

CRITICAL SUSTAINABILITY FACTORS AND DIFFERENCES OF CONSUMERS IN GERMANY AND SOUTH AFRICA WHEN PURCHASING CLOTHING

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Abstract

With the increasing needs of society, the planet and the economy for sustainable development, it has become more pivotal to provide insight for different industries, organisations and retailers into consumer understanding regarding sustainability. Thus, the poster presented aims to provide a conceptual framework, research design and overview for two journal papers; with the first one still in progress, titled critical sustainability factors for consumers in Germany and South Africa when purchasing clothing. The second paper will then be titled Critical sustainability differences between consumers in Germany and South Africa when purchasing clothing.

The two papers aim to provide critical areas the clothing industry should focus on when implementing sustainability efforts that are related to the seventeen United Nations (UN) sustainable development goals (SDGs). However, there is a problem with linking or aligning clothing retailers' sustainable efforts with the UN's SDGs, which this paper intends to address. Another problem is that it is not clear which sustainable efforts within the clothing industry critically influence consumers' buying behaviour towards specific products. Therefore, the paper assumes that each of the seventeen UN SDGs has a differentiated influence on consumers' purchasing behaviour towards clothing. Thus, the UN SDGs were drawn out in the conceptual framework to be analysed and then linked to the clothing industry to later evaluate the levels of influence specific goals have on consumers purchasing behaviour. In the conceptual framework, the UN 17 SDGs are linked with the theoretical concept of the 3 E's of sustainability, namely, environment, economy and equity (social equity).

The consumers' purchasing behaviour will then be analysed through the intention-behaviour gap, which was developed to analyse the ethical behaviour of consumers and draw a distinction between the intention to purchase and the actual sustainable purchases (Carrington 2010). Accordingly, there are six questions highlighted in the poster. The first question is, which of the UN's SDGs influences consumers' willingness/intention to purchase clothing? The second question is, which UN SDGs lead to influencing consumers' actual purchases in retail? Leading to the third question which is, what is the consumers' intention-behaviour gap between the willingness to purchase sustainably and the actual sustainable buying behaviour towards clothing? The first three questions will be answered in the first paper. The second paper will then interrogate firstly, the sociodemographic characteristics of consumers purchasing clothing sustainably in South Africa and Germany. Secondly, evaluate how the UN SDGs vary in influencing consumers' willingness/intention and actual purchases of specific clothing categories. Thirdly, study the cross-cultural differences in sustainable consumption behaviour in the intention-behaviour gap between Germany and South Africa?

Finally, the research design illustrated is based on quantitative measures, through an online survey that will be distributed both in Germany and South Africa. Quota sampling based on gender, income, and age will be outlined and later applied.

Keywords: Clothing, Sustainability, Sustainable-Development-Goals, United Kingdom