Fast and Slow Fashions as seen through the IASDR
Columbus, Ohio, USA

**ABSTRACT**

The term slow fashion was coined by Katja Fletcher to counter the growing trend of the fast fashion industry. In recent years, the clothing industry has become dominated by fast fashion, which has spurred overconsumption whereby people buy more than they need. This study aims to develop a critical creative thinking framework based on the understanding and insights of how Millennials view apparel consumption.

In order to understand the Millennial mindset with regard to apparel consumption, responses were collected from over a hundred Millennials through an online survey (Phase One), where they discussed their reasons for placing themselves along a scale from slow to fast fashion. The findings uncovered a new group of consumers, the undecided-exploring, who identified with both slow and fast fashion. Valuable insights collected from the survey informed the development of a research toolkit that was used in a series of participatory workshops (Phase Two) with the goal to construct a conceptual model of Millennial apparel consumption.

Further understanding of slow fashion, as seen through the Millennial mindset, will inspire and guide designers, manufacturers, and consumers to make more sustainable decisions when buying, selling, and clothing items.

**PHASE 1: SURVEY**

The survey was sent out to Millennial participants. The survey consisted of closed, open, and dichotomous questions, as well as a scale (1-5) to determine whether participants viewed themselves in terms of fast or slow fashion.

Although this research specifically studied slow and fast fashion consumers, a third category of fashion consumers, the undecided-exploring, emerged from the findings. They are aware of fast and slow fashion problems and can decide what avenue to go down. These undecided-exploring consumers are going through physical and psychological metamorphoses as they mature.

The number of wash cycles of clothing is put through in its life cycle greatly compromises the environment, says Kate Fletcher. The Ecologist, 37, 5, 71. They expressed awareness of the environmental effects of fast fashion and overconsumption of resources. For the Journey map, participants envisioned the environmental impact of their clothes, to question their consumption habits.

Slow fashion consumers tend to be older Millennials who spend more money on their clothing, 11.8% of the group of Millennials studied said they would wash their clothing items for 5 to 10 years while only 40.4% of fast-fashion Millennials said they would wash their clothing items for 5 to 10 years. This amount of time, 13% of the undecided-exploring consumers and they would keep their clothing items for over 10 years (Figure 2).

**PHASE 2: PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS**

The first exercise (Figure 3) consisted of a preliminary mapping exercise, where participants marked on a line where they see themselves in terms of fast or slow fashion. Many women posted themselves in the undecided-exploring section as well as in the slow fashion section, while men positioned themselves in the undecided-exploring and the fast fashion sections.

Then the participants were asked to work together on creating a current journey map (Figure 4) for a clothing item collaging the seven Deep Metaphors (Figure 5).

A collaging exercise was conducted after the preliminary mapping activity. The collaging toolkit included visual materials to help the participants think, feel, and understand. Gerald and Lindsay Zaltman’s ‘Deep Metaphor’ was used as a means to reveal Millennials’ emotional states of mind in sustainable fashion. The seven Deep Metaphors: Balance, Transformation, Journey, Container, Connections, Resources, and Control—were universal drivers of human behavior that shape what people think, hear, say, and do (Zaltman & Zaltman, 2008). Participants were asked to fill the spaces on the Journey Map with visual images and written statements regarding fast or slow fashion in relation to the Deep Metaphors.

Most of the participants gravitated towards three of the metaphors, Balance, Resources, and Journey. When lifting the balloon metaphor, participants talked about both the environment and their own self-concept. They expressed awareness of the environmental effects of fast fashion and overconsumption of resources. For the Journey map, participants envisioned the environmental impact of their clothes, to question their consumption habits.

Participants envisioned the ideal journey (Figure 6) of a future clothing product designing Fletcher and Grose’s ‘Seven Deep Metaphors’ Product concepts on the baseline. This mapping exercise allowed the participants to take their shared knowledge and collaborate on a more sustainable and transparent journey map for a clothing product.

Participants expressed a desire to move towards more sustainable materials such as organic cotton. According to a survey conducted by the author, 93.5% of the consumers feel the need for transparency in the sourcing of materials available for their clothing products and production environments. They also demanded materials and resources that encourage washing and reduce the carbon footprint. Overall, more participants wanted to use all clothing products being recycled or biodegradable.

Participants were again asked to mark on the line where they see themselves in terms of fast or slow fashion (Figure 7). This was used to document any changes in perception from the beginning of the session to the end. A number of participants moved their positions from fast fashion to the middle (undecided-exploring) section which revealed that the workshop exercises caused them to question their consumption habits.

**NEXT STEPS**

The author will continue to analyze and summarize the data obtained in this study to develop a critical creative thinking framework based on the understanding and insights of how Millennials view apparel consumption.

**REFERENCES**


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