THE IMPACT OF CUSTOMER-CENTRIC SUSTAINABILITY ON BRAND RELATIONSHIP

A Study Of The Portuguese Fast Fashion Consumers

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The web of support that has surrounded me over the completion of this research has been enormous. This thesis would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of those around me. You are far too many for me to mention you here but please note you have my deep gratitude.

Above all, I would like to thank my mother, Susana, for her unconditional love, support and patience. I inherited your determination and persistence which was surely helpful in this journey. I extend my gratitude to my remaining family and friends who played a fundamental role since the very first day of my master's degree.

I am also most grateful to have met some wonderful colleagues when I embarked on the journey that this master's degree was. I am thankful to Ana, Catarina and Filipa for always extending a helping hand and for helping me getting through some of my struggles. This journey would not have been the same without your comforting and encouraging words.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Prof. Mafalda Nogueira, without whom I would not have been able to complete this thesis. Thank you for your insight and for always being supportive and enthusiastic about the subject of this research.

ABSTRACT

The present research proposes to contribute to measure Sheth's et al. (2011) the three dimensions of customer-centric sustainability (economic, environmental and social) and the impact that these individual dimensions have on dimensions of brand relationship, particularly brand trust, affective brand commitment and continuance brand commitment.

The conceptual model formulated in this research was tested through the collection of a non-probability convenience sample. Statistical procedures were applied to the sample of Portuguese fast fashion consumers (n= 228) collected.

The results of the research showed that there was a significant relationship between all the dimensions of CCS and brand trust, and also that economic sustainability and social sustainability were significant to predict affective brand commitment. In addition, this study showcased that brand trust also influenced positively the intention of consumers to maintain a long term relationship with fast fashion brands.

The results obtained are further detailed in this study and implications of these results for managers and theory were also detailed.

Keywords: Triple bottom line, Customer-centric sustainability, Sustainability, Fast fashion, Brand trust, Brand commitment

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCS - Customer-centric sustainability

EFA – Exploratory factor analysis

H&M - Hennes & Mauritz

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TBL – Triple bottom line

UN - United Nation's

WCED - World Commission on Environment and Development

INTRODUCTION

Mckinsey & Company has called 2019 "the year of the awakening" to indicate that it was a year where consumers started pushing fashion brands to act on what concerns sustainability. Consumers are pushing brands to make a stand, as controversial as it may be, and are also willing to reward those actions (Amed, I., Balchandani, A., Beltrami, M., Berg, A., Hedrich, S., Rölkens, 2018).

The fast fashion industry is well known as having a fair share of problems on what concerns sustainability. The documentary "The True Cost" shed light on the issues that arise down the fashion supply chain. The documentary tackled on many issues such as the consequences of intense use of pesticide in India which are causing malformations on newborn children (Hargreaves, 2015).

Other news reporting on the lack of conditions in manufacturing countries have made headlines. One particularly tragic event was the disaster in Bangladesh's Rana Plaza factory which got nearly 1.200 people killed. The factory building had structural issues, however the pressure to finish order kept the factory working until it collapsed. However, this incident forced fast fashion brands such as Primark and H&M to make investments to assure that the fabric in which they were producing were structurally safe (Butler, 2013).

Building from the above interest on the topic of sustainability, this study proposes to measure sustainability and its influence on customer-brand relationship dimensions such as brand trust and brand commitment. However, one of the first challenges is that ssustainability is not a concept that is clearly defined as there lacks consensus between researchers and many times is confused solely with environmental concerns (Lundblad & Davies, 2015). Notwithstanding, this study is interested in a multidimensional approach of sustainability which considers both environmental and social dimensions while also equally considering the economical bottom line (Elkington, 1998).

This study will look at each of the dimensions of sustainability from a customer-centric perspective, thus enabling results to provide marketers with insight on how to operationalize actions to better manage the relationship with consumers with the help of sustainability. Fast fashion brands are increasingly trying to implement sustainability strategies (Mcneill & Moore, 2015), and this research strives to provide information that will help them better manage those strategies. This shows the relevance of this research since previous studies have indicated that brands can benefit from the use of use of sustainable marketing strategies (Chang & Jai, 2015) namely since it can help strengthen the consumer-brand relationship (H. Choi et al., 2015; Park & Kim, 2016).

The presented research aims to contribute to measuring the impact of sustainability's dimensions of fast fashion brands on brand relationship with its consumers. This thesis will endeavour to investigate the impact of sustainability on brand trust and brand commitment, both of which are dimensions of brand relationship. In addition, it will confirm whether there are significant differences among the impact of the dimension of sustainability on each of these dimensions of brand relationship. One should stress that the purpose of this thesis is not to report any misdeed of fast fashion retailers, but rather to explore the existing paradox of sustainable environmental practices undertaken by corporations in this industry and consumer outputs such as purchase brand trust and brand commitment.

Following this introduction, this thesis continues by presenting a literature review which tackles with more detail the customer-centric sustainability framework and how each of the dimensions of the framework can impact the consumer-brand relationship. The section afterwards centres the attention on the hypotheses this thesis aims to test and also presents the conceptual model that will guide the research. The following section presents the methodology used to conduct this study, and the subsequent sections reflect upon the analysis of collected data and discussion of the obtained results. The last section presents conclusions and implications of this research.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The present literature review will start by provide an overview of the state of the art of sustainability in the fast fashion industry. Later, it will explore the triple bottom line framework as well as the customer-centric sustainability framework which serve as the base for how this study will look and measure sustainability. Finally, this review will also detail the impacts of the multiple dimensions of sustainability on indicators of brand relationship, namely brand trust and brand commitment.

1.1. Sustainability in the Context of Fast Fashion

The current study focusses heavily on sustainability in the fast fashion industry, thus the literature review will start by providing further clarification on the phrase "fast fashion" and to define what sustainability encompasses in this industry and help to clarify the term sustainable fashion.

1.1.1. The Concept of "Fast Fashion"

The term "fast fashion" refers to inexpensively made clothing which is marked at low prices. These clothes replicate trends that are showcased in luxury fashion, and thus they become available to consumers that desire them but would not have a chance to buy them at a luxury price point (Joy et al., 2012).

The fast fashion industry was capable of offering cheap and accessible fashion to the masses which was seen as a democratization of fashion (Von Busch, 2018). Other authors such as Ritzer (2009) called this phenomenon the McDonaldization of fashion. A phenomenon that the author describes was seen in many aspects of societal life. Fast fashion looks to adjust and satisfy to the consumer needs and rapid changes in taste (Black, 2008). According to Haug and Busch (2015) fast fashion programs the obsolescence of its products which in turn causes the necessity for the consumers to repurchase again from them.

Fast fashion retailers work with very short lead times to quickly respond to consumers changing demands (Bick et al., 2018). There are many notable European fast fashion brands such as Zara, Hennes & Mauritz (H&M) or Mango, who have achieved worldwide success by operating under a fast fashion business model. Zara, for example, is recognized for being capable to adjust very rapidly to trends having lead times as low as 15 days (T. M. Choi et al., 2010).

1.1.2. The Concept of Sustainable Fashion

Sustainability on the other hand still ought to have a definition on which researchers agree (Lundblad & Davies, 2015). According to the Cambridge Dictionary, sustainability is "the quality of causing little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time". Sustainable fashion is often associated with the words organic, fair trade, green and sustainable (Lundblad & Davies, 2015). Examples of sustainable practices in the fashion industry may include but are not limited to the use of recycled, vegan or organic materials (Rolling & Sadachar, 2018).

The concept of sustainable fashion gained tracking during the 1960s when consumers started gaining awareness of the malicious effects that clothing manufacturing had on the environment. There is no straightforward definition of sustainable fashion because it is subjective in nature. However, the underlying principles of sustainable fashion included, for example, transparency over the production process and traceability of raw materials, as well as social aspects such as working conditions (Henninger et al., 2009). Recently sustainable fashion has been linked to the movement of slow fashion whose philosophy is consistent with the Slow Food movement originated in Italy in the 1980s. This sustainable fashion movement encourages a change of pace in fashion and supports making clothing to last longer (Clark, 2008; Jung & Jin, 2014).

The literature on sustainability is vast, however, the results presented are inconsistent and difficult to implement. Sustainability has also been measured through a variety of different instruments which results in mixed evidence of this concept (Catlin et al., 2017). There are many terms associated with sustainability such as, for example, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Both concepts, sustainability and CSR are different, but are often used interchangeably in research, which causes further confusion regarding these concepts (Peloza & Shang, 2010).

Further to the above it is clear that more research on sustainability is necessary to help clarifying this concept. Researchers have indicated that sustainability requires to be studied through various lenses, through multidimensional approaches, to better predict consumer behaviour (Catlin et al., 2017; Elkington, 1998; Sheth et al., 2011). In this sense, the present study will study sustainability has a multidimensional construct which will be presented later on during this literature review.

Further to the above, and since conversation regarding sustainability in the apparel industry has started to gain traction, with discussion centring on reducing the amounts of waste and resource consumption (Jung & Jin, 2014) we find that it is relevant to discuss the compatibility between sustainability and fast fashion, which is presented on the following section of the literature review.

1.1.3. Sustainable Fast Fashion – Is It an Oxymoron?

Consumers have started to realize that the current consumption patterns are a hazard for the environment and ethical issues have started to be increasingly discussed in the fast fashion industry (Haug & Busch, 2015). However, the question arises. Can an industry that promotes overconsumption at an alarming rate and that fuels obsolescence of its product be sustainable?

Fast fashion companies have seen an enormous reduction in their fashion cycles over the last few decades. What used to be an annual fashion cycle is now increasingly shortened to monthly or weekly (Schor, 2010). The mainstream fashion industry changed the way people buy and dispose of clothing. The manufacture-use-disposal is the core of the business model of fast fashion retailers. Brands in this industry sell a large amount of clothing at cheap prices, which has fuelled tremendous growth of consumption of clothing throughout the globe (Bick et al., 2018).

The accelerated over-consumption instigated by fast fashion retailers puts extreme pressure on natural resources (Black, 2008). The cotton cultivations which are destined to be transformed into textiles consume about 10% of all synthetic pesticides and from 20% to 25% of insecticides worldwide every year. Some of the worlds' leading producers of cotton such as India are using highly toxic pesticides which consequently have serious impacts on peoples' health and also on the environment (Mancini et al., 2008).

Consumers consider that fast fashion brands encourage a culture of fast disposal of fashion products, which in turn influences consumers to throw away or donate clothing which are still in perfectly fine conditions to be used. Many of the disposed items end up in landfill sites or are incinerated, and thus impact negatively on the environment (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007).

Further reasons why fast fashion is unsustainable may include the use of sweatshops, where employees work for many hours for low wages (Park & Kim, 2016). Researchers have also indicated that this industry has a long track record of using textiles which consume excessive amounts of water or that require chemical treatments (Black, 2008; Ossevoort, 2013). For example, the dye processes alone may require the fabrics to be immersed in 8 different water baths before the desired saturation is achieved. Some of the dye processes consume 132.5 litres of water per each pound of textile (Connell & Kozar, 2012).

In line with the above, researchers such as Schor (2010) have labelled fast fashion as being intrinsically unsustainable, given the number of products it manufactures and the pace at which these are produced. Dissanayake and Sinha (2012) have also expressed the same contradiction between fast fashion and sustainability. Fast fashion consumes an abundance of natural resources and fashion products are rapidly disposed of which is contradictory to the definition of sustainability which appeals to the conservation of resources and on minimizing the impacts on the environment.

Henninger et al. (2009) have expressed the concern that sustainable fast fashion can indeed be an oxymoron given that the apparel industry is based on consumerism. Brands are now more mindful of the materials they are using and are also taking action to reduce the use of water or chemicals in the fabrication of textiles. However, even though there is more consciousness, for example, in sourcing fabrics, clothes are still being made at accelerated rates with the intention to be sold. This is consequently going against the definition of sustainability and thus the juxtaposition of these terms together in the same phrase expresses contrasting concepts.

Despite the above, because of the rising interest on the topic of sustainability, many retailers are striving to change the course of fast fashion by attempting to eliminate or reduce the negative effects their businesses have on the environment, and consequently contradict its unsustainable nature (Mcneill & Moore, 2015). Research has shown that fast fashion retailers can benefit from positioning themselves as sustainable, through the use of sustainability marketing strategies (Chang & Jai, 2015).

Although retailers are already making efforts to change the unsustainable nature of fast fashion, this change will only be possible if consumers are willing to support it by buying the products. In this sense, the next topic of the literature review will explore the consumer side, namely consumers' attitudes towards sustainable fashion.

1.2. Sustainability: From the Triple Bottom Line to the Customer-centric sustainability

The previous section of the literature review has helped to provide a context on the state of sustainability in the fast fashion industry. It also helped to understand that sustainability is a rather complicated subject and is often used confused. Now, building from the above this study continues by focusing on a specific framework which looks at sustainability as a three-dimension concept. This framework will serve as the base for how this study will measure sustainability.

1.2.1. Sustainable Fast Fashion Consumption – The Fast Fashion Paradox

Ethical consumerism has seen a step growth as a result of the growth of consumers' interest in sustainability issues namely with concerns regarding waste, animal testing and over fair trade (Alexander Nicholls, 2002). However, the increasing concerns over these issues are not having impact on consumers' purchase behaviour. In other words, the attitudes shown by purchasers are not in line with the behaviours these showcase (Bray et al., 2011).

For instance, Cowe and Williams (2010) have found that although 30% of British consumers have expressed to be ethical purchasers, only about 3% of these actually engage in buying sustainable products. The authors have called this phenomenon the 30:3 syndrome. This same phenomenon has been reported by other researchers such has Boulstridge and Carrigan (2000) who have termed it as 'Attitude–Behaviour Gap' or also by Nicholls and Lee (2006) who have labelled it as "ethical purchase gap".

Joy et al. (2012) have indicated that although consumers have environmental and social concerns these do not necessarily translate in their decision-making process namely in their fashion purchase decisions. According to these researchers, consumers' concerns regarding sustainability aspects have already impacted their non-fashion purchasing decision but they still tend not to engage in sustainable fashion product consumption. Consumers have admitted to still indulge in low cost trendy fashion clothing, which is costly for the environment.

The table below showcases some of the impeding factors found in the literature which further explain why consumers still do not yet engage in buying sustainable products.

Table 1. Impeding factors of sustainable fashion

Impeding Factors	Researchers
Price	Carrigan and Attalla (2001); Bray et al. (2011);
Lack of Information	Carrigan and Attalla (2001); Bray et al. (2011);

Inertia	Carrigan and Attalla (2001); Nicholls and Lee (2006); Bray et al. (2011);
Quality	Carrigan and Attalla (2001); Bray et al. (2011);
Personal Experience	Bray et al. (2011);
Effort	Carrigan and Attalla (2001)
Scepticism	Carrigan and Attalla (2001); Nicholls and Lee (2006); Bray et al. (2011);
Limited Availability	Nicholls and Lee (2006)

The factor which consumers indicate more frequently that is deterring them from buying more ethically is the price. Consumers are price sensitive, and thus are reluctant to pay too much of a premium for ethical alternatives. However, when the price factor is disregarded consumers tend to still opt for the brands they usually buy and know instead of buying more ethically (Bray et al., 2011).

Earlier research found that limited availability of sustainable products (Nicholls & Lee, 2006) and the effort made to obtain these products (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001) where impending factors of the purchase whilst on the later scientific study by Bray et al. (2011) these were not found to be impeding which could suggest that over time products became more easily and widely available to consumers.

Furthermore, consumers indicate that they lack the information to make more conscious purchase decisions. Consumers tend to avoid brands who receive negative press for their unethical behaviours, however this does not incite consumers to make more ethical purchases (Bray et al., 2011).

Other research has found that greenwashing is also a reason contributing to the lack of conscious consumption (Zhang et al., 2018). Greenwashing is seen as the misleading green marketing strategies where brands present themselves as more conscious than they are. In summary, it is when consumers understand that brands talk the talk, but do not walk the walk (Dahl, 2010). Other researchers also point out that purchase intention is negatively correlated with greenwashing perception. This means that when consumers' perception of greenwashing increases, the purchase intention decreases (Zhang et al., 2018).

Building from the findings presented above, we understand that the consumers indulge in buying fast fashion articles, despite the negative effects on the environment. As a result, the literature review of the present study will continue by showcasing a three-dimensional approach to sustainability which will help to measure consumers' perceptions towards fast fashion brands. Later, we will also use this approach to access a potential linkage between consumers' perceptions of the three dimensions of sustainability and the brand relationship these establish with fast fashion brands.

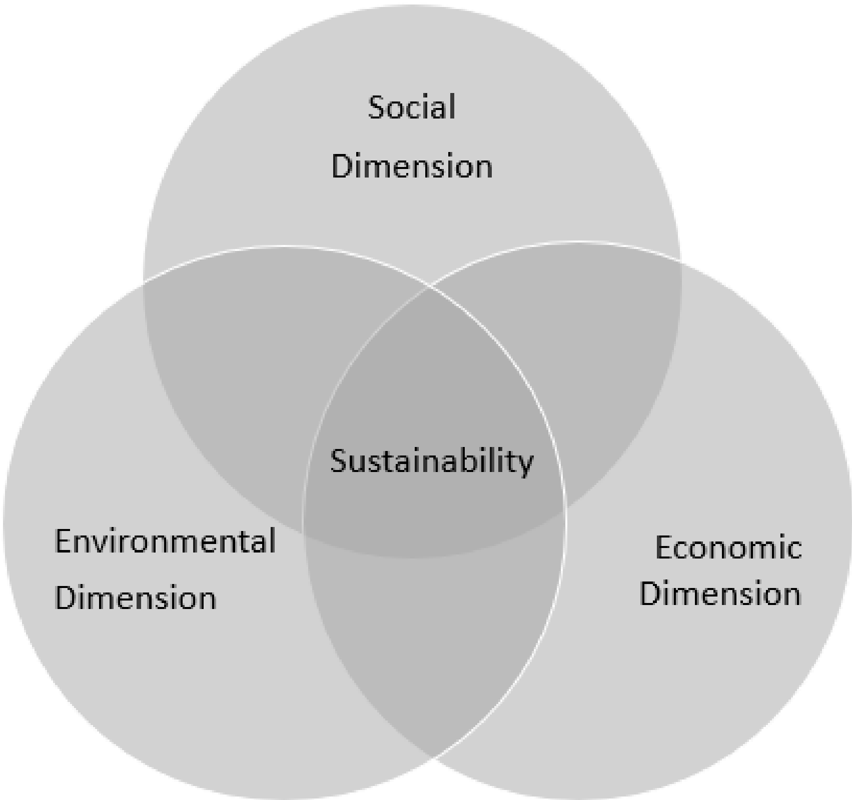
1.2.2. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) of Sustainability

In 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) now known as the Brundtland Commission issued a report titled "Our common Future". The commission was established by the United Nation's (UN) with the purpose of creating a global plan for change (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The report offers a strategy for sustainable development and ways for the international community to deal with environmental concerns.

Park and Kim (2016) understand that the contemporary concept of sustainability is derived from the WCED's report. The concept which emerged from this report suggested that organizational sustainability consisted of three key dimensions: social, environmental and economical. All of which have an equal weight (Carter & Rogers, 2008). While most people usually associate sustainability with environmental concerns, the concept presented goes beyond that to include other impacts on the society and social fabric (Savitz, 2012). In other words the TBL concept expresses that sustainability requires a simultaneous concern for the planet, people and profit (Balderjahn et al., 2013).

The social dimension of sustainability concerns firms' influence on the society and societal issues (Kim, 2018), and companies often express these social concerns by supporting, for example, fair trade (Catlin et al., 2017). The Environmental dimension emphasizes the concern for the well-being of the environment, and namely on avoiding malpractices which cause resource depletion (Sheth et al., 2011). In respect to the economic dimension Thabrew, Perrone, Ewing, Abkowitz, & Hornberger (2017) indicate that it expresses the concern of obtaining profit and maximizing it.

Figure 1. The triple bottom line: Elkington's (1998) concept of Sustainability



Source: Elkington (1998)

The three pillars of sustainability mentioned above (Social, Economic and Environmental) are akin to the triple bottom line (TBL) approach developed by Elkington (1998). The author understands that considering only economic bottom line and the traditional economic indicators (usually return on investment (ROI) or profit) is not enough. Instead companies should also simultaneously assess the impact of their businesses on the society in which they operate and their environmental impacts. **Figure 1** illustrates the TBL theory, where sustainability results from the intersection of the social, economic and environmental dimensions.

However, this theory has seen its detractors such as Ambec and Lanoie (2008) who have indicated that it is not always possible to reach a win-win scenario where a company is able to become more sustainable and also more profitable. The researchers argue that some companies can in fact improve their economic performance positively by implementing actions to improve their environmental performance, but this cannot be taken for granted to all companies. The researchers indicate that companies who sell very standardized products for example are less likely to reach a win-win scenario.

Nonetheless, many other researchers have been capable of showing that the TBL approach could produce long-term benefits, and be a key element in enhancing firms' competitive advantage (Carter & Rogers, 2008; Glavas & Mish, 2015;Schulz & Flanigan, 2016). This corroborates the view that organizations should engage in activities that bring not only positive effects to the natural environment and society, but also allow for a long-term economic benefit to its stakeholders (Elkington, 1998).

Elkington's (1998) TBL of sustainability was presented from the lenses of the stakeholder, while the present study wants to go beyond that into a customer-centric approach to the TBL of sustainability. As a result, the following section of this study will further clarify on this concept.

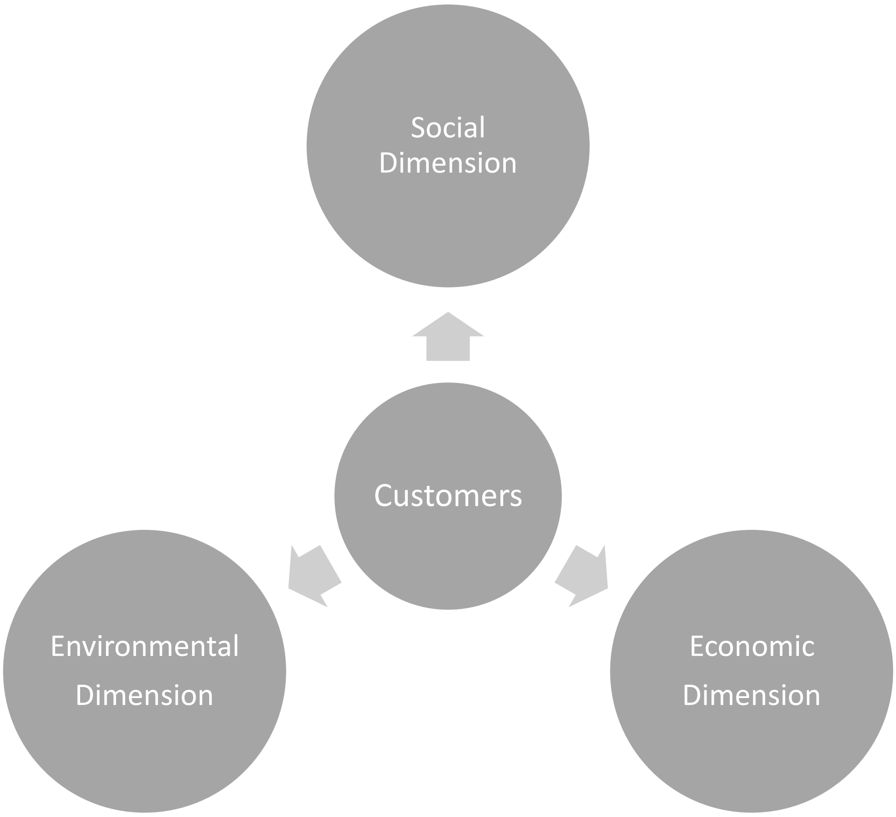
1.2.3. The Customer-centric sustainability (CCS)

The TBL framework is criticised by the lack of customer involvement, thus researchers argue that it is unlikely that this framework is capable of directly generating competitive advantage for firms (Hult, 2011; Sheth et al., 2011). However, companies which have developed marketing strategies oriented to the market and to their customers are able to achieve a sustained competitive advantage through rare, valuable, inimitable and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991).

Sheth et al. (2011) proposed an adapted approach to the TBL, where the customer is seen as the focus firms' strategies. The customer-centric sustainability (CCS) perspective defends that actions planned by the firms for each of the TBL dimensions dimension must necessarily take the consumer into consideration. The authors affirm that "CCS requires recasting the three sustainability dimensions (environmental, social and economic) with reference to consumers" (p. 22). Moreover, for companies to achieve their goal of sustainability, from a customer-centric perspective, they must be able to make a beneficial impact socially, economically and environmentally.

Whilst **Figure 1** represented sustainability as an intersection of the three dimensions of the TBL, the framework presented by Sheth et al. (2011) puts the customer in the centre of the attention and the activities initiated by companies for each of the dimensions should take the consumer into consideration. **Figure 2** presents a representation for this framework.

Figure 2. Representation of Sheth et al. (2011) customer-centric sustainability



According to Lee, Che-Ha, and Alwi (2020) customers are vital to any business and as such companies must pay close attention to them when creating their sustainability plans. Customers are very powerful and can quickly penalize brands by boycotting them if they understand their voice isn't being heard. Other researchers have also been able to prove that the CCS approach is beneficial to reach sustainable consumers (Ross & Milne, 2020).

Although the importance of the customer in the development of sustainable strategy is recognized, some companies struggle to implement a customer centred strategy. Instead their sustainability actions are executed in order to oblige to regulators or appeal to shareholders (Hult, 2011; Lee et al., 2020).

The present study will continue by providing further clarification on the three dimension of the CCS (economic, environmental and social) and particularly in the context of fast fashion brands.

1.2.3.1. CCS: Economic Dimension

In Elkington's (1998) TBL approach, the economic dimension relates to the economic performance of companies, and their ability to achieve profitability. In this perspective, achieving good performance on this dimension would mean to maximize the financial indicators such as ROI (Thabrew et al., 2017).

However, the framework presented by Sheth et al. (2011) offers a broader definition to also consider the consumer instead of only the company-centric economic bottom line. These authors understand that the CCS economic dimension encompasses both the financial performance and the "economic interests of external stakeholders, such as a broad-based improvement in economic well-being and standard of living'' (p. 24). By including the stakeholders, the authors are also including the customers who are viewed as a crucial stakeholder (Dobele et al., 2014; Y. C. Lee, 2016). Economic sustainable firms express concerns for the economic well-being of customers, particularly with aspects such as debts afflictions and work-life balance(Choi & Ng, 2011; Sheth et al., 2011).

Mcneill and Moore (2015) have uncovered that the notion of quality is one of the things that consumers associate the most with sustainability. Consumers have the quality aspect in consideration when buying and they believe that buying the highest quality available is the same as buying more sustainable products.

In the fashion industry the notion that consumers associate quality products with being more sustainable also seems to be true. According to Dekhili and Achabou (2013) luxury brands concentrate their efforts in providing after-sales customer service to lengthen their products' lifetime e.g. by providing product repairs. Whilst on the other hand high street fashion brands adopt a short-cycle strategy with the aim to program the obsolescence of its product causing the consumer to re-purchase from them (Haug & Busch, 2015; Bick et al., 2018). Some researchers argue that fast fashion brands incites over-consumption and do not have a concern for the durability of its product (Black, 2008; Dekhili & Achabou, 2013).

In line with the above, Park and Kim (2016) suggest that in order to measure the consumers perceptions regarding the economic dimension of fast fashion brands, one has to consider the perceptions of consumers towards the quality of the products offered by these brands. In other words, if the brands are invested in providing high quality products, they are also showing to be concerned with the financial well-being since they do not have the necessity to repurchase the products as often.

1.2.3.2. CCS: Environmental Dimension

The environmental dimension of the CCS approach relates with the negative impact of consumption on the ecological environment caused by businesses (Sheth et al., 2011). The fast fashion industry is notorious for the negative effect on the environment, namely because this industry uses toxic chemicals in the production of textiles (Black, 2008) and high amounts of water causing depletion of natural resources (Ossevoort, 2013).

Research points that fast fashion brands are attempting to minimize the negative impacts of their business on the environment and are offering and communicating their ecological actions (Mcneill & Moore, 2015). These environmentally friendly strategies can help retailers to position themselves as more sustainable and consequently benefiting them (Chang & Jai, 2015)

High street fashion is seen as being less environmentally sustainable than luxury fashion, for example. High street brands such as Zara or H&M adopt a short-cycle strategy, while luxury brands concentrate their efforts in providing after-sales customer services to lengthen their products' lifetime, e.g. by providing product repairs (Dekhili & Achabou, 2013). However, fast fashion retailers are fighting the negative environmental impacts caused by their businesses by offering more "green" products which use more conscious textiles and by appealing to garment recyclability. The environmental aspect of the product itself can be easily improved by retailers, but these also must create incentives for their outsourced manufactures to follow the same path so that they can become sustainable throughout their whole supply chains (Kozlowsk, Searcy, & Bardecki, 2016).

However, although brands are trying to be more environmentally friendly these efforts do not yet fully resonate with consumers. Chang and Jai (2015) argue that these may be because brands still choose to accentuate their low prices in their advertising strategies over their sustainability strategies.

The goal for a fast fashion brand to become environmentally sustainable seems to contradict the nature of the business itself. However, research has found that consumers consider that both can co-exist, especially if more sustainable products are equivalent to conventional garments offered by fast fashion brands (Hill & Lee, 2015).

Further to the above the present study will follow Park and Kim's (2016) study and will measure consumers perceptions of this dimension by evaluating their thoughts on production practices and the materials used to make the garments.

1.2.3.3. CCS: Social Dimension

The social dimension of the customer-centric framework of sustainability concerns the impact of consumption on the well-being, quality of lives and welfare of communities (Sheth et al., 2011). According to Waage et al. (2005) the social aspects of sustainability are as vast as fair wages and labour conditions, but also extend to include workers' access to health and education. These researchers also argue that the social aspect goes beyond only the immediate employers to also include the communities who are exposed to the business throughout the steps of the supply chain.

The fast fashion industry has its fair share of socially irresponsible practices such as using sweatshops, paying poor salaries to workers, or overall poor working conditions. Most recently, however, a disaster in the Rana Plaza factory complex killed over a thousand workers, but also sparked a worldwide awakening to the social sustainability dimension (James & Montgomery, 2017).

It is necessary that fast fashion retailers are involved in sourcing their garments more ethically and in embracing fair trade initiatives for more socially responsible garments to reach consumers widely. Notwithstanding, it is not enough to introduce actions to improve social sustainability, it is also quintessential to mitigate customers scepticism by improving transparency of the supply chain (Harris et al., 2015).

Regarding this dimension of the CCS this study will evaluate, in line with Park and Kim (2016) study, the perceptions of fast fashion brands customers. Expressly the present research will collect data to measure the perceptions of fairness of the wages paid to factory workers, the perception of the conditions in which garments are made and the consumers preference towards local production and also their perception of fast fashion businesses' contributions to the communities in which they operate.

1.3. Customer-centric Sustainability: The Impact on Brand Relationship

Marketing has gone past satisfying customers to building relationships, however brand relationship does not seek to replace satisfaction. The brand relationship framework embraces a deeper commitment between the client and brand, where there is trustworthiness and where brands have customers' best interests in mind and respond to their needs (Hess & Story, 2005). The customer-brand relationship can potentially produce some benefits such as word-of- mouth, where the consumers positively spread the brand, but also an expectation of continuity and the opportunity for brands to cross-sell other products (Papista & Dimitriadis, 2019).

Brand loyalty for example has been extensively reviewed by previous literature and is a notorious construct of brand relationships that is established between customers and brands (Veloutsou, 2015). However, there are more examples of consumer-brand relationships/interactions such as brand fidelity (Grace et al., 2018), brand trust and brand commitment (Tong, Su, & Xu, 2017) as well as brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013).

This study will focus on two of the brand relationship dimensions: brand commitment and brand trust. Firstly, brand commitment has very littles studies in the context of the fast fashion industry. Secondly research has pointed out that for luxury fashion brands commitment is a result of brand trust (Tong et al., 2017), thus this study could also contribute to identify if this relationship is also true for fast fashion brands. In this sense, the next two points of this study will review these two brand outcomes of relationship.

1.3.1. Brand Trust

The literature on brand trust derived from the theory of brand personality, where brands are recognized as having characteristics similar to those associated with humans (Aaker, 1997). As for the concept of brand trust between a consumer and a brand it goes beyond simply satisfaction related to the functional performance of the products the brand offers (Belaid & Behi, 2011). In this sense, and in line with the personality theory, research highlights that a consumer can trust a brand the same way they also trust a person (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998).

Brand trust has both a cognitive and an affective nature. The cognitive nature within brand trust is associated with credibility, in a way it evaluates the performance of a brand and its capability to satisfy the needs of its consumers. As for the affective nature, it is linked to the perceptions constructed by the individuals in regard to the intentions of brands towards them personally (Belaid & Behi, 2011). Tong et al. (2017) add that when consumers have trust in a brand, they feel safe that the brand will meet their expectations. Brand trust transforms a relationship that could otherwise be transactional into an intricate, close and personal relationship.

Literature shows that brand trust is built over time and it is precedent to satisfaction. Both satisfaction and trust can generate customer commitment, however, they have different roles in the creation of the commitment. Brand trust for example is key in a context of high involvement, because in those situations brand trust becomes more essential in customers' attitude (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001).

The literature has been able to show that sustainability has positive effects in the relationship of consumers with brands. According to Park and Kim (2016) brand trust developed towards fast fashion brands was found to be positively affected by the social and economic dimension of the CCS, whilst the environmental dimension was found to not be a significant predictor. However, studies conducted in other industries have found that trust presents a moderating effect in regard to the perceptions of consumers of environmental practises presented by brands (Bonn et al., 2016). Consequently, this study hopes to contribute to clarify how each CCS dimension impacts brand trust for fast fashion brands.

Brand trust is a fundamental variable of consumer-brand relationship and is key to mediate a successful relationship marketing strategy (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This outcome is also very much linked with the concept of brand commitment. Research indicates that commitment is a consequence of the trust built upon a brand (Tong et al., 2017). Following this line of thought this research will continue by investigating further the concept of brand commitment.

1.3.2. Brand Commitment

The concept of brand commitment is related to the customers satisfaction with a brand, but it goes beyond that. In this sense, commitment to a brand is linked with the feeling that the brand is trustworthy and attentive to clients' needs (Hess & Story, 2005). Tong et al. (2017) add that commitment expresses the consumers' "strong willingness to maintain a lasting relationship with the brand" (p. 7).

Literature recognizes that brand commitment has two components, affective commitment and continuance commitment (Fullerton, 2009). Affective brand commitment is related with the pleasure of maintaining a relationship and also the development of an emotional attachment to a brand (Belaid & Behi, 2011). Affective commitment is at the centre of the relationship between consumers' and brands, helping to explain the loyalty of consumers' to brands (Fullerton, 2009). As for continuance commitment it is connected to the lack of alternatives and high switching costs (Fullerton, 2009). In short, in a relationship of continuance commitment with a brand, consumers find it difficult to get out of the relationship or perceive they lack alternatives to the existing relationship (Anderson & Weitz, 1992).

There is not much research which studies the effects of sustainability on brand commitment. One of the few examples is a study developed by Choi, Ko, Kim, and Mattila (2015) revolving around fashion brands of sports goods and which uncovered that sustainability significantly helped predict brand commitment. The same study also added regarding brand commitment that sustainability was one of the factors that affected this concept of brand relationship the most.

Additionally, there is a lack of studies focusing on the impact of customer-centric sustainability on brand commitment which further confirms the need for this study. In this sense, this study will provide more knowledge in what concerns these two concepts and their relationship in the fast fashion industry.

2. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The general objective of this study is to access the impact of the three dimensions of customer-centric sustainability suggested by Sheth et al. (2011) on brand trust and affective and continuance brand commitment. To pursue the general objective of the study this researched followed previous work from ark and Kim (2016) as well as Fullerton (2009) who had previously measure some of the concepts in which this study will focus. Building from the previously presented literature review and in order to achieve the purpose of this study one must be able to carry out the specific objective presented below:

- **i.** Measure Portuguese consumers' perceptions of the dimensions of CCS of fast fashion brands
- **ii.** Determine the impact of each of the dimensions of CCS on brand trust
- **iii.** Determine the impact of each of the dimensions of CCS on continuance and affective brand commitment
- **iv.** Determine the impact of brand trust on both continuance and affective brand commitment

The CCS framework is inspired by Elkington's (1998) TBL framework, however the CCS framework presents the three sustainability dimension (environmental, social and economic) from a consumer perspective instead of a corporate viewpoint (Sheth et al., 2011).

Previous studies on sustainability have reported that it positively impacts brand relationship outcomes such as brand trust and brand commitment (H. Choi et al., 2015; Park & Kim, 2016). In particular, Park and Kim (2016) have expressed the positive relationship between the three dimensions of CCS and brand trust. As for brand commitment research show that brand commitment is positively influenced by sustainability (H. Choi et al., 2015), however no studies have previously analysed each of the CCS dimension relationship with brand commitment. Furthermore research indicates that the concept of brand commitment has two different dimensions (affective and continuance) which will both be considered in this research (Fullerton, 2009). Thus, the present study hopes to clarify the relationship between the CCS dimension and the two dimensions of brand commitment. Therefore, the following three hypotheses were formulated:

H1. Customer-centric economic sustainability positively affects **(a)** brand trust, **(b)** affective brand commitment and **(c)** continuance brand commitment.

H2. Customer-centric environmental sustainability positively affects **(a)** brand trust, **(b)** affective brand commitment and **(c)** continuance brand commitment.

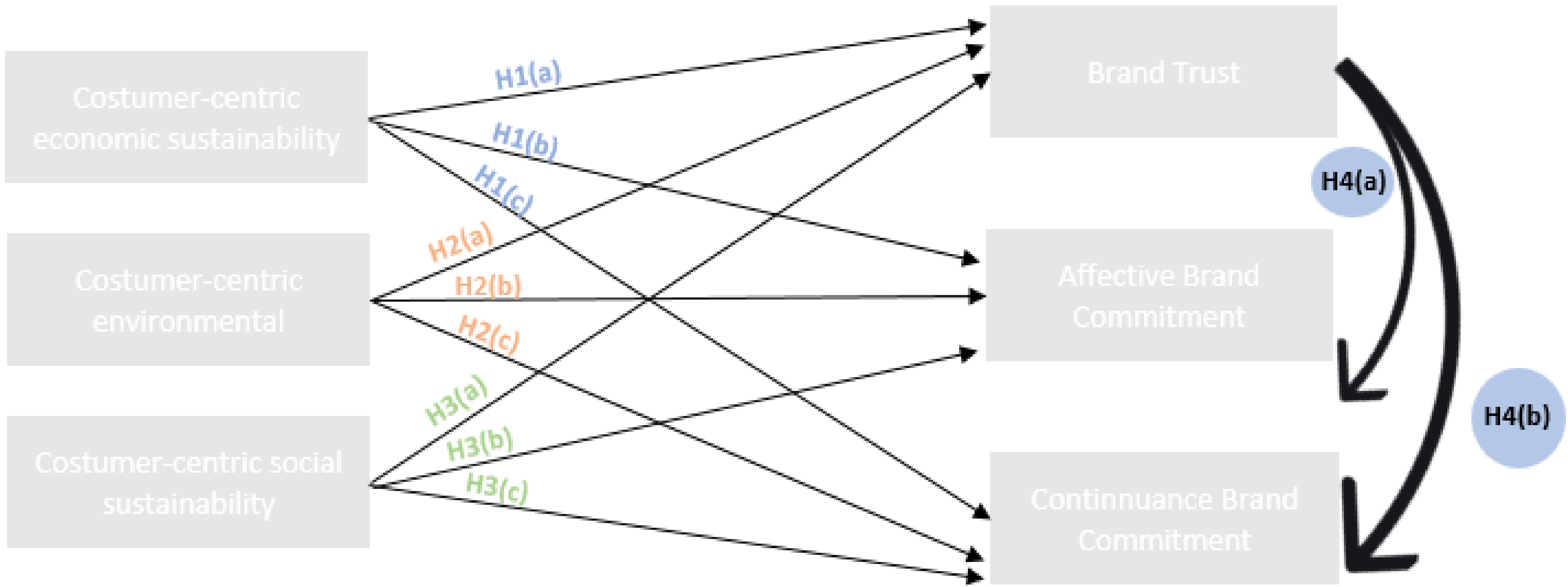
H3. Customer-centric social sustainability positively affects **(a)** brand trust, **(b)** affective brand commitment and **(c)** continuance brand commitment.

Additionally, research developed by Tong et al. (2017) centred around luxury fashion brands revealed a positive relationship between brand trust and brand relationship. According to the study, brand trust positively impacts the brand commitment showcase by consumers. As such, the present study will also look to verify if the same is true for the fast fashion context and also for the two dimension of brand commitment (affective and continuance). Thus, the below hypothesis was also formulated.

H4. Brand trust has a postive impact on **(a)** affective brand commitment and **(b)** continuance brand commitment.

In line with the hypotheses formulatted above, the below figure illustrates the research model being followed in this research, showcasing the interaction between the different concepts which this study looks to verify.

Figure 3. Conceptual Model



3. METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter of this study presented the general and specific objectives as well as the hypothesis that will be tested in this research. The current chapter will provide a methodological approach that will help to guide the investigation in order to achieve its goals. A methodology's purpose is to provide the best possible approach to tackle the practical problems of a research. Jackson, Drummond and Camara (2007) explain that the "methodology is about ''why to'' collect data a certain way" (p. 22).

In order to achieve the purpose of this study outlined in **Figure 3** one must follow an exploratory quantitative approach. The quantitative methodology aims to test pre-determined hypothesized statements based on the literature review (Marshall, 1996). In this methodology researchers collect quantitative data that can be coded in variables which have a predetermined range of values (Hox & Boeije, 2005). This methodology looks to establish relations between the variables in the research. Such methodology produces highly reliable results. In a quantitative methodology one is able to validate the hypothesis initially proposed, through the use of statistical techniques (Turato, 2005).

Additionally, this study is exploratory in its nature which means that it looks to investigate research problems that are yet unclear. Exploratory researches are flexible and adaptable to change since the initial focus of the research is broad and becomes increasingly narrower (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.1. Data collection

Data collection is an extremely important part of this research because it is crucial to test the hypotheses formulated in the previous chapter. In order to test the hypotheses, it is necessary to collect primary data from consumers. Primary data are data that are collected for a specific research goal and using data collection procedures which are more appropriate for the particular research problem (Hox & Boeije, 2005).

The selection of the data collection technique is determined by the objectives and hypotheses of the study, but also considering the limitations regarding available financial resources and also in terms of available human resources. For the present study the data collection technique selected was the survey, since it is the most suitable to validate the formulated hypotheses. The questionnaire is a data collection technique that allows researchers to collect rigorous and measurable data regarding respondents' opinion, beliefs, behaviour and attitudes to name a few (Fortin, 2009; Rowley, 2014). The main advantage of this research method is that it allows for the collection of data from a large number of people even if they are geographically dispersed, or even in remote locations (Rowley, 2014).

3.1.1. Questionnaire development

The construction of the questionnaire used in the present study was based on previous works by Park and Kim (2016) and Fullerton (2009). The questionnaire was built with the aim of collecting a set of answers that would best help to measure Portuguese consumers' perception of CCS of fast fashion brands as well as their trust and commitment towards those brands.

Both Park and Kim (2016) and Fullerton (2009) present constructs that are brand specific, thus the respondent answered the questions for a particular brand. Park and Kim's (2016) study offered a list of three fast fashion brands (Forever 21, H&M and Zara), therefore this study also presented the participants with 3 options of fast fashion brands. However, in the current study the brand Forever 21 was not selected as one of the options since it is not widely present in Portugal. Instead, it was swapped with Mango, which is a more popular European retailer (T. M. Choi et al., 2010), with greater presence in Portugal. Similarly to H&M and Zara, Mango is also making efforts to become more sustainable. The constructs and their items were adapted from the two previously mentioned studies and translated to Portuguese. **Table 2** showcases in detail the items used for each of the constructs as well as the respective source. In line with Park and Kim (2016) and Fullerton (2009) each of the items was measured using a likert scale with five levels that ranged from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

Table 2. Constructs, items and source

Construct	Items	Source
Customer-centric economic sustainability	**EC1:** The clothes from the selected brand are resistant and durable. **EC2:** The clothes from the selected brand are soft, comfortable and fit well. **EC3:** The clothes from the selected brand are well designed and stylish. **EC4:** The clothes from the selected brand have good workmanship and materials.	Park and Kim (2016)
Customer-centric environmental sustainability	**ENV1:** The selected brand adopts environmentally friendly production practices. **ENV2:** The selected brand does not use toxic chemicals in the production of its clothes. **ENV3:** The selected brand produces its clothes with minimum effect on the environment (e.g. with low carbon footprint) and animals. **ENV4:** The selected brand uses sustainable materials in the production of its clothing (e.g organic cotton).	Park and Kim (2016)

Customer-centric social sustainability	**SOC1:** The selected brand pays fair wages to factory workers and to raw materials suppliers. **SOC2:** The products sold by the selected brand are made under safe and healthy working coditions and wihtout child labor. **SOC3:** The selected brand favours local productions of their clothing. **SOC4:** The selected brand gives back to the communities in which it does business.	Park and Kim (2016)
Brand Trust	**T1:** The selected brand delivers what it promises. **T2:** The claims the selected brand makes about their products are believable. **T3:** Over time, my experience with the selected brand have led me to expect it to keep its promises. **T4:** The selected brand has a name you can trust. **T5:** The selected brand does not pretend to be something it is not.	Park and Kim (2016)
Affective Brand Commitment	**AFF1:** I feel emotionally attached to the selected brand. **AFF2:** The selected brand has personal meaning to me. **AFF3:** I feel a strong sense of identification with the selected brand.	Fullerton (2009)

Continuance Brand Commitment	**CONT1:** It would be very hard for me to switch from the select brand, even to a brand offering similar products. **CONT2:** My life would be disrupted if I switched away from the selected brand. **CONT3:** It would be too costly for me to switch from the selected brand at this moment.	Fullerton (2009)

The initial version of the questionnaire was subjected to pretest from a small sample of individuals (n=6) in order to understand if the questions were easily understood and to check for overall easiness of the questionnaire. The number of piloting trials cannot be established in advance as there is no formula to determine the number of pretest trials required. Instead the pilots should be repeated as many times as necessary until the researcher is pleased (Greco & Walop, 1987). In this case, we found that no more preliminary trials were necessary since the last trials were not providing new feedback that could lead to further improvement in the instrument. According to Rowley (2014) the piloting of the questionnaire can be done with friends or colleagues but should also include individuals who belong to the targeted population. Therefore, the pretest was done among friends and colleagues who were also part of the population of this study. The pretest was undertaken in May 2020 using the same format and through the same platform as the final version with the aim to reflect the difficulties that could arise later when administering the questionnaire. The questionnaire was reviewed in order to mitigate some of the concerns reported from the sample of pretest trials. The issues reported concerned wording and question formulating. Finally, before beginning the administration the final version was also validated with the dissertation supervisor.

The final questionnaire (**Annex 1**) contained a total of 29 questions and is divided in 5 parts. The division is as follows:

- ➔ The **first part** of the questionnaire is intended to introduce the theme, scope and purpose of the investigation. It consists only of an introductory text. This introduction also emphasises the importance of responding sincerely to all questions and reinforces the fact that all responses are confidential.
- ➔ In the **second part** the respondents are invited to choose among the three fast fashion brands (H&M, Mango and Zara) the one that they buy most frequently. This question also helps to validate whether the respondent is part of the population (i.e. a client of one of the three fast fashion brands presented).
- ➔ The **third part** of the questionnaire seeks to measure the three dimensions of CCS. This part contains a total of twelve questions. Each group of four items is intended to measure the dimensions of CCS (environmental, economic and social).
- ➔ The **fourth part** of the questionnaire has eleven questions which aim to measure the construct related with brand relationship (brand trust, affective brand commitment and continuance brand commitment).
- ➔ Finally, the **fifth part** collects sociodemographic data that helps to characterize the respondents in terms of age, sex and education among other variables. Although these variables are not the direct object of the study, they help enrich the sample characterization.

3.1.2. Population, sample and sampling technique

Before the administration of the questionnaire it is necessary to define the sampling technique to adopt in order to collect responses from the population targeted by the study. In this research the population are Portuguese consumers of the three fast fashion brands (H&M, Mango and Zara) that can be selected by respondents in the questionnaire.

According to Fortin (2009) researchers do not always possess access to the whole population which they are studying. Thus, in those cases researchers are forced to work with representative samples of the population which they are studying. In the present case, since it is not possible to access the total targeted population it means that it is not possible to choose individuals statistically at random, and consequently the study follows a non-probability sampling technique (Saunders et al., 2009). Non-probability sampling (also known as non-random sampling) is often used when the population cannot be delimited, enumerated or when the sample features are rare (Drăgan & Isaic-Maniu, 2012)

In the case of the present research the sampling method followed was convenience sampling. This method selects individuals who are a part of the population in any way possible (Emerson, 2015). The researcher collects responses from people who are the easiest for him to collect responses from (Saunders et al., 2009). The benefits of this method are mainly the easiness to collect responses and the fact that it is less costly than probability sampling (Bryman, 2001). The main disadvantage of convenience samples is the fact that it is susceptible to bias because it is likely that the sample share many similarities (Emerson, 2015), thus generalising results are not advised (Saunders et al., 2009). However, even though the finding from these sampling methods cannot be generalised they can provide a starting point for future research (Bryman, 2001), which is in fact what this research aims to do since it is exploratory in nature.

Additionally, concerning sample size it is noted that the suitable sample size may vary greatly among studies. A smaller sample may be suitable to analyse questionnaires as a set. However it is unlikely that it will provide statistically significant results if the same sample is subdivided into groups based on factors such as gender or hierarchical position (Rowley, 2014). Bryman (2001) indicates that in non-probability sampling the sample size is defined by the research questions and objectives, thus it is subjective to each research. However, it is consensual among researchers that the generalisation errors decrease as sample size increases (Saunders et al., 2009). Notwithstanding, Stutely (2003) expresses that the magnitude of the sample compared to the total population is rather irrelevant. Instead, it is the total sample size that is the most important. He adds that in some cases a sample as low as 30 items may be adequate to make estimates with a 99% level of confidence.

3.1.3. Questionnaire administration

The questionnaire started being distributed on the 24th of May and was kept available to respondents until the 7th of July. The data collection was done online in a self-administered survey through the platform Google Forms. Self-administered computerized surveys increase truthfulness in participants responses, since the participants' perceive higher anonymity (Gnambs & Kaspar, 2014).

Although online surveys experience lower response rate when compared with other survey modes (Fricker & Schonlau, 2002), they are recognized as being faster and cost efficient (Lefever et al., 2007), particularly when the questionnaire is administered through free platforms such as Google form. The questionnaire was shared with potential participants online via social media through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. The use of social media as a means to gather participants for academic researchers is on the rise (Gelinas et al., 2017) due to the fact that it allows the collect data timely and with little to no costs, which is rather important since funding for academic is rare (Dusek et al., 2015).

3.2. Data Treatment

After collecting the data following the procedures previously presented the data was extracted to an excel spreadsheet and the data treatment and statistical analyses was done using the 26th version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

3.3. Statistical Procedures

In order to achieve the goal of this research it is necessary to treat the data obtained in the questionnaires. The procedures to apply and the tests to run depend on the purpose of each research. In this case, since a sample larger than 30 was obtained one can consider through the central limit theorem that the distribution of the sample mean will be approximately normally distributed (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). Thus, this study will use both regression analyses and Pearson's correlation to investigate the relationship between the variables in this study.

The linear regression model allows to model relationships among variables and predict a depend variable based on one or more independent variables also known as predictor variables (Mâroco, 2018). In this research, the regression model will allow to verify the relationship between the dependent variables (brand trust, affective brand commitment and continuance brand commitment) and the three dimension of CCS which are our independent variables. As a result, we will have three different multiple linear regression which will be presented in detail later. The analysis of the output of the linear regression is more accurately done through the analysis of the coefficient of determination (R^2) which establish the percentage of variance of the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in the model. The R^2 can range from 0 to 1 and the closer the value of the coefficient is to 1 the higher percentage of the variance will be explained by the model (Pestana, M. H., & Gageiro, 2008).

As for Pearson's correlation coefficient (R) it allows to measure the degree of linear relation between two variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient can range from -1 until 1. A value of 1, for example, indicates a positive linear correlation while a -1 indicates a negative correlation between the two variables (Pestana, M. H., & Gageiro, 2008). In this study the Pearson's correlation coefficient will be used to measure the correlation between brand trust and each of the dimension of brand commitment.

This concludes the section of methodology and the next section present the data analysis performed and the results obtained.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1. Sample Demographic Characteristics

The questionnaire administration allowed to collect a total of 235 responses, however 7 questionnaires were excluded from the research since respondents did not fully complete the questionnaires, leaving some of the questions unanswered. This set the sample size at 228. The final sample consisted predominantly of female fast fashion consumers with male respondents not surpassing 9.6% (n=22).

The constructs which the present study proposed to measure are brand specific, as previously indicated in the questionnaire development section of the methodology. Therefore, the respondents were requested to choose between H&M, Zara and Mango the fast fashion brand that they bought most frequently. The results show that 67.5% of respondents bought Zara (n=154) more frequently, followed by H&M (n=46) which attained 20.2% of respondents' preferences.

A total of 70,6% of respondents are from the north of Portugal (n=161). The next region with the most representation in the sample is the Lisbon metropolitan area (n=34), closely followed by the centre of Portugal (n=28).

Table 3. Sample statistical analysis

Brand	Frequency (n)	Percent
H&M	46	20,2
ZARA	154	67,5
MANGO	28	12,3
Gender	**Frequency (n)**	**Percent**
Female	206	90,4
Male	22	9,6
Region	**Frequency (n)**	**Percent**
Alentejo	3	1,3
Algarve	1	0,4
Lisbon metropolitan área	34	14,9

Centre	28	12,3
North	161	70,6
Autonomous region of Azores	1	0,4
Education level	**Frequency (n)**	**Percent**
Basic education or lower	1	0,4
Secondary education	44	19,3
Post-Secondary education	14	6,1
Higher education (bachelor, masters or PHD)	169	74,1
Net household income	**Frequency (n)**	**Percent**
Less than €1.000	59	25,9
€ 1.000 - € 1.500	79	34,6
€ 1.500 - € 2.000	43	18,9
More than € 2.000	47	20,6

The individuals which are part of the sample of this study are highly educated with 74,1% of respondents holding some sort of higher education degree. Secondary education and post-secondary education (such as vocational training) rank second and third respectively with a joint total of 25,4%. Only one respondent (n=1) had basic education or lower. **Table 3** presents the full sample statical anlysis performed in this study.

4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Factor analysis aims to simplify the interpretation of large number of data, namely when a questionnaire has many variables, that many times are intercorrelated and express the same unobserved variable. Factor analyses helps to group intercorrelated variables into clusters (factors). The factors are constructs and the variables which compose the factors measure facets of a same underlying factor (Rietveld & Van Hout, 1993; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Robson and McCartan (2016) indicate that factor analysis "allows you to assess the extent to which different test items are measuring the same concept (strong intercorrelations)" (p. 433). Exploratory factor analysing

(EFA) is one of the types of factor analysis and according to Sarstedt and Mooi (2014) it ” is used to reveal the number of factors and the variables that belong to specific factors” and is “used to screen variables for subsequent analysis” (p. 202) namely to perform a linear regression analysis.

In this sense, this researchers’ questionnaire contained different items some of which could be intercorrelated and thus they may cover different aspect of the same underlying variable. The factor analysis will allow to find the patterns among groups of variables that measure key factors (JR et al., 2014).

Furthermore, in order to proceed with exploratory factor analysis, one must guarantee that the sample size is adequate. According to JR et al. (2014) a sample size can be deemed as adequate if the total sample size is at least 5 times the number of variables. In the present research the minimum acceptable sample size would be 115 respondents (23 variables multiplied by 5), thus the sample in this research is adequate to perform an exploratory factor analysis.

Table 4. KMO VALUES

KMO value	Correlation Adequacy
< 0.5	Unacceptable
[0.5; 0.6[	Miserable
[0.6; 0.7[	Mediocre
[0.7; 0.8[	Middling
[0.8; 0.9[	Meritorious
≥ 0.9	Marvelous

Source: Sarstedt and Mooi (2014).

Firstly, before proceeding with exploratory factor analysis the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was performed. The test allows to confirm the sample adequacy, by quantifying the degree of correlations among variables (JR et al., 2014). In order for the sample to be considered adequate the minimum threshold value of 0.5 must be met. **Table 4** presents the adequacy of all possible KMO values (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014).

Additionally, another test necessary to confirm appropriateness of EFA is Bartlett's test of sphericity, which is used to test the null hypotheses that the correlations matrix is an identity matrix. In order to proceed with EFA one must confirm that Bartlett's is significant, which means that the null hypotheses is rejected. Thus, suggesting that there are correlations among, at least, some the variables. (JR et al., 2014; Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014).

Table 5. KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY	
Items	EC1, EC2, EC4
KMO	0,692
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	277,685
Df	3,000
Sig.	0,000
CUSTOMER-CENTRIC ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	
Items	ENV1, ENV2, ENV3, ENV4
KMO	0,810
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	484,864
Df	6,000
Sig.	0,000
CUSTOMER-CENTRIC SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY	
Items	SOC1, SOC2, SOC3, SOC4
KMO	0,788
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	

Approx. Chi-Square	380,795
Df	6,000
Sig.	0,000
BRAND TRUST	
Items	T1, T2, T3, T4
KMO	0,796
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	330,615
Df	6,000
Sig.	0,000
AFFECTIVE BRAND COMMITMENT	
Items	AFF1, AFF2, AFF3
KMO	0,692
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	405,389
Df	3,000
Sig.	0,000
CONTINUANCE BRAND COMMITMENT	
Items	CONT1, CONT2, CONT3
KMO	0,708
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	306,491
Df	3,000
Sig.	0,000

The performed KMO test generated KMO values that ranged between 0.692 (for customer-centric economic sustainability and affective brand commitment) and 0.810 (for customer-centric environmental sustainability). Comparing the obtained KMO values with Sarstedt and Mooi's (2014) correlation adequacy values in **Table 4** it is possible confirm that the intercorrelation among variables is mediocre for two of the variables, middling (or moderate) for another three of the variables and meritorious for the one of the variables. Notwithstanding, since all the KMO values are above the minimum threshold value of 0.5 it is possible to proceed with EFA.

Regarding Bartlett's test of sphericity all the variables present a significance level lower than 0.05 (Sig. = 0.000), which means that there are correlations among the different variables for each of the underlying variables. Thus, the test confirms that we can reject the null hypotheses since the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix.

Furthermore, the communality values were also evaluated for all the variables to confirm whether any of the variables showcased a communality value below 0.5 for which researchers recommend removing the item from the study due to the fact that it meant that the factor accounted for less than 50% of the variable's variance (Mâroco, 2018). In this case two item **EC3** ("The clothes from the selected brand are well designed and stylish.") and **T5** ("The selected brand does not pretend to be something it is not.") fell below 0.5 with values of 0.260 and 0.471 respectively. Thus, these two items were removed, and the tests were repeated. After the item exclusions, the communality values for the items ranged from 0.576 to 0.871.

Moreover, after having done both KMO test and Bartlett's test of sphericity and after removing item with low communalities we find that it is appropriate to proceed with an exploratory factor analysis for the variables in this study. A total of six factors were extracted. According to Sarstedt and Mooi (2014) the extracted factors should explain at least 50% of total variance, and the recommended variance explained should sit at 75%. As per **Table 6** the six extracted factors account for at least 65,764% of the total variance, thus all sit above the minimum of 50%, with some of the factors presenting values close or above 75%. Since the extracted variance is at least 60% as claimed by JR et al. (2014) we can consider the solution to be satisfactory.

Tabela 6. Explained Variance

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY	
Items	EC1, EC2, EC4
% variance explained	74,840

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	
Items	ENV1, ENV2, ENV3, ENV4
% variance explained	72,700
CUSTOMER-CENTRIC SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY	
Items	SOC1, SOC2, SOC3, SOC4
% variance explained	68,726
BRAND TRUST	
Items	T1, T2, T3, T4
% variance explained	65,764
AFFECTIVE BRAND COMMITMENT	
Items	AFF1, AFF2, AFF3
% variance explained	80,201
CONTINUANCE BRAND COMMITMENT	
Items	CONT1, CONT2, CONT3
% variance explained	76,896

Additionally, **Table 7** present the exploratory factor analysis. It is noted that all the variables in the study are unidimensional, since they are composed of only one factor.

Tabela 7. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Item	Communalities	M	DT	Customer-centric Economic Sustainability	Customer-centric Environmental Sustainability	Customer-centric Social Sustainability	Brand Trust	Affective Brand Commitment	Continuance Brand Commitment
EC1	0,775	3,60	0,809	0,880					
EC2	0,657	4,03	0,650	0,810					
EC4	0,814	3,49	0,847	0,902					
ENV1	0,751	2,90	0,924		0,867				
ENV2	0,721	2,63	0,873		0,849				
ENV3	0,842	2,68	0,900		0,918				
ENV4	0,593	3,20	0,934		0,770				
SOC1	0,725	2,40	0,907			0,852			
SOC2	0,720	2,72	0,925			0,848			
SOC3	0,648	2,22	0,969			0,805			
SOC4	0,655	2,74	0,958			0,810			
T1	0,722	3,55	0,808				0,850		
T2	0,744	3,50	0,837				0,863		
T3	0,589	3,59	0,913				0,767		
T4	0,576	4,02	0,785				0,759		
AFF1	0,871	2,79	1,289					0,933	
AFF2	0,845	2,50	1,306					0,919	
AFF3	0,690	3,66	1,052					0,831	
CONT1	0,692	2,19	1,292						0,832
CONT2	0,799	1,97	1,243						0,894
CONT3	0,816	1,87	1,148						0,903

Finally, after the EFA one must guarantee the scales for each of the constructs are reliable, which is more frequently done through Cronbach's alpha. A scale is considered reliable if the Cronbach's alpha meets the threshold value of 0.7 or 0.6 in the case of exploratory researches (JR et al., 2014). All factors presented a Cronbach's alpha above 0.7. The Cronbach's alpha calculated ranged from 0.823 (for brand trust) and 0.875 (for affective brand commitment).

Table 8. Cronbach's Alpha

Factor	Nº of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Customer-centric Economic Sustainability	3	0,830
Customer-centric Environmental Sustainability	4	0,872
Customer-centric Social Sustainability	4	0,847
Brand Trust	4	0,823
Affective Brand Commitment	3	0,875
Continuance Brand Commitment	3	0,846

4.3. Factor Statistics

Having found the factors which will be the focal point of this study it is now time to analyse how the items that composed them were ranked by respondents in the study. In order to do so we will take a closer look to the frequency with which respondents selected each of the likert's scale levels, as well as means and standard deviation.

It is important to note once again that this study used a likert scale with five levels, as follows:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree

5. Strongly agree

Regarding the customer-centric economic sustainability factor, we can confirm that respondents appear to agree with the two of the statements (**EC1** and **EC2**) and show a neutral position towards a third (**EC2**). For all items the level 4 of the scale was selected the most by respondents, and the mean for the items ranged from 3.49 to 4.03. Thus, consumers seem to be torn between having a neutral position and agreeing that fast fashion brands are economically sustainable.

Table 9. Factor statistics – customer-centric economic sustainability

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY							
Item	Frequency					M	DT
	1	2	3	4	5		
EC1: The clothes from the selected brand are resistant and durable.	3	16	72	115	22	3,60	0,81
EC2: The clothes from the selected brand are soft, comfortable and fit well.	1	4	27	152	44	4,03	0,65
EC4: The clothes from the selected brand have good workmanship and materials.	4	21	82	101	20	3,49	0,85

As for the factor of customer-centric environmental sustainability the mean for all items is close to level 3 of the scale, suggesting that respondents showcase a neutral response towards this factor. Level 3 was also the level of the scale that registered more responses.

Table 10. Factor statistics – customer-centric environmental sustainability

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY							
Item	Frequency					M	DT
	1	2	3	4	5		
ENV1: The selected brand adopts environmentally friendly production practices.	16	47	122	29	14	2,90	0,92
ENV2: The selected brand does not use toxic chemicals in the production of its clothes.	24	67	111	21	5	2,63	0,87
ENV3: The selected brand produces its clothes with minimum effect on the environment (e.g. with low carbon footprint) and animals.	22	67	110	21	8	2,68	0,90

ENV4: The selected brand uses sustainable materials in the production of its clothing (e.g organic cotton).	7	42	96	65	18	3,20	0,93

For the customer-centric social sustainability the responses were not as consensual between the four items. The mean for all items is below 3. However, the mean for **SOC2** and **SOC4** is close to 3, which consequently shows that respondent neither agree nor disagree with these statements. Notwithstanding, the sample disagrees that fast fashion brands pay fair wages to factory workers and raw materials suppliers as well as that fast fashion brands favour local production of their goods.

Table 11. Factor statistics – customer-centric social sustainability

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY							
Item	Frequency					M	DT
	1	2	3	4	5		
SOC1: The selected brand pays fair wages to factory workers and to raw materials suppliers.	43	71	97	14	3	2,40	0,91
SOC2: The products sold by the selected brand are made under safe and healthy working coditions and wihtout child labor.	24	60	106	32	6	2,72	0,92
SOC3: The selected brand favours local productions of their clothing.	67	62	83	14	2	2,22	0,97
SOC4: The selected brand gives back to the communities in which it does business.	27	52	112	28	9	2,74	0,96

All four items in the brand trust factor got a mean rank of 4 (when rounded), which indicated that fast fashion consumers part of our research agreed with the statement portraying brand trust for the brands in this industry. Item **T4** got the best mean score, which show that consumers are in agreeance that fast fashion brands had a name in which they were able to trust.

Table 12. Factor statistics – brand trust

BRAND TRUST							
Item	Frequency					M	DT
	1	2	3	4	5		
T1: The selected brand delivers what it promises.	2	18	82	104	22	3,55	0,81
T2: The claims the selected brand makes about their products are believable.	4	19	85	100	20	3,50	0,84

T3: Over time, my experience with the selected brand have led me to expect it to keep its promises.	5	19	73	98	33	3,59	0,91
T4: The selected brand has a name you can trust.	1	8	38	120	61	4,02	0,79

Consumers rated item **AFF3** the best out of all the items**.** This item registered a mean of 3.66 which point out that the respondents agreed that they felt a strong sense of identification with the fast fashion brand they selected. As for the other two items, consumers showed a neutral response to them, which indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with them.

Table 13. Factor statistics – affective brand commitment

AFFECTIVE BRAND COMMITMENT							
Item	Frequency					M	DT
	1	2	3	4	5		
AFF1: I feel emotionally attached to the selected brand.	51	43	57	56	21	2,79	1,29
AFF2: The selected brand has personal meaning to me.	75	39	56	42	16	2,50	1,31
AFF3: I feel a strong sense of identification with the selected brand.	10	19	61	87	51	3,66	1,05

Finally, the factor of continuance brand commitment had some of the lowest scores to all three of its items. Respondents selected "completely disagreed" most frequently to all items. In this sense and analysing the mean scores we can understand that consumers disagreed with all the items in this factor.

Table 14. Factor statistics – continuance brand commitment

CONTINUANCE BRAND COMMITMENT							
Item	Frequency					M	DT
	1	2	3	4	5		
CONT1: It would be very hard for me to switch from the select brand, even to a brand offering similar products.	94	59	29	30	16	2,19	1,29
CONT2: My life would be disrupted if I switched away from the selected brand.	119	44	31	21	13	1,97	1,24
CONT3: It would be too costly from me to switch from the selected brand at this moment.	122	49	29	20	8	1,87	1,15

4.4. Hypothesis Testing

After having presented statistical analyses for all factors, we will proceed with testing the hypotheses formulated in our conceptual model. In order to proceed with testing the hypothesis through Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression analyses it is first necessary to test some of assumptions which are necessary requirements to proceed with the regressions. The linearity of the regression between the depend variable and independent variables was validated. Additionally, it was confirmed that there was no multicollinearity between the predictors since all correlations between independent variables were below 0.7 for all multiple regressions.

In this sense, the linear regressions will be presented next. The variable selection process followed the enter method, where the researcher chooses the independent variables, in this case based on the literature review. This allows to extract more meaningful information to answer the research problem (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). Each regression will be represented by a letter. The letters were selected in alphabetical order.

4.4.1. Multiple Linear Regression – A

The first multiple linear regression aims to test the below hypotheses formulated in the conceptual model section of this research:

H1 (a): Customer-centric economic sustainability positively affects brand trust.

H2 (a): Customer-centric environmental sustainability positively affects brand trust.

H3 (a): Customer-centric social sustainability positively affects brand trust.

Building from the above, the dependent and independent variables were input as below.

- **Dependent variable:** Brand Trust

- **Independent variables:** Customer-centric economic sustainability, customer-centric social sustainability and customer-centric environmental sustainability

Analysing the output for **regression A** we can establish that 32,2% of the variance of brand trust can be explained by the three dimension of customer-centric sustainability framework.

Table 15. Model Summary - Regression A

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. F Change
1	,576	0,331	0,322	0,55884	0,000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer-centric economic sustainability, Customer-centric social sustainability, Customer-centric environmental sustainability
b. Dependent Variable: Brand Trust

In addition and in line with Sarstedt and Mooi (2014) the Anova test (**Table 16**) was found to be significant, thus indicating that there is a linear relationship between the variables.

Table 16. ANOVA – Regression A

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	34,673	3	11,558	37,008	,000
	Residual	69,956	224	0,312		
	Total	104,628	227			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Trust

b. Predictors: (Constant), Customer-centric economic sustainability, Customer-centric social sustainability, Customer-centric environmental sustainability

According to the multiple linear regression output in SPSS, all three independent variables (customer-centric economic sustainability, customer-centric environmental sustainability and customer-centric social sustainability) of multiple linear **regression A** have significant influence on brand trust (p-value < 0.05 for all independent variables). Consequently, all three hypotheses (**H1 (a)**, **H2 (a)** and **H3 (a)**) were validated by this multiple linear regression.

Table 17. Coefficients – Regression A

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1,566	0,218		7,190	0,000
	Customer-centric economic sustainability	0,281	0,060	0,279	4,679	0,000
	Customer-centric environmental sustainability	0,178	0,062	0,204	2,895	0,004
	Customer-centric social sustainability	0,215	0,061	0,246	3,515	0,001

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Trust

4.4.2. Multiple Linear Regression – B

The second multiple linear regression proposes to confirm whether the customer-centric dimensions of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) have a positive effect on affective brand commitment. Thus, it tests the below hypotheses formulated in the concept model section of this research.

H1 (b): Customer-centric economic sustainability positively affects affective brand commitment.

H2 (b): Customer-centric environmental sustainability positively affects affective brand commitment.

H3 (b): Customer-centric social sustainability positively affects affective brand commitment.

In line with the above hypothesis the variables of this multiple linear regression were defined as follows:

- **Dependent variable:** Affective brand commitment
- **Independent variables:** Customer-centric economic sustainability, customer-centric social sustainability and customer-centric environmental sustainability

Similarly to regression A, the Anova test was also significant, which points out that that there is a linear relationship between the variables in this regression. Although there is a significant linear relationship between the variables, the independent variables present low predictive power over the dependent variable. The three dimensions of customer-centric sustainability can only explain 12,5% of the variance of affective brand commitment. Even though the adjusted coefficient of determination is low, it is still higher than 0.1, thus according to Sarstedt and Mooi (2014) the regression analysis can still be performed.

Table 18. Model Summary - Regression B

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. F Change
1	0,370	0,137	0,125	1,02985	0,000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer-centric economic sustainability, Customer-centric social sustainability, Customer-centric environmental sustainability

b. Dependent Variable: Affective brand commitment

As per the analysis of the coefficients table (**table 19**) we can understand that not all independent variables of multiple linear **regression B** were found to be statistically significant predictor of the dependent variable. Both customer-centric economic sustainability and customer-centric social sustainability are significant predictors of affective brand commitment, but the same cannot be said of customer-centric environmental sustainability whose p-value is higher than 0.05. In this sense, customer-centric environmental sustainability did not make a significant contribution to change in affective brand commitment. Thus, **H1 (b)** and **H2 (b)** were confirmed, however **H3 (b)** was not supported.

Table 19. Coefficients – Regression B

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0,878	0,401		2,188	0,030
	Customer-centric economic sustainability	0,265	0,111	0,162	2,392	0,018
	Customer-centric environmental sustainability	0,113	0,114	0,080	0,999	0,319
	Customer-centric social sustainability	0,310	0,113	0,219	2,750	0,006

a. Dependent Variable: Affective brand commitment

4.4.3. Multiple Linear Regression – C

The third and final multiple linear regression was formulated with the intent to confirm if the customer-centric dimensions of sustainability have a positive effect on continuance brand commitment.

H1 (c): Customer-centric economic sustainability positively affects continuance brand commitment.

H2 (c): Customer-centric environmental sustainability positively affects continuance brand commitment.

H3 (c): Customer-centric social sustainability positively affects continuance brand commitment.

In line with the above hypothesis the variables of this multiple linear regression were defined as follows:

- **Dependent variable:** Continuance brand commitment

- **Independent variables:** Customer-centric economic sustainability, customer-centric social sustainability and customer-centric environmental sustainability

Table 20. Model Summary - Regression C

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. F Change
1	0,267	0,072	0,059	1,04238	0,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer-centric economic sustainability, Customer-centric social sustainability, Customer-centric environmental sustainability

b. Dependent Variable: Continuance brand commitment

As in the other two regessions (A and B) the Anova test was also significant, thus there is a linear relationship between the variables in this regression. However according to the interpretation of the adjusted R squared the three dimensions of customer-centric sustainability can only explain 7,2% of the variance of continuance brand commitment, which according to researchers this value is below the cut off value of 10% suggested as acceptable to confirm that the independent variables have predictive power over the dependent variable (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). In line with this we the current research is unable to confirm hypothesis **H1 (c)**, **H2 (c)** and **H3 (c)**.

4.4.4. Pearson Correlations

The remaining 2 hypotheses formulated in this study were tested through the calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient, and the results are presented in the following tables.

H4 (a) Brand trust has a postive impact on affective brand commitment.

The Pearson correlation coefficient for the two variables indicates that there is a moderate positive relationship between the two. In other words, we can confirm hypotheses **H4 (a)** since increases in brand trust also trigger increases in affective brand commitment.

Table 21. Pearson's correlation between brand trust and affective brand commitment

		Brand Trust	Affective brand commitment
Brand Trust	Pearson Correlation	1	,405**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	228	228
Affective brand commitment	Pearson Correlation	,405**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	228	228

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Lastly, hypotheses H4(b) intends to confirm if brand trust positively influences brand commitment, thus the pearson correlation was also done for these two variables.

H4 (b) Brand trust has a postive impact on continuance brand commitment.

As per the analysis of the output of the Pearson correction we conclude that there is also a positive correlation between the two variables, however in this case the correlation is deemed as being a weak correlation. We confirm that there is a positive association between brand trust and continuance brand commitment, hence hypotheses **H4 (b)** is confirmed.

Table 22. Pearson's correlation between brand trust and continuance brand commitment

		Brand Trust	Continuance brand commitment
Brand Trust	Pearson Correlation	1	,344**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	228	228
Continuance brand commitment	Pearson Correlation	,344**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	228	228

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5. DISCUSSION

Now that all formulated hypotheses have been tested, we will proceed by stablishing a connection between the results obtained in this study and the literature which was initially reviewed. The results will be discussed considering the objectives stablished for this research. The empirical findings of this study were summarized and presented in **Table 23.**

Table 23. Hypothesis empirical results

Hypothesis	Empirical Result
H1 (a): Customer-centric economic sustainability positively affects brand trust.	Suported
H1 (b): Customer-centric economic sustainability positively affects affective brand commitment.	Suported
H1 (c): Customer-centric economic sustainability positively affects continuance brand commitment.	Not suported
H2 (a): Customer-centric environmental sustainability positively affects brand trust.	Suported
H2 (b): Customer-centric environmental sustainability positively affects affective brand commitment.	Not suported
H2 (c): Customer-centric environmental sustainability positively affects continuance brand commitment.	Not suported

H3 (a): Customer-centric social sustainability positively affects brand trust.	Suported
H3 (b): Customer-centric social sustainability positively affects affective brand commitment.	Suported
H3 (c): Customer-centric social sustainability positively affects continuance brand commitment.	Not suported
H4 (a): Brand trust has a positive impact on affective brand commitment.	Suported
H4 (b): Brand trust has a positive impact on continuance brand commitment.	Suported

This research followed a previous study by Park and Kim (2016) where the researchers proposed an instrument to measure the three dimensions of customer-centric sustainability (economic, environmental and social) and tested whether those dimension had a significant impact on brand trust. This study concluded that customer-centric economic sustainability, costumer-centric environmental sustainability and customer-centric social sustainability all had a significant statistical impact on brand trust, thus supporting hypothesis **H1(a)**, **H2(a)** and **H3(c)**. Interestingly, these results are not fully consistent with the research it was based on, since Park and Kim (2016) reported that customer-centric environmental sustainability had an insignificant impact on brand trust.

On one hand, even though customer-centric environmental sustainability was found to be a significant predictor of brand trust it was the dimension with the least impact on brand trust. This dimension is often confused precisely with sustainability (Lundblad & Davies, 2015), yet it impacts brand trust the least, which is an interesting finding. On another hand, we confirm that economic sustainability is playing a greater role for consumers, thus this may suggest that consumers may want a change in the pace at which the industry is moving, by having products last longer which is in line with studies done by Clark (2008) as well as Jung and Jin (2014).

This research went on to also measure the impact of the three dimensions of sustainability on other dimension of brand relationship, namely affective brand commitment and continuance brand commitment. We found that not all dimensions of sustainability were significant to predict affective brand commitment. Whilst customer-centric economic sustainability and customer-centric social sustainability were found to be significant predictors of affective brand commitment, the same cannot be said of customer-centric environmental sustainability.

The above provides us the understanding that the environmental dimension of sustainability does not impact consumers' willingness to commit long term to a fast fashion brand, according to this sample of Portuguese fast fashion consumers. Again, the environmental dimension is often the most explored in literature and the one most often advertised by brands who make special collections focusing on the use of organic materials (Henninger et al., 2009). Still, this research comes to show that this dimension may be outweighed by the willingness to buy cheap trendy styles, which have negative effects on the environment (Joy et al., 2012).

Thus, brand may need to shift the focus from customer-centric environmental dimension of sustainability to both the economic and social dimension. In line with the above, the above **H1 (b)** and **H3 (b)** were confirmed, but **H2 (b)** was not supported.

As for the impact of the three dimensions of sustainability on continuance brand commitment it was found to be very little since only a very small amount of the variance of continuance brand commitment was explained by those three variables, thus we were unable to support that any of them had any impact on this indicator of brand relationship. Therefore**, H1 (c)**, **H2 (c)** and **H3 (c)** were not supported.

Moreover, this research also supports finds from Tong et al. (2017) who reported on a link between brand trust and brand commitment. However, unlike Tong et al. (2017) this study separated the concept of brand commitment into two dimensions: continuance brand commitment and affective brand commitment.

Consequently, we found that brand trust is positively related with continuance brand commitment which may indicate that the more brands win customers' trust the higher the perceived cost for customers to switch away from the brand (Fullerton, 2009). As for affective brand commitment it is also positively related with brand trust something that is easily understandable as it is the same with relationships, the more the trust the more two individuals have the pleasure of keeping a committed relationship to each other (Aaker, 1997). In this case, the same happens with this sample of Portuguese fast fashion consumers and brands. Thus, **H4 (a)** and **H4 (b)** were supported by this research.

6. Conclusion

This last section of the research looks to provide an overview of the main conclusions and contributes of the present thesis as well as the theoretical and managerial implications, limitations and future research suggestions.

The literature review of this thesis helped to clarify the research problem at hands, and the previous research that had covered similar topics. Previous research from Sheth et al. (2011), Park and Kim (2016) and Fullerton (2009) were key for the development of this research. The first provided the base of the customer-centric sustainability framework which was followed in this research while the following two provided the scales for the variables which this study proposed to measure. Next, the questionnaire was distributed so that primary data could be collected and compared with previous researches. In fact, this study was found to be relevant since no other research was founded that tried to measure sustainability following the same three-dimensional concept for the Portuguese consumer. The present research proposed to investigate a research problem that had not yet been investigated in Portugal, thus the study was exploratory (Saunders et al., 2009).

The data analysis allowed to extract information from the primary data collected through the questionnaires, and the discussion allowed us to confront the data analysis output with the literature which was reviewed in the beginning of this thesis. Therefore, we were able to extract the implications for theory and managers as well as the limitations of the current research and suggestions of future research which we will present next.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

This research adds to the current literature by supporting that the CCS framework allows to measure consumers' perceptions of fast fashion brands, and allows to also understand how consumers' perception of the different dimensions of sustainability affect brand relationship.

In regard to brand trust our results contrast with the results obtained by Park and Kim (2016). In our study all dimensions of sustainability were significant predictors of brand trust, while the previous researchers found that environmental sustainability was not a significant predictor of the same dimension of brand relationship. Thus, this suggests that the Portuguese consumer of fast fashion brands may differentiate from the consumer of fast fashion brands in the United States of America. As for brand commitment a previous study by Choi, Ko, Kim, and Mattila (2015) reported that sustainability was a predictor of brand commitment. However our study allow us to provide further detail on that, since first we have divided brand commitment into two different dimensions (affective brand commitment and continuance brand commitment) and second by testing the predictive power of three dimensions of sustainability instead of focusing on a macro concept of sustainability. Consequently, we were able to detail that sustainability was not found to be significant predictor of continuance brand commitment. As for the predictive power of sustainability on affective brand commitment we confirm that the social and economical dimension have significant predictive power over affective brand commitment, but the same was not found of the environmental dimension.

Moreover, Sheth et al. (2011) have criticised researches on sustainability for using macro measures for this concept, thus the present research also intends to mitigate the lack of research which focus on more micro levels of sustainability, which it did by using the three-dimensional CCS framework.

6.2. Managerial Implications

Fast fashion brands sustainability efforts have focused on reducing the impact of the industry on the environment by, for example, sourcing more ecological fabrics (Mcneill & Moore, 2015). However, the environmental dimension in one of the three dimensions of the CCS (Sheth et al., 2011) and according to this study it is the variable out of the three dimension of sustainability that has less predictive power on brand trust and no predictive power at all over affective brand commitment.

Building from the above, these findings indicate an urgency in shining a light on the remaining dimension of sustainability (social and economic) which have significant predictive power over both brand trust and affective brand commitment. These two dimensions are a vehicle for brand to strength the relationship with their consumers. Marketing actions may focus on the economical dimension of sustainability (which has a high predictive power over both brand trust and affective brand commitment) by promoting characteristics of the product such as durability or fit.

A marketing strategy with a more balanced focus on all three dimensions of sustainability may also mitigate the risk of greenwashing since it presents a brand which is concerned by all aspects of sustainability, thus lessening the risk of some actions being perceived as misleading (Dahl, 2010).

6.3. Limitations and future research

The current research followed a convenience sampling method, where researchers collect responses from the easiest people to access (Saunders et al., 2009). This sampling method is often used do to the fact that it less costly than other sampling methods (Bryman, 2001). However, the decision to use a convenience sampling method also introduces limitations to the research due to the fact that the sample may share many similarities and thus it is not advisable to generalise the results obtained (Emerson, 2015). Future research may mitigate this limitation by using a snowball sampling method.

The findings from this research reflect only the Portuguese fast fashion consumer sample that this study collected and Park and Kim's (2016) research findings only reflected those of the American consumers'. In this sense, future research should strive to test the CCS framework with consumers from different cultural backgrounds namely consumers in developing countries (Tong et al., 2017).

In addition, future researches should also attempt to stablish the relationships between the concepts of this study through the structural equation method in order to obtain more detail on the complex relationships of the conceptual model of this research.

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THE MARKETING SCHOOL
LAUREATE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

ANNEX 1 - QUESTIONNAIRE

Sustentabilidade no Retalho Fast Fashion

O presente trabalho de investigação foi desenvolvido no âmbito de uma dissertação de mestrado em Gestão de Marketing do IPAM Porto, com o objetivo de avaliar as percepções dos consumidores relativamente à sustentabilidade no retalho fast fashion, pelo que é importante que responda com sinceridade a todas as questões.

O questionário é totalmente anónimo pelo que as respostas não serão identificadas como sendo suas. O tempo de duração do questionário é de aproximadamente 7 minutos.

Agradeço desde já a sua colaboração na realização desta investigação.
*Obrigatório

Sustentabilidade no Retalho "Fast Fashion"

1. 1. Seleccione das 3 marcas seguintes aquela que compra com mais frequência para si ou para alguém do seu agregado familiar. As perguntas seguintes serão relativas a essa mesma marca. (Caso não seja consumidor de nenhuma destas marcas o questionário terminará aqui para si. Agradecemos a sua colaboração) *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ZARA
- H&M
- MANGO

Sustentabilidade no Retalho "Fast Fashion"

Responda às questões seguintes relativamente à marca que seleccionou na secção anterior (Zara, Mango ou H&M). Para cada uma das questões deverá seleccionar um dos número da escala de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 5 (concordo totalmente).

1= Discordo totalmente
2= Discordo
3= Não concordo nem discordo
4= Concordo
5= Concordo totalmente

2. 2. As roupas da marca seleccionada são resistentes e duradouras. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

3. 3. As roupas da marca seleccionada são macias, confortáveis e têm boa vestibilidade. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

4. 4. As roupas da marca seleccionada têm um bom design e estilo. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

5. 5. As roupas da marca seleccionada apresentam materiais de qualidade e boa confecção. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

6. 6. A marca seleccionada adopta práticas de produção amigas do ambiente. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Concordo totalmente

7. 7. A marca seleccionada não recorre a químicos tóxicos na produção dos seus artigos. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Concordo totalmente

8. 8. A marca seleccionada produz os seus artigos com reduzidas consequências para o meio ambiente (por exemplo, com uma baixa pegada de carbono) e animais. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Concordo totalmente

9. 9. A marca seleccionada produz os seus artigos com recurso a materiais sustentáveis como, por exemplo, algodão orgânico. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Concordo totalmente

10. 10. A marca seleccionada paga salários justos aos trabalhadores das fábricas com quem trabalha e aos fornecedores das suas matérias primas. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

11. 11. Os produtos da marca seleccionada são fabricados seguindo regras de saúde e segurança para os trabalhadores das fábricas, e sem recurso a trabalho infantil. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

12. 12. A marca seleccionada privilegia a produção local dos seus artigos. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

13. 13. A marca seleccionada desenvolve acções para melhorar as condições das comunidades em que desenvolve o seu negócio. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

Sustentabilidade no Retalho "Fast Fashion"

Responda às questões seguintes relativamente à marca que seleccionou na secção anterior (Zara, Mango ou H&M). Para cada uma das questões deverá seleccionar um dos número da escala de 1 (discordo totalmente) a 5 (concordo totalmente).

14. 14. A marca seleccionada cumpre com aquilo que promete.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

15. 15. As reivindicações feitas pela marca seleccionada sobre os seus produtos são credíveis.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

16. 16. Com o tempo, as minhas experiências com a marca seleccionada levaram-me a esperar que esta cumpra as suas promessas.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

17. 17. A marca seleccionada tem um nome no qual se pode confiar.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

18. 18. A marca seleccionada não finge ser algo que não é.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

19. 19. Sente-se emocionalmente ligado com a marca seleccionada.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

20. 20. A marca seleccionada tem significado pessoal para si.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

21. 21. Sente que se identifica com a marca seleccionada.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

22. 22. Seria difícil para si mudar para uma marca alternativa à seleccionada, mesmo que essa marca oferece-se o mesmo tipo de produto.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

23. 23. A sua vida seria afectada caso fosse impedida de realizar compras na marca seleccionada.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

24. 24. Neste momento, seria muito penoso mudar para outra marca além da seleccionada.

Marcar apenas uma oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Discordo totalmente	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Concordo totalmente

Sustentabilidade no Retalho "Fast Fashion"

25. Sexo *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

◯ Masculino
◯ Feminino

26. Idade *

27. Seleccione a região onde habita. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Norte
- Centro
- Área Metropolitana de Lisboa
- Alentejo
- Algarve
- Região Autónoma dos Açores
- Região Autónoma da Madeira

28. Seleccione o seu nível de escolaridade. *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Ensino Básico ou Inferior
- Ensino Secundário
- Ensino Pós-Secundário Não Superior
- Ensino Superior (Licenciatura, Mestrado ou Doutoramento)

29. Rendimento Liquido do Agregado Familiar *

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- Inferior a €1.000
- € 1.000 a € 1.500
- € 1.500 a € 2.000
- Superior a € 2.000