preceding text, will be presented in a table format.

### **5.1 Consumers’ perspectives on the role of slow fashion towards sustainability in the local clothing industry**

Objective 3 served as the theme for organising the transcribed interviews, namely, the consumers’ perspectives on the role of slow fashion and sustainability in the country. The categories that surfaced within this theme, contributing to the fulfilment of the objective, are as follows:

- Attitude towards slow fashions relevance in South Africa (category 1)
- Perspectives on the general awareness of slow fashion (category 2)
- Perspectives on solutions to increase awareness of slow fashion (category 3)
- Perspectives on the relevance of consumer behaviour (category 4).

### 5.1.1 Attitude towards slow fashion’s relevance in South Africa

Most of the participants felt that slow fashion is relevant in South Africa. However, their reasoning sometimes varied. The subcategories within this particular category were separated by participants’ attitudes regarding the relevance and future of the local slow fashion industry and were therefore segmented into (1) hopeful and (2) sceptical factors.

**Table 5.1: Verbatim quotations related to consumer attitudes towards slow fashion’s relevance in South Africa**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Hopeful	P2	“... so, I think it does [have relevance], financially it does have an impact and it's better for us as a whole to support the slow fashion, slow production wise in the country, cause it's also growing our economy.”
	P5	“I do think [slow fashion is] relevant. I do think it will be difficult to try and backtrack what has been done already maybe a few generations ... I think there's a market so they should be relevant.”
	P8	“I feel like [slow fashion] could be [relevant], because they are lots of people in South Africa ... they want to sort of become more sustainable, be more wise when they're spending their money, look after the planet more and slow fashion is sort of a part of that trying, trying to not destroy the planet while we're making clothing.”
	P11	“I really think [slow fashion in SA] is [relevant] because over the years I've seen the rise of designers, individual designers more than retail shops ... it's relevant in this country in this, because of that.”
	P3	“I think [slow fashion is] relevant.”
	P9	“I do [feel that slow fashion is relevant].”

	P10	"... well, it is relevant."
Sceptical	P1	"In South Africa [slow] fashion isn't even in the mainstream media unless you're following niche groups."
	P4	"I would definitely not say that it's something that will become mainstream soon." "I do think there are small movements, but I think in South Africa it's a very difficult thing to actually manifest."
	P6	"... as much as we'd like to shop the dream of slow fashion, I don't think it's realistic ... not unless something dramatic happens it's going to hit this country." "I don't think that, retailers are making slow fashion a viable option for people."
	P7	"I hope [slow fashion] will be [relevant] but by 2020."
	P10	"It is relevant, but I don't think the South African consumers are educated enough to buy slow fashion."

Participant 2 stated with a hopeful tone: *"... so I think it does [have relevance], financially it does have an impact and it's better for us as a whole to support the slow fashion, slow production wise in the country, cause it's also growing our economy."* In accordance with this, Participant 5 said (see Table 5.1), *"I do think [slow fashion is] relevant. I do think it will be difficult to try and back track what has been done already maybe a few generations ... I think there's a market so they should be relevant."* Participant 8 explained, *"I feel like [slow fashion] could be [relevant], because they are lots of people in South Africa ... they want to sort of become more sustainable, be more wise when they're spending their money, look after the planet more and slow fashion is sort of a part of that trying, trying to not destroy the planet while we're making clothing."* Participant 11 shared the following: *"I really think [slow fashion in SA] is [relevant] because over the years I've seen the rise of designers, individual designers*

*more than retail shops ... it's relevant in this country in this, because of that.*" These participants seemed to have a positive outlook on the relevance, value and likely impact that slow fashion could have on the country in different sectors. Participants 3, 9 and 10, among most of the participants, believed that slow fashion is relevant to the South African clothing industry. Participant 3 clearly stated, *"I think [slow fashion is] relevant."* In similar wording, Participant 9 said: *"I do [feel that slow fashion is relevant]."* In a similar manner Participant 10 stated, *"Well, it is relevant."* It is important to understand the consumer's perspective on the value and relevance of slow fashion within a local context. Consumers are commonly recognised as the driver behind the clothing industry (What is consumer behavior in marketing? 2018), therefore consumers' opinions and actions have the ability to alter the dynamics of the clothing industry.

Some participants revealed that they were sceptical with regard to the success of slow fashion or the impact it could have, if any, on the South African clothing industry. Participant 1 explained that, *"In South Africa [slow] fashion isn't even in the mainstream media unless you're following niche groups."* Participant 4 shared in that scepticism by stating, *"I would definitely not say that it's something that will become mainstream soon."* Others were in complete disbelief that slow fashion is a concept that could succeed in the country. Participant 6 stated, *"As much as we'd like to shop the dream of slow fashion, I don't think it's realistic ... not unless something dramatic happens it's going to hit this country."* Two participants considered it a movement that could become relevant, implying that they did not think it was relevant at the time of the interview. Of those two participants, one in particular stated (refer to Table 5.1), *"I hope [slow fashion] will be [relevant] but by 2020."* Other participants referred to slow fashion as more of a niche movement rather than a mainstream movement in South Africa, as compared to other influential countries. Participant 4 went on to express the following opinion: *"I do think there are small movements but I think in South Africa it's a very difficult thing to actually manifest."* Such statements reveal that these participants considered it likely for slow fashion to become a prominent and viable option for South African consumers; however, the time period within which this could take place is undefinable.

To give reasons for her scepticism, Participant 6 stated, *“I don't think that retailers are making slow fashion a viable option for people”*, expressing the opinion that slow fashion clothing is not easy to access or find. Participant 10 stated, as shown in Table 5.1, *“It is relevant, but I don't think the South African consumers are educated enough to buy slow fashion.”* This statement indicates the need for and importance of educating consumers about the value and availability of slow fashion in the country. The following category, focusing on perceptions of the general awareness of slow fashion and solutions to increase awareness, delves further into the topic of slow fashion awareness.

The second category focuses on the participants' perceptions of the current state of slow fashion in the country, taking problems into consideration and presenting possible solutions. Aspects that arose from the data, such as a lack of awareness and convenience will be discussed further.

### 5.1.2 Perspectives on awareness of slow fashion

This category analyses the participants' perceptions of the current state of slow fashion in the country, while taking into consideration the problems with this movement. The participants raised concerns about a number of problems that prevent greater growth of slow fashion consumption, or that decrease consumption levels as a whole. A number of subcategories emerged under this category, namely (1) a lack of knowledge, (2) a lack of transparency and information from retailers, (3) misconstrued information, (4) a lack of convenience, (5) excessive imports, (6) affordability of slow fashion (higher pricing and demographics), and (7) the high cost of slow fashion.

**Table 5.2: Verbatim quotations related to perceptions on national awareness of slow fashion**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Lack of knowledge	P1	“I just don't think they're educating their customers [about slow fashion] ... I don't think [knowledge of sustainability is] available to many people.”
	P2	“Education”

	P3	“I think the only issue with slow fashion in the industry, in the country, is education.”
	P4	“[W]e definitely not getting enough information.”
	P8	“I haven't actually seen [slow fashion being promoted] so it's probably not promoted at all.”
	P10	“I don't think the South African consumers are educated enough to buy slow fashion, so they opt for fast fashion ... because of lack of knowledge.”
Lack of transparency and information from retailers	P4	“... trying to get the information out there and when people are going to make a decision, having all the information, all the different items available, because that's how you make an informed decision.”
	P8	“I feel like people who are sustainable, companies who are sustainable they don't actually speak loud enough.”
	P10	“I mean you can't just sell clothes, tell us why we should buy your clothes.”
Misconstrued information	P3	“... a lot of people think that slow fashion is more expensive, most of us designers are cheaper than [Brand name B], which is by [Retailer A] which is made in China.”
	P1	“... they've only actually targeted a niche market in spending ... so they'll put slow fashion as not always affordable.”
Lack of convenience	P1	“People would rather have the convenience ... it's the convenience of having something quickly and easily and cheap.”
	P3	“I think people don't know where they can find these brands that's the issue.”
	P6	“I don't think that, retailers are making slow fashion a viable option for people because where

		you gonna find your slow fashion trousers, where are you going to find them?"
Imported clothing	P9	"If there's a way to reduce imports ... specifically, Chinese imports especially when it comes to textiles ... because we're being flooded. It's hard for the customer or the consumer to understand the full impact of their decision."
	P10	"... they can start buying local and plant more local manufacturing plants or factories so we can make our own clothing, so we don't have to go outside."
Demographics (affordability)	P1	"I think slow fashion is very much a first world South African problem, more than like majority of the country."
	P4	"I do think our economy is a big thing that is holding us back ... Because of the economic and demographic issues, I think it's difficult to reach people."
High cost of slow fashion	P1	"... as soon as more people are doing it, it will take down the cost of [slow fashion] in South Africa"
	P4	it's also expensive to buy."
	P6	"... [there are] a lot of people who don't have the skills [to upcycle their clothes] or the means to shop for [slow fashion]."

The most common issue raised among participants was a lack of knowledge of the issues surrounding fast fashion consumption, as well as the knowledge of the slow fashion industry and its constructs. According to most of the participants, there is a lack of attention given to slow fashion, as well as a lack of awareness and information being shared in South Africa regarding these matters. Participant 1 stated (see Table 5.2), *"I just don't think they're educating their customers [about slow fashion] ... I don't think [knowledge of sustainability is] available to many people."* Participant 2's answer to the question 'What is lacking in the industry in relation to slow fashion?' was *"education"*. Likewise, Participant 3 shared the following: *"I think the only issue with*

*slow fashion in the industry, in the country, is education.*” Participant 4 confirmed, “[We] definitely not getting enough information.” Participant 8 stated, “I haven't actually seen [slow fashion being promoted] so it's probably not promoted at all”, implying that there is an insufficient amount of attention given to slow fashion. Participant 10 asserted, “I don't think the South African consumers are educated enough to buy slow fashion, so they opt for fast fashion ... because of lack of knowledge.” Under section 4.2.3, the data analysis on the consumer’s awareness of ecological issues pertaining to overconsumption revealed that some of the participants were not always slow fashion or conscious consumers; however, their philosophies on fashion consumption were transformed after being exposed to information related to the topic. This finding supports the evidence in this section, which expresses the notion that increased awareness of and education on the topic of fast and slow fashion is an important aid to grow the appeal of slow fashion in the country (Saricam & Okur 2019).

Another facet linked to this issue was aimed at the retailer or supplier of clothing. Participants felt as though there is not enough information readily and conveniently available that explains where and how sustainable items are being sourced or manufactured, which leads to a lack of transparency. Participant 4 explained it as follows (refer to Table 5.2): “... trying to get the information out there and when people are going to make a decision, having all the information, all the different items available, because that's how you make an informed decision.” Participant 8 stated, “I feel like people who are sustainable, companies who are sustainable they don't actually speak loud enough”, implying that designers and companies need to be more vocal and improve marketing strategies to promote their sustainable products or services. Participant 10 simply stated, “I mean you can't just sell clothes, tell us why we should buy your clothes.” It seems evident that the participants value information that reveals a wealth of knowledge related to the production and make-up of their products (Miller 2017), in order to aid their and other consumers’ purchase decisions.

As a possible result of a lack of knowledge or, in this context a lack of correct knowledge, notions of the pricing of slow fashion clothing are often misconstrued as overpriced. Dibb (2017) states that the perception of local clothing being overpriced can be attributed to “[t]he convenience of retail stores ... and the lack of public knowledge on designer brands”. According to Participant 3, who is also a designer

(See Table5.2), *“A lot of people think that slow fashion is more expensive, most of us designers are cheaper than [Brand name B], which is by [Retailer A] which is made in China.”* Participant 1 had a similar understanding, which seemed to be underwritten by her theory of the clothing sector’s marketing strategies. She stated that *“they’ve only actually targeted a niche market in spending ... so they’ll put slow fashion as not always affordable”*, implying that the information is given to a limited part of the consumer market, and is marketed as unaffordable to others. It goes without question that the cost of local produce is subsequently higher because the cost of production is greater in the country. However, the perception of the local produce being overpriced is questionable. According to Dibb’s (2017) sources, if a consumer could afford to purchase from popular mainstream stores, this individual will most likely be able to afford clothing that has been locally produced. Using an example to edify this analysis, it was stated that, *“A local designer coat costs R1 800, a classic trench coat from [Retailer G] costs R2 600 and a velveteen puffer from [Brand Name B] is R2 300.”* Interestingly, a possible solution to this matter seems to be an increase in accurate information to the public or more conveniently located South African produced clothing.

Additionally, a lack of convenience (subcategory 4) arose as a hindrance to the slow fashion market (Dibb 2017). Participant 1 stated, *“People would rather have the convenience ... it’s the convenience of having something quickly and easily and cheap.”* Participant 3 remarked (refer to Table5.2), *“I think people don’t know where they can find these brands.”* Similarly, Participant 6 stated, *“I don’t think that retailers are making slow fashion a viable option for people because where you gonna find your slow fashion trousers?”* The participants felt that big retailers in malls and online stores were more popular because of ease and convenience of access and for their widespread availability, whereas most consumers are unaware of where they should shop, if they were looking to purchase slow fashion products.

Subcategory 5 raised the matter of excessive imports, indicating that the influx of internationally imported clothing is what suffocated the South African textile and clothing industry. May (2019) states that not only has the local clothing and textile industry been devastated by cheap imports, it has added to the exceptionally high rate of unemployment in the country as well. Participant 9 expressively stated (see

Table 5.2), *“If there's a way to reduce imports ... specifically, Chinese imports especially when it comes to textiles ... because we're being flooded. It's hard for the customer or the consumer to understand the full impact of their decision.”* The decision she speaks about refers to the consumer's decision to purchase a fast fashion, Chinese import, because of the lower price. Likewise, Participant 10 suggested that South African consumers need to direct their clothing purchases to a local market, by explaining that *“... they can start buying local and plant more local manufacturing plants or factories so we can make our own clothing, so we don't have to go outside”*. Local designers have stated that not only is the influx of cheap imports taking away appeal from their locally produced goods, but the cost of their products is higher because much of their textiles have to be imported, due to a lack of resources locally (May 2019).

The affordability of slow fashion clothing (subcategory 6), pertaining to the high pricing of slow fashion in relation to the country's demographics, surfaced as a fundamental issue that influences the consumption of fast fashion items. Participants have brought to light that the ills of consumption and fast fashion seem to have created a greater reaction on overseas platforms than it does in South Africa. Participant 1 detailed this as follows: *“I think slow fashion is very much a first world South African problem, more than like majority of the country.”* The implication here is that slow fashion will have a limited market in South Africa, as a result of the demographic profile and the Third World positioning of the country, which rules out a large number of the South African consumers, due to their lower levels of income, if they have an income at all. Participant 4 stated, *“I do think our economy is a big thing that is holding us back ... Because of the economic and demographic issues, I think it's difficult to reach people.”* This statement speaks to the element of affordability. It has been mentioned in Chapter 4, section 4.3.4, in subcategory 1, that affordability of a clothing item is an important factor that either supports or hinders the consumption of the item. When considering the statistics that reveal that the country's formal unemployment rate is currently 29% (Omarjee 2019), one can understand why the price of an item is an important factor in the consumption of the product. It can be understood that the percentage of South Africans who can realistically afford slow fashion or locally produced clothing should be identified. Head (2018) revealed that 46% of South Africans earn an average of R1 000 monthly, while the bottom end, which makes up

10% of the country's population, lives off R345 per month. Taking these statistics into account, it could be determined that the demographic profile of South Africa is vastly different from most First World countries and the positive aspects of slow fashion in the country should therefore not be undermined by comparing it to such countries.

With the aspect of demographics being analysed on a local scale, it cannot be ignored that slow fashion is synonymous with being priced at higher levels (subcategory 7), as a result of the higher quality of textiles, construction methods and finishings that make up these garments (Davis 2019). Participant 1 stated, "*as soon as more people are doing it, it will take down the cost of [slow fashion] in South Africa*", implying that the cost of slow fashion is currently high in South Africa. Participant 4 concisely stated, "*... it's also expensive to buy.*" According to Participant 6, "*[There are] a lot of people who don't have the skills [to upcycle their clothes] or the means to shop for [slow fashion].*" She offered possible solutions for the clothing consumption problems faced, but concluded her statement by declaring that slow fashion is not quite affordable for many people.

It is noticeable that affordability is an important motivator of consumption. The higher price tag of slow fashion, together with the demographic profile of the country, proves to be major issues that are yet to be overcome. Even though some participants in this study felt as though there were major difficulties, if not barriers, pertaining to the South African slow fashion movement, there were those who were hopeful that these issues could be resolved.

Category 3 presents possible solutions, suggested by the participants, to the problems pointed out in the discussion of category 2 under section 5.1.2.

### **5.1.3 Education as a solution to problems related to slow fashion**

Participants shared what they thought to be a possible solution to some of these problems, discussed under the previous category (category 2). The common aspect mentioned, which forms part of category 3, was that of education. The majority of participants argued that educating people about slow fashion, the purpose for which it was initiated and the positive aspects thereof, will resolve many problems faced by the slow fashion industry. The findings did, however, reveal two types of methods by which

education could be relayed, namely formal and informal learning. Formal learning is described as intentional learning commonly acquired through an institution, directed by a teacher, based on a type of curriculum that would be assessed to attain some form of qualification (Nygren et al. 2019). Informal learning is acquired through various unstructured and undirected daily life experiences and stimuli. It could be acquired through various channels such as the media, peers and family (Nygren et al. 2019). As directed by the findings, these two types of learning make up the two subcategories under category 3, which are: (1) formal learning and (2) informal learning.

**Table 5.3: Verbatim quotations related to education as a solution to problems related to slow fashion**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Formal learning	P1	"I think to promote slow fashion in South Africa ... educating manufacturers also would just have a more long-term thing on all of us."
	P7	"... in universities or colleges, they should teach fashion students."
Informal Learning	P1	"I think as a designer or a friend or family member, just showing them the alternative options sometimes ... makes that small shift of mindset."
	P4	"I think the fundamentals to slow fashion is knowledge ... and the sharing of knowledge ... also as peers to actually share what we have."
	P2	"... then it becomes more educated decisions ... but it's now I'd rather buy this one because they're educated about it."
	P8	"YouTube and Netflix, you have to watch the ads, you have to at least watch a certain amount of it and if it catches your attention."

The following participants claimed that certain forms of formal learning were required to further the education of slow fashion to consumers. Participant 1 explained it as follows (refer to Table 5.3): *"I think to promote slow fashion in South Africa ...*

*educating manufacturers also would just have a more long-term thing on all of us.*” Her perception was that manufacturers need to be educated regarding the value of slow fashion, with the hope of growing awareness about the slow fashion industry. Participant 7 explained, *“... in universities or colleges they should teach fashion students”*, expressing her belief that fashion design students need to be educated at tertiary level to stimulate a growth in education and awareness regarding slow fashion. Likewise, May (2019) quoted senior fashion design lecturer at the University of Johannesburg, Desiree Smal, who stated that the sharing of information and knowledge on the issues behind fast fashion is imperative to promote slow fashion in the country, lest the information remains “isolated”.

Many participants suggested various means through which informal learning could be encouraged, as a way to educate and increase awareness on the topic of slow fashion. Participant 1 claimed, *“I think as a designer or a friend or family member, just showing them the alternative options sometimes ... makes that small shift of mindset.”* Her perception is that education can be attained informally through the passing on of knowledge to those within one’s circle, such as family and friends. Similarly, Participant 4 agreed, *“I think the fundamentals to slow fashion is knowledge ... and the sharing of knowledge ... also as peers to actually share what we have”*, establishing that the sharing of knowledge to peers, among others, is one of the fundamentals of slow fashion. Nygren et al. (2019) explain that informal learning experiences, such as information retrieved through the means as discussed by participants above, are capable of adding value to formal training in that it can potentially be seen as a life-long learning process. Participant 2 explained that a designer has the ability to pass on knowledge regarding slow fashion to customers and change their perspectives as a result. She stated, *“... then it becomes more educated decisions ... but it’s now I’d rather buy this one because they’re educated about it.”* According to Participant 8, as shown in Table 5.3, *“YouTube and Netflix, you have to watch the ads, you have to at least watch a certain amount of it and if it catches your attention”*, explaining that the advertisements that are found on social media could serve as a tool for informal learning regarding matters related to slow fashion. Shaoolian (2018) claims that millennials are the “most valuable target demographic” as they have been noted as the “driving force” behind Ecommerce, online shopping platforms and social media channels. It can therefore be deduced that social media

and the advertisements thereof are a viable tool to educate consumers and spread awareness regarding slow fashion.

An increase in education and sharing of knowledge seems to be a viable approach, considering that the data revealed that many of the participants changed their spending and consumption behaviour after becoming enlightened on the negative effects of consumption of fast fashion, and consumption in general, to the environment. Jung and Jin (2016) confirm that the spreading of awareness and education on such topics is of necessity and these aspects need to be illuminated. Participant 2 went on to explain, “... as soon as more people are doing it, it will take down the cost of [slow fashion] in South Africa, so if you had more people only using natural fibres it should become more affordable long term for people to only shop natural fibres. So that kind of thing I think it would just be a constant knock on effect.” Her perspective gives light to a possibility for long-term positive effects of slow fashion in this country, should the consumption of slow fashion clothing increase. An increase in education and awareness regarding slow fashion could mean an increase in consumption of slow fashion items, which is likely to lower the prices of such items. This could resolve one of the problems related to slow fashion in the country, which is the pricing and affordability factor. Davis (2019) shares this value by explaining that a greater consumer investment in sustainable clothing could likely lead to lowered prices of such items, as is evident in other products like organic foods.

#### 5.1.4 Perspectives on the relevance of consumer behaviour

The fourth category focuses on who the participants believed could bring the greatest change to the South African clothing industry. Because the millennial slow fashion consumer is an integral part of the study, it is beneficial to understand the participants’ opinions regarding the role of a consumer in the context of this study. The subcategories that emerged focus on (1) the consumer as the key influence, and (2) retailer or industry as the influencer.

**Table 5.4: Verbatim quotations related to perceptions of the relevance of consumer behaviour**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
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Consumer as the key influence	<p>P1</p> <p>P2</p> <p>P3</p> <p>P4</p> <p>P8</p> <p>P9</p>	<p>“I’d say [consumers] have the biggest influence and their spending power gives that influence”. “What drove me to [sustainability] is seeing the impact that I could have as a consumer.”</p> <p>“I do think [the fashion industry is] consumer driven.”</p> <p>“... the more you buy the more there’s gonna be produced ... if we sell an item and it’s doing well, we obviously do more of them.”</p> <p>“I think the consumer must make the change cause that’s gonna push the retailer ... the more you buy the more the retailers gonna produce if it sells.”</p> <p>“... apparently [millennial consumers] are the biggest generation to be like this.”</p> <p>“I think [the change within the fashion industry] should come from the consumer ... we sit with the power in our pockets.”</p> <p>“... the companies follow what the consumers want ... the consumers have more of the power than the companies.”</p> <p>“[The consumer] definitely could [alter the fashion industry] ... we could have a real legit strong say in how this industry is run.”</p>
Retailer or industry as the influencer	<p>P5</p> <p>P6</p>	<p>“I think the industry influences the consumer more than what the consumer gives feed back to the industry ... core values must start with more retailers and just make clothes available that are sustainable.”</p> <p>“Unless retailers change the way they do business the consumer is not going to change.”</p>

Six of the eight participants who commented on subcategory 1, the relevance of consumers and their behaviour, vehemently stated that the consumer has the greatest influence on the clothing industry and the direction in which it goes. According to Participant 1 (refer to Table 5.4), *“I’d say [consumers] have the biggest influence and their spending power gives that influence.”* She went on to say, *“What drove me to [sustainability] is seeing the impact that I could have as a consumer.”* Likewise, Participant 2 stated, *“I do think [the fashion industry is] consumer-driven.”* In addition, Participant 2, who is also a sustainable fashion designer, revealed that, *“... the more you buy the more there’s gonna be produced ... if we sell an item and it’s doing well, we obviously do more of them.”* This falls in line with Participant 3 who stated, *“I think the consumer must make the change cause that’s gonna push the retailer ... the more you buy the more the retailers gonna produce if it sells.”* Participant 4 said, *“I think [the change within the fashion industry] should come from the consumer ... we sit with the power in our pockets.”* Similarly, Participant 8 claimed, *“The companies follow what the consumers want ... the consumers have more of the power than the companies.”* Participant 9 also stated, *“[The consumer] definitely could [alter the fashion industry] ... we could have a real legit strong say in how this industry is run.”* Gwozdz et al. (2017) express the same understanding as these participants, whereby it is understood the consumer is the ultimate influencer and driver in the fashion industry, meaning that the consumer could determine the future of the industry.

Participant 3 also mentioned that the millennial consumer, in particular, has a great influence on the industry, which validates the selection of participants from the cohort of millennial slow fashion consumers. She mentioned that, as documented in Table 5.4, *“apparently [millennial consumers] are the biggest generation to be like this”*, in reference to the consumer being conscious of the need for sustainable and ethical clothing manufacture. Most of the participants have determined that the consumer’s purchases pilot the direction of the clothing industry.

Two of the participants, however, mentioned that they believed the consumer is influenced by what is made available by the retailer, therefore it is the industry’s duty to change the way it functions, in order for the consumer to follow suit. Participant 5 explained, *“I think the industry influences the consumer more than what the consumer gives feed back to the industry ... core values must start with more retailers and just*

*make clothes available that are sustainable*”, arguing that the consumer is limited to the options provided by the retailer. In the same way, Participant 6 stated (refer to Table 5.4), *“Unless retailers change the way they do business the consumer is not going to change.”* She went on to explain, *“Most people don't have those skills ... to, you know, fix their garments or tailor garments that they inherit from people ... it's just not part of our culture anymore so the change has to come from the retailer.”* Participant 6 made reference to the option of consumers upcycling their clothing as a means to increase the longevity of old items. Upcycling of fashion is the process whereby the fabric and trims of old garments are reused to create new garments (Han et al. 2017). However, as stated by Participant 6, as the knowledge and skill set for consumers to upcycle clothing might be limited, it is the retailer’s duty to take a greater initiative to promote sustainable consumption practices through avenues such as slow fashion.

Uptmoor (2014) challenges the power of the consumer and of the brand<sup>4</sup>, by observing which end has the greatest influence on the other. It would seem that the power belonged to the brand for many years but was challenged with the rise of social media platforms that allow consumers to not only seek and gain relevant information with ease, but also be able to converse with other consumers on a global platform. As a result, it can be concluded that consumers now hold the greater power as they have the ability to build or break a brand, based on the spread of social information (Gwozdz et al. 2017; Uptmoor 2014). However, the current study found that although the participants were indeed slow fashion consumers, they would still purchase items on sale or at a reduced price, even if such clothing items were not deemed a necessity. Therefore, the findings show that it is perhaps both the responsibility of the consumer as well as that of the industry to change their consumption and production behaviours to favour a more sustainable, slow fashion approach to clothing consumption.

## **5.2 The slow fashion designer**

The data in this chapter imply that South Africa needs an increased awareness of the availability of slow fashion clothing through local fashion designers and retailers. A greater awareness of slow fashion availability could contribute to the convenience and

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<sup>4</sup> The term ‘brand’ refers to the marketer who voices the image and message of the brand in this context (Uptmoor 2014).

ease of access to slow fashion produce by the consumer, which could result in a growth in the slow fashion industry. According to Štefko and Steffek (2018), a slow fashion designer is one who produces high quality, timeless pieces, often produced locally by an ethically sound manufacturing team, resulting in aesthetically pleasing, higher-priced collections. These collections are not released as frequently as that of fast fashion retailers. At present, the local fashion designer could be recognised as the only channel of slow fashion production in the country and should therefore be promoted to support the slow fashion model in the country (May 2019).

### 5.2.1 Role of the South African fashion designer in promoting slow fashion

Previous research studies and many of the participants in this study agree that local fashion designers have a substantial role to play (Dibb 2017; May 2019) to activate or promote the slow fashion movement in South Africa. The emerging subcategories were focused on the fashion designer’s duty to: (1) promote their ethos through marketing and educating their consumers, (2) have accountability in manufacturing, (3) upskill the workforce, and finally (4) to maintain authenticity.

**Table 5.5: Verbatim quotations related to the role of the South African fashion designer**

Subcategory	Participant	Verbatim quotation associated with subcategory
Create awareness and spread knowledge	P4	“I think [South African fashion designers] are just the ones that might just be able to slowly but surely change our minds, also exposure to them is difficult, if you don't consciously go and look for, for these designers you won't necessarily find them. Big fashion magazines don't feature them cause it's too expensive to promote them.”
	P1	“I think as a designer it's your responsibility to educate your customers and educate those in your supply chain ... and if you educate your consumers it would have a more knock on effect.”
	P2	“[Designers] are the ones who know so we should be the ones who's paying it forward and letting people know how it's supposed to be and what the

		impacts are of these Chinese clothing and fast fashion and quickly changing trends and we should be the educators.”
Accountability in manufacturing	P1	“It's your responsibility as a designer to say, 'I don't want anything wrapped in single use plastic', or 'I don't want any synthetics used'.”
	P4	“I think the role of the local fashion designer and all of this would be to be able to give better quality.”
	P5	“I think there's more power in making a difference which will influence the consumer ... that's a good enough start to influence slow fashion and fast fashion, to either contribute or to help fight it.”
Upskill South Africans	P6	“I would hope that South African designers would you know help to upskill people and create jobs and bring manufacturing back.”
	P7	“If I am conscious of what I'm making for my collection, surely you are going to inspire someone.”
	P10	“I think our role, it goes back to manufacturing locally as a designer ... I think working towards local manufacturing.”
Maintain authenticity	P3	“We need an edge, you can't just be trends, coz why would someone buy your trendy cropped top if they can buy them at [Retailer B] for cheap.”
	P9	“The most the designer down here can do is be authentic.”
	P11	“I think the role of a designer in this country should be setting our own trends ... the role of the designer in this country is to look at who we are ... our mindset our values and our cultures to create forward thinking fresh cut fashion for specifically for our country.”

Some participants have gone so far as to say that designers themselves can revolutionise the industry if they have a strong conviction and voice to promote their ethos through marketing and educating their consumers (subcategory 1). Participant 4 stated (see Table 5.5), *“I think [South African fashion designers] are just the ones that might just be able to slowly but surely change our minds, also exposure to them is difficult, if you don't consciously go and look for, for these designers you won't necessarily find them. Big fashion magazines don't feature them cause it's too expensive to promote them.”* It is an unfortunate fact that local designers and other small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) do not have the means to promote their brands on the same scale as the larger retailers do, since they have limited access to funding and capital, creating a limitation to their reach in terms of expansion (Dibb 2017; Khanna 2018). This inevitably also has an influence on SMEs' ability to communicate their slow fashion stance to the consumer in a marketing strategy, to educate and subsequently target the pro-environmental consumer.

Other participants stated that the designer is the educated party and therefore his or her role should be to spread the knowledge related to responsible and ethical production, as far as possible. Participant 1 expressed the following opinion: *“I think as a designer it's your responsibility to educate your customers and educate those in your supply chain ... and if you educate your consumers it would have a more knock on effect.”* Likewise, Participant 2 stated (refer to Table 5.5), *“[Designers] are the ones who know so we should be the ones who's paying it forward and letting people know how it's supposed to be and what the impacts are of these Chinese clothing and fast fashion and quickly changing trends and we should be the educators.”* Jung and Jin (2016) also documented the value of education and the spreading of awareness as a means to bring to light the damage of overconsumption and the impact of both fast and slow fashion as a whole. However, this information, combined with the consumers' perspectives, seems to highlight the spreading of this knowledge and education and that it should also come from the designers.

Another aspect that participants addressed was that of the designers becoming more conscious, responsible and accountable in the process of clothing manufacturing (subcategory 2). According to Participant 1, *“It's your responsibility as a designer to*

say, *'I don't want anything wrapped in single use plastic', or 'I don't want any synthetics used'.* Participant 4 addressed the element of longevity in clothing by stating, *"I think the role of the local fashion designer and all of this would be to be able to give better quality."* Likewise, Participant 5 said, *"I think there's more power in making a difference which will influence the consumer ... that's a good enough start to influence slow fashion and fast fashion, to either contribute or to help fight it"*, implying that designers can choose to be responsible and ethical in every part of the design process, including sourcing of fabric and a workforce, as this is a good contribution to slow fashion and the local clothing industry.

Two of the participants made mention of the designer's ability to upskill the workforce (subcategory 3), to contribute towards local manufacture while concurrently supporting job creation. Participant 6 claimed, as stated in Table 5.5, *"I would hope that South African designers would you know help to upskill people and create jobs and bring manufacturing back."* Participant 7 also stated, *"If I am conscious of what I'm making for my collection, surely you are going to inspire someone."* Similarly, Participant 10 expressed this view: *"I think our role, it goes back to manufacturing locally as a designer ... I think working towards local manufacturing."* This statement implies that manufacturing locally will have a direct impact on job creation, which has been noted as an irrefutable need in the country. There are other local designers who have the same beliefs and have incorporated the passing on of knowledge to communities in need as a part of their business plan (Finney 2017).

Finally, the matter of authenticity (subcategory 4) was addressed by the participants. Participant 3, who is a fashion designer, stated that *"we need an edge, you can't just be trends, coz why would someone buy your trendy cropped top if they can buy them at [Retailer B] for cheap"*, expressing the view that the sustainability and longevity of her clothing as slow fashion garments are what set her apart from common fast fashion brands. She recognises this factor as a useful selling point. Participant 9 stated (see Table 5.5): *"The most the designer down here can do is be authentic."* According to Participant 11, *"I think the role of a designer in this country should be setting our own trends ... the role of the designer in this country is to look at who we are ... our mindset our values and our cultures to create forward thinking fresh cut fashion for specifically for our country."* She argued that designers should look for inspiration from within the

continent rather than from outside. It is considered important for South African designers to be original and not be influenced by international sources to mould their creativity, but to rather draw inspiration from their local culture and heritage.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Chapter 5 presented findings relative to the third objective, which was to determine millennial slow fashion consumers' perspectives of the role of slow fashion towards sustainability in the local clothing industry. The participants' attitudes towards slow fashion's relevance in South Africa were analysed, raising just two subcategories, hopeful and sceptical. However, both the 'hopefuls' and the 'sceptics' believe that slow fashion is somewhat relevant to the local clothing industry. The problems with slow fashion in the country were identified by the participants as a lack of knowledge regarding slow fashion, a lack of transparency and information from retailers about the products that are sold, unclear or misconstrued information pertaining to slow fashion, a lack of convenience or ease of access to slow fashion products, the influx of imported clothing that flushes out the viability of the local clothing industry, demographics in terms of average household income in the country and, finally, the high cost of slow fashion, which proved to be a hindrance to the growth of the slow fashion industry. Solutions to some of these problems were discussed, whereby an increased awareness through education related to slow fashion stood out as a prominent resolution to many of the problems. Most of the participants identified the consumer as the key to influencing the direction the clothing industry has taken and could take in the future. However, the fashion industry must also change its production behaviour. Additionally, the local fashion designer has also been identified as having an influential role in the production and expansion of slow fashion in South Africa, implying that change should come from both consumers and industry (manufacturers and retailers).

## CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

*“I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think.”*

— *Socrates* (Goodreads n.d.[b]).

### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions, attitudes and awareness regarding slow fashion consumption. This chapter concludes the body of research as presented in Chapter 1 to Chapter 5. These conclusions will be framed around the objectives that guided the research in order to address the aim, namely:

Objective 1: To investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions of slow fashion consumption.

Objective 2: To investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' attitudes towards slow fashion consumption.

Objective 3: To determine millennial slow fashion consumers' perspectives of the role of slow fashion towards sustainability in the local clothing industry.

#### 6.1.1 Millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions of slow fashion consumption (Objective 1)

The first objective intended to investigate millennial slow fashion consumers' perceptions of slow fashion. Consumers' perceptions of fashion were the dominant theme under this objective. The first emerging category focused on consumers' perceptions of fast fashion. Many participants discussed the connection between fast fashion and the pollutive by-products being produced through its production processes. The fast fashion industry has in fact been recognised as a substantial contributor to environment harms and pollution (Anastasia 2017). Over-production also emerged as an issue. It was noted that many fast fashion retailers are often left with large amounts of excess stock at the end of a season, which they attempt to sell by marking down the prices on these items. Overconsumption was also recognised as a destructive practice, consequential of the short life cycle associated with fast fashion. It was suggested that marked-down excess stock influences the overconsumption of

fast fashion items. The participants' perceptions around fast fashion proved to be mostly negative. Studies have revealed a distinct connection between fast fashion resulting in the overproduction of clothing and is thus seen as a contributor to over consumption (Anastasia 2017; Rudenko 2018; Crumbie 2019; Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). Participants perceived the fast fashion industry to be founded on and run with the sole intention being economic gain. Finally, fast fashion was determined to be synonymous with poor quality clothing that was not made to last. Danie (n.d) confirms this observation by identifying that the sole intention of the industry to increase profits.

The second category, consumer perceptions of slow fashion, reflected on slow production and slow trends as a part of its constructs. Consumers of slow fashion are understood to make clothing purchases when there is need for a specific item rather than be influenced by emerging trends. Slow fashion clothing was perceived to be synonymous with good quality fabric and construction methods, which were connected to the longevity of the item. The idea that slow fashion represented conscious consumption surfaced commonly among participants as they stated that they were mindful of their consumption decisions and the purchases they made pertaining to clothing. The mindless consumption of clothing was perceived to be linked to fast fashion consumption. Similarly, studies reveal that slow fashion does indeed encompass the ideals of longevity and mindful consumption through the higher quality of the clothing and slower trends (Leslie et al 2014; Davis 2019; Kerner 2018).

The third and final category under the theme of consumers' perceptions of fashion was consumers' awareness of ecological and social issues pertaining to fast fashion consumption and production. Some participants were outspokenly aware of waste by-products produced as a result of clothing production and consumption. Participants were conscious of the relationship between the high levels of clothing production and consumption and the negative effect of the resulting waste by-products, as well as the disposal of these items on the environment. The adverse social impact was also recognised and discussed under this category. Overall, slow fashion was perceived as less harmful than fast fashion, in terms of environmental and social impact by the participants. These perceptions are confirmed by studies that confirm the slow fashion ethos to be an environmentally and socially responsible one (Štefko & Steffek 2018; Okur & Saricam 2019, Rudenko 2018).

### **6.1.2 Millennial slow fashion consumers' attitudes towards slow fashion consumption (Objective 2)**

Objective 2 aimed to establish millennial slow fashion consumers' attitudes towards slow fashion. The prevalent theme that surfaced was consumers' attitudes and behaviour in relation to fashion consumption, as it was determined that people's attitudes motivated their behaviour.

Material simplicity was one of the emerging categories, which focused on aspects such as minimalism. Minimalism was often linked to slow fashion, as it was determined that both movements have similar constructs, founded in a need for lower consumption levels. Slow fashion has been recognised as a promotor of lower consumption through the slow trends released and high quality of the clothing which encourages longevity (Gottberg n.d; Hara 2017; Pozin 2016). Lower consumption levels have been recognised as a higher quality of life was discussed, which involved an increase in life experiences, with less focus on material possessions. Participants, in turn, were aware of their spending habits as they re-evaluated the importance of possessions over lived experiences.

The aspect of self-determination surfaced as an integral category whereby certain elements, such as conscious consumption and consumption out of necessity, were revisited. Both these elements are founded in the willingness and self-determination to change one's behaviour according to the individual's beliefs, in relation to what the individual values. Likewise, self-determination has been defined as the individuals ability to alter their way of thinking or behaving by making decisions to do so (Collins dictionary 2019). It was found that consumption out of necessity was a by-product of conscious consumption. The aspect of personal growth was discussed as a process whereby individuals' consumption practices were altered according to the personal growth that they experienced over time. This growth was more than likely as a result of exposure to knowledge regarding the issues around the fast fashion clothing industry and the problems related to consumption.

Affordability, quality to ensure longevity, convenience, sustainable or ethically sound and locally manufactured products were discussed as the motivators behind the choice of retailers. Participants were found to be price-sensitive, in that the clothing from their retailer of choice had to be affordable for them. The retailer of choice should

also provide good quality clothing, synonymous with the longevity of the item to be favoured. Sustainably and ethically sound retailers were also favoured; however, it was mentioned that even when retailers were not entirely sustainable but were showing an effort by the initiation of sustainable and ethical movements, they were deemed good enough for participants to favour them. Locally produced clothing from local manufacturers was also preferred by consumers. However, said participants acknowledged that locally produced clothing would have higher prices, but this was acceptable to them because of the value that was placed on local manufacturing. Research shows that individuals in favour of sustainable products and services are still sensitive to prices but are willing to pay more for these products and services (Pookulangara & Shephard 2013; Saricam & Okur 2019).

It was important to understand, according to the objective, what the participants' attitudes were towards consumption of fashion; however, it was interesting to note the motivation behind their consumption behaviour and to interpret that against their actual consumption behaviour. The most common motivator for consumption of clothing was necessity. Accordingly, research shows that this is a common motivator for slow fashion consumers (Leslie et al. 2014; Kerner 2018). The participating consumers were also influenced by the price of the garment and were therefore wooed to consume by sales and mark-downs.. This factor further suggests the participants are indeed price sensitive and may on occasion be wooed by impulse purchases. Once again, the aspect of garment longevity arose. This has been a common element, together with that of consumption out of necessity, which is commonly appealing to slow fashion consumers. It is evident that consumption could be increased or decreased according to a change in life priorities. This could affect the millennial's consumption behaviour. Finally, the driver that is common to both the fast and slow fashion industry, is that of aesthetics. It has been determined that the garment must still fulfil an aesthetically appealing requirement, together with the ideals of social and environmental accountability. Actual clothing consumption behaviour proved to have great variation, in the frequency of clothing purchasing and in terms of differences among participants, which could be influenced by any number of external and internal factors. It can therefore be established that for the most part, millennial slow fashion consumers' attitudes towards consumption are congruent with their actual consumption behaviour, with the exception of a few variables, such as the favouring

of sale items of fast fashion clothing, which is synonymous with overconsumption. In conjunction, studies identify the longevity of the slow fashion item, the aesthetics of the item and the need for the item as contributors to encourage one to purchase clothing (Kerner 2017; Štefko and Steffek 2018; Jung & Jin 2016; Kowalski 2018).

### **6.1.3 Millennial slow fashion consumers' perspectives on the role of slow fashion towards sustainability in the local clothing industry (Objective 3)**

Conclusive findings of the third objective revealed the third theme, which is focused on consumers' perspectives on the role of slow fashion as a sustainable fashion solution in South Africa. The participants' opinions regarding slow fashion's relevance in South Africa were analysed, raising just two subcategories, hopeful and sceptical. Nearly all participants believed that slow fashion is somewhat relevant to the local clothing industry. The majority believed there was tremendous hope and potential for the slow fashion industry to thrive in this country. However, there were several sceptical views, which were focused on the inability of a movement such as this to thrive as mainstream in a Third World country. The sceptics expressed the view that slow fashion was relevant; however, it was unlikely to experience substantial growth in South Africa.

When assessing the general perception regarding slow fashion in the country, the issues faced and possible solutions to them, the dominant category seemed to be that of a lack of knowledge and a need for the spread of knowledge and awareness regarding slow fashion and its constructs. It has been suggested that everyone, from the consumer, to the designers, to the manufacturer and suppliers, need to be educated about slow fashion. Another important factor to promote slow fashion and sustainable products was found in the need for increased information and greater transparency from retailers. It was found to be important that consumers are given the option to make an 'informed decision' when choosing products, with easily accessible or visible information presented with it. Misconstrued information was also an aspect proving to be a hindrance to the slow fashion industry. It has been discussed that slow fashion is often assumed to be too expensive and often unaffordable.. On the contrary, Dibbs (2017) clarifies that a large portion of the South African population that is able to afford some of the common mainstream brands are more than likely able to afford local designer wear and slow fashion brands. Even though slow fashion does carry a

higher price tag than some fast fashion brands, it has been stated that the pricing is similar to, if not sometimes cheaper than, clothing found in popular fast fashion retailers. The ease of access to slow fashion brands seems to be an aspect that needs attention. Slow fashion brands are not marketed on the same scale as fast fashion retailers' brands, making it less convenient to purchase, as compared to that of fast fashion retailers, which are available in almost every shopping centre. Saricam and Okur (2019) express the value and need for the spread of knowledge and awareness around slow fashion and its ethos, as likely to contribute substantially to the growth of the industry.

With the excessive clothing imports brought into South Africa on a regular basis, there is less room left for the local manufacturing industry to thrive. Imported clothing is easy to access as it is found everywhere, at affordable prices, with new trends being released very often. Excessive clothing imports have and continue to choke the local clothing manufacturing industry, with no exception to the local slow fashion industry. The large amount of imports brought into the country seem to have a damaging and somewhat fatal effect on the South African clothing industry as a whole (May 2019). The matter of the country's demographic profile could not be overlooked. Slow fashion is said to have mainstream platforms in countries overseas; however, it seems to be a niche market in South Africa. Some of the reasons for this have been attributed to South Africa's third world status, unequal incomes and high unemployment rates. It can be determined that the percentage of the population that could afford to support slow fashion clothing would make up the minority, albeit that slow fashion can sometimes be seen as competitive in terms of the price of fast fashion garments (Omarjee 2019).

Consumer perception regarding who the greater influence in the fashion industry is, was divided into two categories – the consumer as the key influencer and the industry as the influencer of the consumer's consumption behaviour. The majority of the participants stated that consumers have the ultimate authority and ability to direct the industry in the direction they want it to go, emphasising that the consumer has the ability to demand more slow fashion. Gwozdz et al (2017) presented the same hypothesis, claiming the consumer is the greatest influencer and driver in the fashion industry.

Additionally, the final theme was focused on the slow fashion designer. Much mention was made of the role of the South African fashion designer and her or his duty to vocalise consumption issues. It was stated that part of their role is to inform others about aspects like conscious consumption and the positive attributes of locally manufactured slow fashion clothing. It has also been mentioned that it is the role of the designer to be accountable, responsible and authentic in their practices and designs, to contribute to a healthier local fashion industry. They have also been recognised as the individuals with the ability to upskill the clothing manufacturing workforce in the country, as there is a dire need for an increase in local manufacturing. Dibb (2017) has similarly identified the invaluable role of the local fashion designer to the South African clothing market, due to the impact it could have on a number of different sectors.

## **6.2 Conclusion regarding the project's aim and objectives**

This chapter intended to analyse the data retrieved in order to fulfil the aim and the objectives of the study. When identifying the relevance of slow fashion in the country, the unanimous response was that it is relevant; however, the many issues this movement faces leave room for much adaptation and growth. Problems creating a hindrance to the slow fashion movement included a lack of consumer knowledge of and public focus on the topic, a lack of transparency from the retailer, the higher pricing of items that does not suit the demographics of the country, and the inconvenience in accessing these slow fashion producers. Another problem that surfaced was the excessive importing of fast fashion clothing into the country, which is said to be suffocating the local clothing industry, advertently affecting local designers and negatively affecting job creation. Most of the participants stated that the consumer has the greatest ability to influence change in the fashion industry. An overruling belief was that slow fashion is not a mainstream concept in this country. This was similarly proved by the fact that all of the participants in the study had a qualification in fashion design and were involved in the fashion and clothing industry as academics or fashion designers, further cementing the notion that slow fashion is currently a niche industry, familiar typically to those involved in the fashion or clothing industry in some way. Even though it currently serves a niche market, a highly anticipated awareness of this movement is growing, granting it the potential to develop into a substantial part of the fashion and clothing industry.

### **6.3 Limitations**

Because the project was qualitative in nature, the results are not generalisable to the millennial slow fashion population at large. It was, however, not the aim of the project to provide results that can be generalised, but rather to provide an in-depth understanding of the topic at hand. A further possible limitation is that the project employed purposive sampling. In order to gain a true reflection of the topic at hand from the average consumer, a random sampling strategy would be preferred. However, as with the nature of the research, in order to investigate the South African millennial slow fashion consumer's attitude and perceptions regarding the impact of slow fashion on sustainable consumption, it was necessary to use purposive sampling. It is therefore recommended that future research regarding this topic should incorporate a quantitative and/or mixed methods approach with a random and/or criterion sample in order to generalise the findings to the South African millennial slow fashion consumer.

Limitations from the data collection method could also be anticipated. The matter of biased responses from the participants could prove to be a limitation to the study. It is possible that participants provided answers to questions that they considered to be the correct answers, rather than an honest and truthful response. It was therefore made clear to the participants that their honest opinions were appreciated, and that there were no right or wrong answers during the data collection phase, with the aim of putting the participants at ease and promoting honest and truthful accounts of the topic at hand.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that the fact that most of the participants in this study were fashion designers, could be considered a limitation or an aspect that is likely to affect the overall results of the study, in terms of their above-average knowledge of slow fashion. As previously mentioned in the study, this was not one of the sampling criteria for participants, however it was an occurrence that happened without contemplation.

### **6.4 Contributions**

The contribution of the project can be regarded as two-fold, namely a theoretical contribution as well as a practical contribution. The results of the study will add to the

body of literature in terms of the slow fashion movement, explained from the theoretical foundation of the voluntary simplicity movement. This topic can still be regarded as under-researched, specifically in the context of the millennial slow fashion consumer in South Africa. Through gaining a theoretical understanding of the topic in question, the results can be interpreted and recommendations made to tertiary fashion institutions and local fashion designers, among others involved in the industry. This can be presented as data that can be translated into practical solutions that might mediate some of the negative effects of the fast fashion industry in an acceptable manner within the growing consumer culture of slow fashion.

## **6.5 Recommendations**

### **6.5.1 Educate and create awareness brand building**

Evidence shows that a lack of education and awareness stunts the growth of the slow fashion industry in the country. Education and increased awareness can be achieved through formal and informal learning mediums. Various methods could be utilised to contribute to solving this issue, such as increased exposure of individuals to slow fashion at a tertiary level, to educate and create awareness regarding the problems related to consumption of fast fashion and the ethos or value of slow fashion as a means to counter these problems (May 2019). Students studying towards an education in fashion design should be informed at entry level of the methods and resources available to them, to approach design practice in a more sustainable manner.

If fashion designers are trained at a tertiary level on ways in which to market their brands, this could contribute to increased information on fashion designers, which will add to a larger body of knowledge made readily available. Fashion designers in the country, who often fulfil the criteria of slow fashion because they run small-scale production enterprises as SMEs, should endeavour to communicate these issues to their consumers, to increase awareness.

Social media should be utilised as a viable platform by which fashion designers could build their brands, businesses and spread information about where and how to easily access their clothing (Gwozdz et al. 2017; Uptmoor 2014). Social media could also be used to informally educate family and peers through exposure to said social media

platforms. Considering the limited funding available to SMEs, improved marketing through avenues such as social media could help grow their brands and businesses (Dibb 2017; Khanna 2018). Widespread information about these brands also contributes to convenience and ease of access to their clothing. Convenience and ease of access have emerged as significant contributors to consumers' clothing consumption decisions. This inevitably has an influence on the ability of SMEs to communicate their slow fashion stance to the consumer in a marketing strategy to educate consumers and subsequently target the pro-environmental consumer. An increase in slow fashion consumption in the country will ultimately contribute to the slow fashion industry globally.

### **6.5.2 Maintain authenticity**

It is considered important for the South African designer to be original and not to be influenced by international sources to mould their creativity. Designers should draw inspiration from the rich culture and heritage of the country and continent. This could promote a level of authenticity that is needed in the clothing industry, according to the data discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.2.1, subcategory 4. A combination of cultural influence, together with a slow fashion stance, could set South African fashion designers apart as truly authentic and could give them an edge that may be welcomed on a global scale.

### **6.5.3 Possibilities for South Africans who cannot afford slow fashion**

It is evident that slow fashion is not a practical option for the large percentage of South Africans who earn a minimum wage, less than minimum wage, or who are unemployed. However, to alleviate the level of clothing consumption in the country, these individuals could be taught skills to prolong the life of their clothing. If information pertaining to methods of caring for clothing and ways to repair clothing is spread, it could make a substantial impact on the longevity of the wearer's clothing, and on consumption levels in the country. Such practices to extend the lifespan of clothing fall in line with an aspect of the VSM, which is a means by which one could consume less.

## **6.6 Future research**

In Chapter 4, section 4.3.4 (Motivation behind consumption), subcategory 4 discussed priority purchases. This subcategory addressed consumers who consume less

clothing for themselves, after their priorities were altered and redirected to their children. It has not been clarified if this resulted in a reduction in consumption. This presents an area with room for further research, whereby the actual consumption of consumers with children could be investigated.

It would also be of interest to investigate the perceptions, attitudes and perspectives of the different sectors of the South African clothing industry regarding the relevance of slow fashion in the country. Such an investigation could provide valuable information and knowledge in an area of study that is still considered to be under-researched, namely the topic of slow fashion in South Africa.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

This chapter concluded the body of research within context, framed around the theoretical underpinnings of the study, and guided by the aim and objectives. Furthermore, this chapter presented the limitations, contributions and recommendations of the study. It has been deduced that, apart from the many ills of the fast fashion industry, overconsumption proves to be an important matter in need of an urgent solution. The South African slow fashion industry can be considered a viable approach to alleviate the problem of fashion overconsumption. The consumer can be considered a significant contributor to the alleviation of fashion overconsumption and to the growth of the slow fashion industry. However, greater measures need to be employed in the country to increase education regarding slow fashion and slow fashion manufacturers, such as local fashion designers, for any change to manifest. The ideals of the VSM should also be promoted as they encourage simplicity of living through the reduction of consumption and by promoting the philosophy that value can be found in lived experiences and inner peace. These values thereby promote the ethos of slow fashion and could be a practical option for the South African consumer.

*“Because this is my land. I can feel it, tremendous, still primeval, looming, musing downward upon the tent, the camp—this whole puny evanescent clutter of human sojourn which after our two weeks will vanish, and in another week will be completely healed, traceless in this unmarked solitude. It is mine, though I have never owned a foot of it, and never will. I have never wanted to, not even after I saw that it is doomed, not even after I began to watch it retreat year by year before the onslaught of axe and saw and log-lines and then dynamite and plow. Because there was never any one for me to acquire and possess it from because it had belonged to no one man. It belonged to all; we had only to use it well, humbly, and with pride.” — William Faulkner (Goodreads n.d.[a]).*

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## APPENDIX A: Ethics approval letter



### CAES HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date: 03/12/2018

Dear Ms Moodly

**Decision: Ethics Approval from  
01/12/2018 to 30/11/2019**

NHREC Registration # : REC-170616-051

REC Reference # : 2018/CAES/169

Name : Ms C Moodly

Student # : 41493761

**Researcher(s):** Ms C Moodly  
[cheryldene.p@gmail.com](mailto:cheryldene.p@gmail.com)

**Supervisor (s):** Dr L Christie  
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Ms M Strydom  
[strydm1@unisa.ac.za](mailto:strydm1@unisa.ac.za); 011-471-2039

**Working title of research:**

The millennial South African consumers' perception, attitude and behaviour regarding slow fashions impact on sustainable consumption

**Qualification:** M Consumer Science

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the CAES Health Research Ethics Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for a one-year period. After one year the researcher is required to submit a progress report, upon which the ethics clearance may be renewed for another year.

**Due date for progress report: 30 November 2019**

*Please note the points below for further action:*

1. The researcher stipulates that ten participants are targeted. Whilst this could be the minimum number required for saturation, the researcher should allow for more participants if saturation is not reached by that point.
2. Will the stipulated interview questions address all the objectives? The researcher is requested to indicate which questions will address each objective.



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*The **low risk application** was **reviewed** by the CAES Health Research Ethics Committee on 29 November 2018 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2018/CAES/169** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

URERC 25.04.17 - Decision template (V2) - Approve

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## **APPENDIX B: Participant information sheet**

Ethics clearance reference number:

Research permission reference number:

November 18, 2018

Title: The Millennial South African consumer's perception, attitude and awareness regarding slow fashion's impact on sustainable consumption

### **Dear Prospective Participant**

My name is Cheryldene Moodly and I am doing research with Dr Lorna Christie and Ms. Mariette Strydom, lecturers in the Department of Life and Consumer Science towards a Masters' degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled, the Millennial South African consumers' attitude versus behavior regarding slow fashions impact on sustainable consumption.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

I am conducting this research to find out what the slow fashion consumers eagerness and perceptions toward slow fashion, as well as to determine their point of view regarding the relevance of slow fashion to the fashion industry. This information will be used to fulfil the intention of the study, which is to contribute toward the enrichment of research and information regarding slow fashion, as well as to promote sustainable and responsible fashion consumption.

### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

I sent a request on Facebook and Twitter for slow fashion consumers who are willing to participate in interviews for research study purposes. The criteria to be met was that the participants need to be South African slow fashion consumers between the ages

of 21 to 37. I chose participants who responded to my request and met the criteria. There will be approximately ten participants interviewed for this study.

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

The study involves a short demographic questionnaire and a semi-structured interview which will be recorded for data analysis purposes. The questions asked will be based on your opinion and experiences as a slow fashion consumer, regarding slow fashion. The interview could take approximately 30-60 minutes in total.

### **CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do choose to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason or penalty.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The potential benefit of taking part in this study is found in the contribution this study intends to make toward research on slow fashion. Since this study aims to ultimately promote sustainable and responsible fashion consumption, you will likewise be contributing toward the same objective.

### **ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

There are no negative consequences that may arise should you participate in the research project.

### **WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, such as the members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. It is possible that information retrieved from the interview may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings, the data will however maintain anonymity. Participants will remain unidentifiable even if the study is submitted for publication.

### **HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer and an external storage device by the researcher for a period of five years in a safe at my private residence for future research or academic purposes. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Electronic information will be permanently deleted through the use of relevant software functionality should the information need to be destroyed.

### **WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

There are no incentives for participation in this study and your participation is voluntary.

### **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

### **HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Cheryldene Moodly on 082 304 9384 or [cheryldene.p@gmail.com](mailto:cheryldene.p@gmail.com). The findings are accessible for a five-year period. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Cheryldene Moodly on 082 304 9384 or [cheryldene.p@gmail.com](mailto:cheryldene.p@gmail.com).

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Lorna Christie on 011 471 2811 or [chrisl@unisa.ac.za](mailto:chrisl@unisa.ac.za). Contact the research ethics chairperson of the CAES General Ethics Review Committee, Prof EL Kempen on 011-471-2241 or [kempeel@unisa.ac.za](mailto:kempeel@unisa.ac.za) if you have any ethical concerns.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Cheryldene Moodly

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname.....(please print)

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

## APPENDIX C: Demographic profile questionnaire

RESEARCH PROJECT: Facilitating Consumers' perspective on slow fashion within the South African fashion industry

Respondent number	V1	
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Dear participant. You have been selected to take part in a study that will assist the researcher in gaining knowledge about the slow fashion consumers eagerness and perceptions toward slow fashion, as well as to determine their point of view regarding the relevance of slow fashion to the fashion industry. We would appreciate your honest opinion about the questions that will be put to you as the researcher is interested in gaining a greater understanding of the topic of research. Your honest opinion will be appreciated. Please note: ALL INFORMATION WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL

DEMOGRAPHICS											For office use only		
1	What is your gender?		Male			1	Female			2	V2		
2	What is your age?		Years								V3		
3	What is your approximate total monthly expenditure on clothing?							Rand		V4			
4	Please indicate your ethnic affiliation												
	Black	1	White	2	Coloured	3	Indian	4	Other	5	V5		
5	What is your highest level of education?												
	Lower than matric/ Grade 12									1	V6		
	Matric/ Grade 12									2			
	Grade 12 + a degree/ diploma									3			
6	Please indicate your marital status												
	Single									1	V7		
	Married/living with a partner									2			
	Divorced/ separated									3			
	Widow(er)									4			
7	Please indicate your status of employment												
	Permanent full time									1	V8		
	Permanent part time									2			
	Contract work									3			
	Self- employed									4			
	Unemployed									5			
8	In which province/suburb do you reside?											V9	

## APPENDIX D: Interview questions

1. How often do you purchase clothing?
2. Which retailer do you purchase these items from?
3. Have you heard of the term slow fashion, if so what do you know about it?
4. Would you consider this retailer a slow fashion/sustainable/eco-friendly retailer?
5. Why or why not; in your understanding would this retailer be classified as a slow fashion retailer?
6. Why do you choose to purchase items from this retailer?
7. What type of consumer would you classify yourself as and why?
8. What would you say are the fundamentals of slow fashion in general?
9. Do you think slow fashion is relevant to the South African fashion industry as a whole?
10. How relevant do you think your clothing consumption practices are as a consumer and do you think you could make an impact to the local clothing industry?
11. What do you think can be done to promote slow fashion or responsible clothing consumption in South Africa?

What do you think the role of a designer should be in this country, considering the relevance of Chinese imported clothing (fast fashion) in the industry?

## APPENDIX E: Editor's certificate

20 January 2020

### LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that I have conducted the language editing and reference verification of the dissertation of Cheryldene Moody.

Title: **The millennial consumer's perception, attitude and awareness regarding slow fashion consumption in South Africa**

Exclusions: **Appendices were not edited.**

The following reference works were used as sources of authority:

Burger, M. 2010. *Bibliographic style & referencing techniques*. Pretoria: Unisa.

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Word count: 53,931  
Character count: 297,813  
Submission date: 23-Jan-2020 08:10AM (UTG+0200)  
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