

7.4 Case studies

Lastly, the last part of this chapter provides case study views that provided an analysis on two brands operating in different segments of the fashion pyramid. These brands were pitched against each other to provide an advice towards both parties. Here these two brands were analyzed and discussed in order to find similarities and or differences that creates a sustainability recommendation strategy for the fast fashion industry based on a strategy from a brand operating in a different segment within the fashion industry.



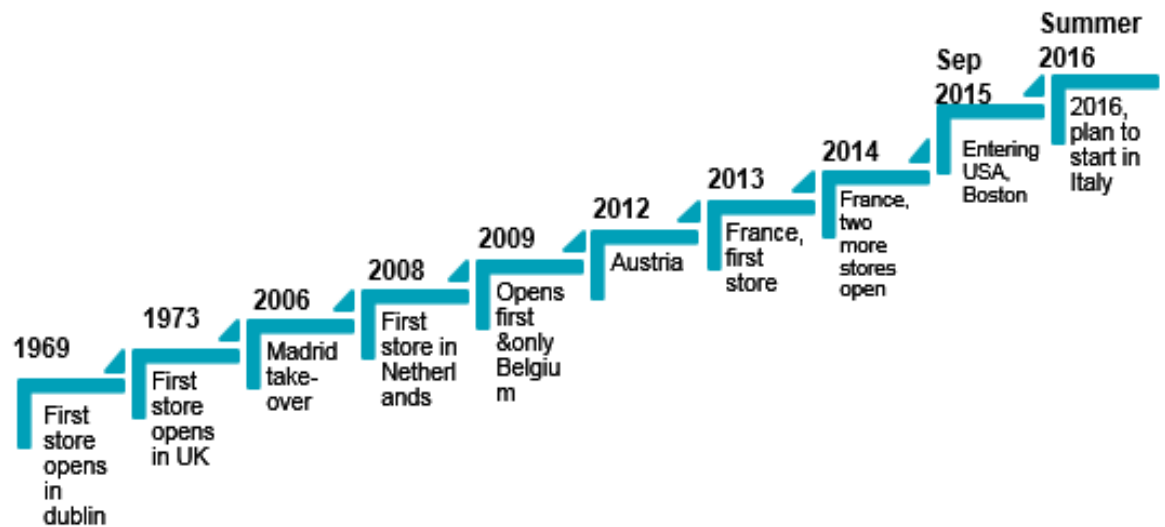
(truelibertydenim , 2015)

(Verbon, 2012)

7.4.1 Mini-case Primark

One of the upcoming brands in the European fast fashion market: Primark (sell, 2016). This case study will first explain the starting steps of the company beginning with the history line. Following a company description on the European brand, a USP description (how are they positioned in relation to the competition), and Primark's corporate social responsibility based on current activities. In addition a description on strategic position and direction plans. Ending, with a business model analysis and a SWOT analysis on the brand's internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats.

7.4.2 History timeline



7.4.3 Company description

The roots of the company Primark lay in Ireland where it was founded in 1969, however it really started to grow when it started opening stores abroad. A retail store that copies the latest fashion items and offering them for bottom prices. The store design offers not only clothing for women but also carries a men's line, children, children's, cosmetics, home decorations department, and different accessory lines. In addition, the below figure displays the current position that the company holds when it comes to market share. Primark brand is number 6 right now on the world scale within the fast fashion industry(print edition, 2014).

Today, the company owns a total of 270 stores in nine different European countries and are now taking the next step by entering the American marketplace and is planning to open its first store in city Boston soon.

Unique Selling Proposition

What makes Primark so special and desirable to go to for consumers? According to Telegraph writer Katherine Ruston: *"We are a nation of shoppers and in a downturn we are more eager to trim our budgets than curtain the habit altogether, Primark fits the bill within the dream of having fashionable clothes for a dirt cheap price"* (Katherine Ruston, 2015).

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
S1: Very broad range of product choice because of large volume buying S2: Low prices for consumers S3: Give back to the community, obtain a high level of CSR responsibility	W1: Exposure of too much choice W2: Remain to have a bad image when it comes to ethical fashion
<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Threats</u>
O1: Improving website, allowing a gateway of communicating with consumers O2: Web shop, giving the choice of online shop and order O3: Engage more in promoting the brand (e.g.: using models to represent the brand) O4: Engage in collaborating with designers (like what H&M is doing)	T1: Decrease in age of target audience population T2: Falling behind when it comes to technology e.g.: online store T3: Developing an app that connects to the website (as all completion already have this) T4: Image of unethical practices might ruin reputation in a slow pace

7.4.4SWOT analysis

To have a better understanding of the Primark's internal strengths and weaknesses and external threats and opportunities an analysis has to be drawn. In order to see where the brand can improve or perhaps change strategic direction. Especially when it comes to the measurement of external weaknesses and treats in order for Primark to take advantage of their opportunities.

7.4.5Business model

Below the business model framework on how Primark configures their resources, products

and services, activities that in the end create their value proposition for their target audience. This business model was used in the assessment for the two strategies researched.

Input

The beginning phase of the business model is the input stage. Here lies the strengths on how the company organizes its resources and assets (tangible and intangible). The input starts for Primark with high sales volume. Meaning, their stock is large and the ordering of items are very large orders. This allows them to have low margins which equals high sale targets. They have to sell twice as more comparing to target sales for example a Zara.

Throughput

In this phase the process is described of bringing resources into the value chain of production. Here all activities concerning production are mentioned. The best way to describe this briefly for Primark is with the use of the Porter value chain theory. All primary activities within the Porter value chain are displayed in the figure below. When it comes to Primark's supporting activities the company has yet invested into little technological development such as an online app or social media channels.

Output

This last phase of the business model of Primark explains the exact steps taken on how the products or services are brought to the consumer. How does Primark communicate its value proposition when not engaging in any form of promotion or marketing? Primark depends on its word-to mouth advertising and leaves the talking to their loyal consumers. How the company communicates its value proposition is by the following sentence: "Look good, Pay less"(Armstrong, 2009) A slogan if you will that describes the motivation behind not choosing to spend high costs on advertising.

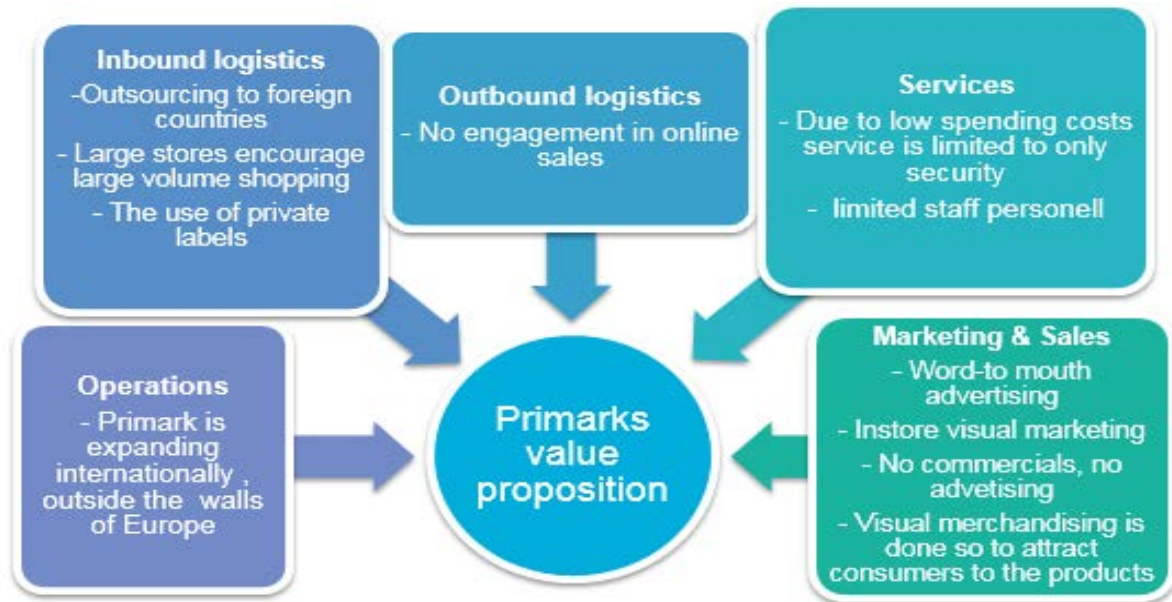


Diagram made by Miryam Jamal

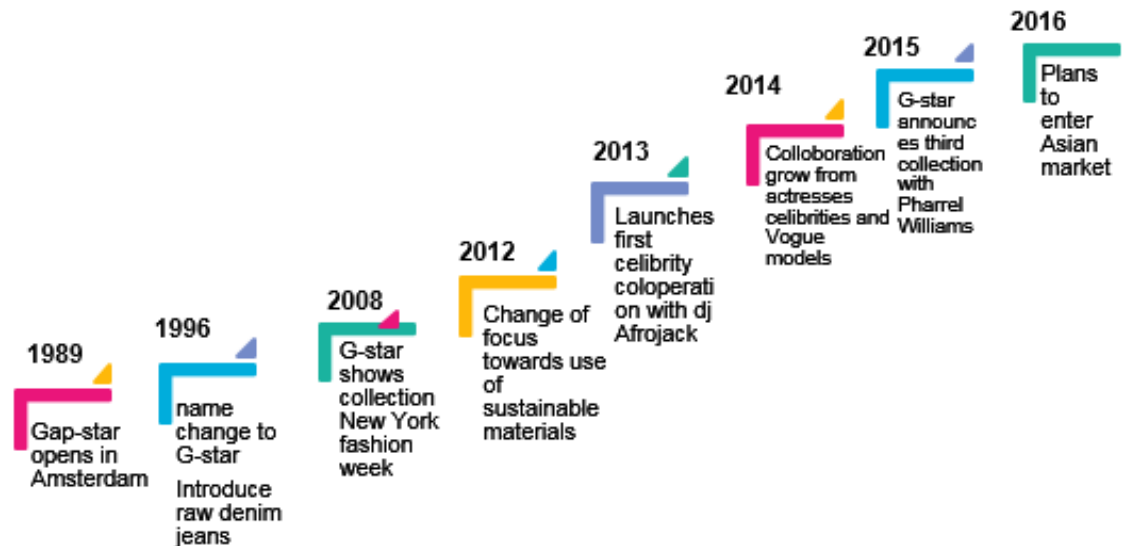
7.5 Mini-case G-star

Company description

The roots of this company lay in Holland where it was founded in 1989 but had a slightly different name: Gap star. In 1996 the company changed its name to G-star and developed the first raw denim type of jean. Meaning, the jeans were not processed in the pre-wash process. This is why they carry the name RAW as it takes a few weeks to make the jeans less stiff and more wearable. The company started in designing jeans that were meant for men only. At this moment in time the company is targeting the women's target audience as well as it men's as it now carries both lines. The lines have expended to entire collections of denim from tops, blouses, coats, belts and so on.

G-star was the first within its jean industry to introduce "luxury denim" to the fashion world. By doing this the company created a new sector of high fashion that meets an edgy street style. The brand positions themselves as a denim first brand that focuses on "just the product" which is also their slogan and value proposition. Allowing their consumers to have their own style and have the opportunity to wear one of a kind textured garments.

7.5.1 History timeline



7.5.2 Corporate social responsibility

According to G-star, the company monitors its social responsibility by making sure that two important relations are strong and monitored. Namely, the relationships with their suppliers and their workers. As G-star does not own its factories it outsources the production which means that the relationships need to be strong and transparent (Charlton, 2014).

Measuring performance

Monitoring production processes during inspections is not enough to ensure that problems do not occur. In order to address problems head on the company tries to share information with the suppliers, creating an ongoing dialogue on how the supply chain is moving forward. By doing this the company wants to promote and set an example for other brands to start engaging in responsible chemical production. This monitoring process is embedded in a code handbook of the company named: Gstar supplier code of conduct. In this handbook the company evaluates each new supplier relation that is planning to work with them.

7.5.3 SWOT analysis

Below the SWOT analysis is shown in order to evaluate the internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the external opportunities and threats.

<u>Strengths</u> S1:Several communication/marketing tools S2:Innovative in sustainable fashion (celebrity collaborations) S3:High differentiated level S4:High competitive advantage	<u>Weaknesses</u> W1:Differentiated market positioning, only focus on a small segment (limited) W2: No clear focus on consumer emotions W3:High and non-focused pricing
<u>Opportunities</u> O1:Sustainable fashion (keep on investing in sustainability and the creative promotion) O2:Fashion collaborations with celebrities O3: Sustainable collaboration with Hasmik (expert on sustainability design model)	<u>Threats</u> T1:Strong competitor (Diesel) T2: The hacker(s) on their email creation account (damaging the image of the brand)

(Francois, 2013)

7.5.4Business model G-star

Input

The assets that G-star holds are not only their brick and mortar stores sold now in over 70 countries but also their online webstore and mobile application app (Elly0c, 2012). This belongs to one of their strengths as they have multiple communication channels towards their consumers.

Throughput

This part of business model process is important for the company and is where they derive their strongest aspects as a business. As the company designed its own rule of conduct book where suppliers that want to collaborate with them need to meet standards set by G-Star before entering the relationship.

This way the company can ensure safe and ethical working conditions for their staff. This code of conduct is based on the United Nations declaration on human rights charter and is approved by the SMETA environmental criteria points. G-star is operating stores in an international scale and so is their relationships with their suppliers. Today, the company is operating supplier relation in six different countries that operate in over 28 factories, counting a total of 32145 employees (G-star, 2015).

Output

When it comes to delivering the value proposition to G-stars target audience it involves detailed targeting. The brand positions itself as a high street brand which focuses on a niche segment of consumers (men and women) that value innovation, quality and sense of personal style. In terms of the pyramid they are positioned in the high-end market one level above the mass-market. This means prices are higher however the perceived value of the end product is carefully chosen because their consumers also receive a high quality product.

Marketing

G-star engages heavily in marketing their product by detailed targeting. Every single detail is thought about from logo to ads on their websites to the celebrities chosen to represent the brand during campaigns. As the company saw success with the first collaboration it now is continuing this path and is announcing a third men's line in the end of 2015 with Pharrell Williams. This line of denim garments is a line that is entirely made out of recycled plastic removed out of oceans. By doing this G-star and Pharrell are raising awareness on the growing issue of ocean pollution and promoting a brand at the same time.

7.6 Sub conclusion 5

In today's fashion industry a lot is happening when it comes to sustainable practices. Many brands are finding creative ways to add sustainability within their production chain. Some brands chose to communicate this to consumers on what they are doing more than others. Whereas some communicate sustainable practices throughout promotional marketing such as Dutch based brand G star. The awareness among the designers behind the brands when it comes to the importance of sustainable practices is growing. However, the amount of brands who are actually incorporating sustainable practices are fashion brands who lay in the upper parts of the fashion pyramid. Fast fashion brands such as Primark, showed in the case study results little incorporations of sustainable production methods. However, it did show that Primark is trying to give back to its community by improving labor conditions among its direct environment. Meaning, this brand is actively working on the improvement of the people aspect within its triple bottom line theory.

One of the recent developments found in this chapter was the sustainable design system created for any brand operating in the fashion pyramid, a design system created by fashion consultant H.Matesvoyan namely: *'The Paradigm in fashion design system.'* Where communicating with the consumer comes first instead of designing on a fast pace which in the end will results in failed designs and harmful consequences for the environment. By using this design system, brands can cut back on costs such as expensive marketing campaigns, disposal costs, and extra costs of failed designs. Meaning, this system contributes to equal profits for all parties involved without harming the environment in the process.

In addition, other sustainable practices were identified during another interview with environment consultant and promoter on slow fashion: Kirsten Palland. As she claims that educating the consumers on making better and slower decisions is key when wanting to increase sustainability. The concept slow fashion comes to play here with the aim of providing tips to women via different communication channels. Tips that make these women think about their purchase as if they were to buy a new television set. Making them go through all the different steps in the buying process instead of just buying it and having a big chance of several unwanted purchases.

The outcome of the case studies provided one similarity that both parties can learn from each other namely: Improving the communication with consumers.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

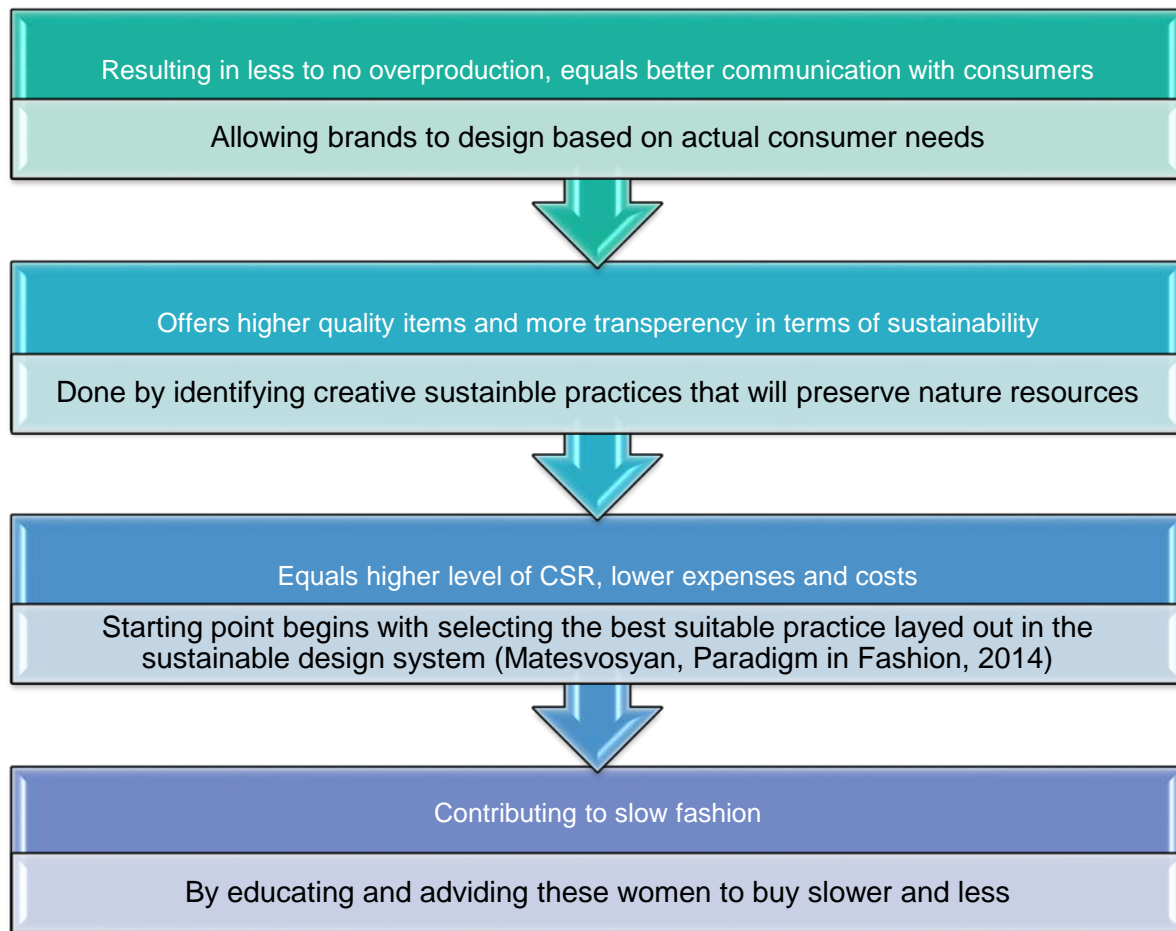
This dissertation research focused mainly on the needs and possibilities for sustainable practices for the fast fashion market. In order to answer the main question certain limitations need to be addressed within this research. Starting, the results of this research aimed to provide a recommendation strategy on sustainable practices for the fast fashion segment within the fashion industry. The current situation revolving fast fashion and sustainability is according to two fast fashion experts at this moment defined as ultimate opposites. Mainly, because this industry thrives on a fast speed business model that focuses on profits and mass production. Nevertheless, the results showed that sustainability within the fast fashion industry is about balancing the interests and not harming the people and the planet in the process. In the end, this will create equal high profits for all parties involved. As expert and creator of the sustainability business model H. Matesvosyan stated *“sustainability will become a necessity for all the fast fashion brands at one point, because resources are simply running out”* (Matesvosyan, 2016).

According to survey results, the women surveyed have a large interest in seeing a change towards better quality clothing within the fast fashion segment. Even though price is an important aspect for these women, they are willing to pay a little more in order to receive more quality for their clothes.

In terms of responsibility level, consumers found that the responsibility lies with the brands and not with them. On the contrast, both interviewed experts in fast fashion found that responsibility does lay with the industry. As the FF brands hold substantial power of distributing the consumers with choices because only these brands can offer the consumer another choice, a sustainable one. In addition, the case study research on the two different brands Primark and G-star showed two brands segments in the fashion pyramid showed mutual learning objectives for both brands. It can be seen that different brands within the fashion pyramid, meaning not only fast fashion brands can improve a lot when it comes to improving sustainability. In order to slow down the speed of the constant moving train of fast fashion environment consultant expert Kirsten Palland states that educating consumers on slow fashion is key at this point. According to H. Matesvosyan, expert on fashion sustainability, incorporating at least one part of the sustainable design system created by her will provide the best suitable fit of sustainable practices for any brand wanting to change strategic directions.

Chapter 9 Recommendations

In terms of recommendations for the fashion industry, choice is key when it comes to adding sustainable practices to the current fast fashion model. According to expert H. Matesvosyan the brand in question must first know what it desires to change. When starting, a brand should describe all the stakeholders involved in its supply chain, drawing what is known to be called a 'stakeholders map'.



According to the consumers and interviewed experts, responsibility concerning being more sustainable lies first with the industry. This because if better options are displayed as a choice, consumers will choose those instead of previous destructive non-sustainable habits such as unnecessary mass-shopping. However, this shift of strategic direction requires complete trust and full motivation into making the production chain more transparent. Because this is where it starts, allowing the production process to be fully seen in the public eye. Consumers can then decide for themselves whether or not they will make the sustainable choice in fashion. Being a sustainable brand in fashion is all about knowing where

the brand wants to be in terms of delivering designs that truly satisfy their consumers, not just for the short-term but especially for the long-term. For this, educating the consumers is a useful tip for FF brands to engage in. One other important recommendation to the entire fast fashion industry is: Improving communication towards consumers. There is a huge lack of this within the industry because the focus lies more on making profits and achieving sales targets rather than really advising these women. This is the main reason why overproduction is caused which would not occur if FF brands would really listen and design on the basis of the true needs of their target audience. When adding this in the current business model, long-term customer satisfaction shall be generated that will also benefit the entire triple bottom line of a brand.

According to previous research, many brands believe that engaging in sustainability will only provide risks and investments that will only cost them money instead of making more profits. Clearly, this is not the case according to creator of the sustainability business model H.Matesvosyan (Matesvosyan, 2016). With the help of her system brands have the opportunity to drop unnecessary marketing expenses, prevent overproduction, and find creative ways to promote their brand in a more sustainable way.

Finally, this will in the end deliver fast fashion brands and other brands operating in the fashion industry the ultimate consumer satisfaction and above all stimulate consumer retention.

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Chapter 11 Appendices

Terminologies used within industry

Globalisation

The development of lower international variety and tighter international linkages on a worldwide scale. The relationship of the term globalization and the fast fashion industry lies within the international expansion processes of the retail brands transforming into international firm brands. Globalisation within the fashion industry can also be seen as the evolving trends and the shifting demand of consumers and markets.

Collections

Not to be confused with a line. A line is within a clothing collection. For example Primark carries among other sub-lines a men's line within their entire collection. Meaning, a collection is a mash-up of all the items the brand designed to be sold within a particular season. The main collections are shown each year once in the summer and spring period and after once in the fall and winter period. In between these periods it is up to the brands themselves to keep the target audiences triggered and interested in the collections. This can be anything from promotion online, displays on social media, engaging in extra sales, special events etc. Anything in order to keep the consumer interested in the brand.

Couture

Is a term that is used within the fashion scene quite frequently. However, what does it mean exactly when people are talking about couture? Usually, it is used within a sentence like this: 'This item or this dress belongs to a higher level': '*Haute couture*'. Haute couture is French and it literally means: 'you cannot sit with us', giving away the underlying thought of what this term means- it is group of elite fashion members you will never be able to match with or even engage with in your lifetime (Odin, 2014). The French term has changed a bit because it has been used in the international fashion scene in a more positive manner. It now means simply means: *Comparing a fashion item or person to something that is higher than beauty*. Something so beautiful and high that it belongs to the elite of '*haute couture*.'

Designs

Similar to the other definition of design. The design of a business plan, the design of an architect, the designs of a painter, the designs of a fashion designer. The art process of designing clothing on paper or computer. Usually this happens when sketching with pencil and paper but nowadays designs are made more and more with online programs.

Here designs are referred to a fashion designer designing clothes for his or her particular target audience. Most fashion designers design for the mass-market part of the fashion pyramid. Only a few in the game design for the upper-class of the pyramid.

Ethical fashion

Firstly, you have ethical in here: According to the English Collins dictionary, ethical means that something is considered right in terms of norms or values, or morally acceptable in someone's view. And in combination with fashion it means striving to conduct business within the fashion industry that causes no ethical harm to the business and also its direct environment. The scope of being ethical differs per company's view in terms of mission and vision (Annamma Joy, 2012).

High street brands

Fashion brands in the lower level of the pyramid that mimic the top-level pyramid brands in such a manner that the designs seem identical. Only prices, quality and place of production are different. These brands are often referred to as high street brands, meaning high fashion with an edge of personal style combinations. When talking about street style, it is mostly the inspirations for designs that designers get from the personal style of the young generation on the streets. This could be glances on the street or on Instagram (social media).

Interview transcript



(Mitchell, 2014)

Personal description:

Hasmik Matesvosyan

Expert and creator on fast fashion sustainability model

As she consults and guides different well-known brands on how to incorporate sustainable practices within their current business model. Helping them create a real two-way communication with their consumers. Resulting in the creations of collections that will sell with a 100 percent guaranty.

1. First of all can you tell me a little bit about yourself. What do you do exactly when it comes to fashion?

Hasmik→Well. I am a fashion researcher and a consultant. And next to that I am also a public speaker. And I specialized myself in fashion sustainability and clothing psychology.

Me→You are also the author of the book: Paradigm in fashion right?

Hasmik→ Yes that is my book that was published in the end of 2014 and I also developed video course named good fashion mastery. That was somewhere last year in October. So yes I have the book which is quite new still and my video courses that I give and next to that I am a consultant. A fashion graduate.

2. What is sustainability in fast fashion according to you?

Follow-up → most important topics / elements / challenges

Hasmik→ Well, fast fashion and sustainability are quite the opposites of each other, at least right now. Where sustainability is about maintaining diversity and making sure that everybody receives fair wages and can build their lives while consumers are also getting confident about themselves because they have good clothes. On the other hand, fast fashion is about providing people with attractive looking but quality clothes that are produced in an environmental harming way that also harms the lives of people.

Fast fashion and sustainability are two different terms that do not go hand in hand, not right now at least, not in the way the system works today.

The most important challenge is adjusting the business model and then fast fashion can become sustainable. A business model where clothing is not only sold for the full price when its new but loaned to people and sold second hand. When fashion brands will use my business model that I have developed they can prevent investments in the production of unwanted clothes. Because in my research and also in my book you will see that 30 percent of the production is never sold, it is just overproduction. The business model can help them to make up to 70 percent more profit than they are generating right now. Adding, that the clothes can still be more than affordable to a broader group of people with the use of this model.

Me→ I did not know this was possible because I think most of the FF brands are too afraid to invest because it will provide them with less profits and more risks

Hasmik→ It took a lot of hard research, a still ongoing research and it just keeps on going and developing. For instance, I found out how (Profit margin) so the price of the garments is build up and usually when we buy a garment in the Netherlands, the price that we pay is much higher than the production costs. So there is a lot of margin in between and I started analyzing where this margin goes to. First of all I saw that it covers the risk of the clothes, the ones that are not being sold. And next to this you have the branding and the marketing that makes sure the clothes will sell.

Thirdly, my system allows the marketing expenses to drop drastically and have no need for overproduction so that the margin can be taken out. And next to this the fashion brands can also borrow the clothes and sell these clothes second at discount prices. For the brands it means that they are going to earn several times at the same time for the same garments and for the consumers it means that they can wear a lot of high quality clothes for affordable prices.

One of the fear factors that FF brands might carry is brand image. Meaning, once a FF brand communicates to the outside world that they are doing something ethical all eyes are on them. All media are then on stand-by to attack them because they become transparent, every move becomes seen. There are also a lot of other financial pressures within the industry that these CEOs and important people have to obey by so investing in sustainability is a choice that requires motivation and trust. Because you also have corporations like Greenpeace that are putting mega pressure on some of these brands.

Whereas what I am doing is helping the brands create collections that will sell for 100 percent guaranty or to be loaned sold second hand. By doing so creating extra profit which equals a budget for the second collection for the improvement of the production.

3. Is there a big difference between sustainability and corporate social responsibility according to you?

Hasmik → No I do not think so. They are defiantly linked with one another. Yes I know the triple bottom line theory and I believe that taking care of the people and planet will equal good profits for everyone involved. Meaning any company who engages in good sustainable production will also have a high level of corporate social responsibility.

4. Is there a need for sustainable fashion among this group of women or not?

Hasmik → No there is never a need for sustainable fashion. There is need for fashion. We then look at the fundamental needs for clothes. There are three sections you would say:

When you are in a shop and your thinking of buying clothes there are a lot of subconscious decisions happening in your head,

1.Price (How much does it cost? Can I afford it?, Am I receiving enough value back for the money that I am paying)

2.Physical (does it fit me? does my body look good in it? how is the material against my skin and the bit more advanced consumer that does research, looks into the materials before buying. These women look whether or not these materials have harmful chemicals while in production for the skin or environment. More questions arise after these three :Is it beautiful?, is the quality good enough? Will it fit me? Will I wear it often? and so on. A lot of these questions pop in the minds of consumers.

3. Phycological, a book from my research written in the 30s explains that there are three psychological needs when it comes to clothes:

1. Decoration (we want to make ourselves more attractive, beautiful, stand out more) to be the centerpiece of attention

2. Modesty, the opposite of decoration in which women do not want to stand out but want to blend in with the crowd. Adding, that modesty can also refer to hiding the body or hiding some kind of transformation of the body e.g: weight loss, weight gaining, pregnancy

3. Organic protection, so protection not so much against the weather but against the judgment of others, negative judgments. Because clothes cover quite a big area of our body, everything can be seen from a distance. Everything you wear is a communication tool to others of who you are as a person. About what you do or how you stand in society and s fort. All these aspects play a role while we buy clothes and sustainability on its own on the other hand does not play a role. So it is not a need.

Hasmik→ Quick example: When you have a date in the evening as a woman. Trying to find a dress to wear you are not thinking where can I find a bio fair trade cotton dress? No you are thinking I want to find a dress that makes me feel beautiful, feminine, attractive and then you associate several brands with it. You connect the brands with the criteria you have for the dress and then you go buy it. You will not think I want a sustainable dress, You will think I want a nice dress, one that fits me, looks nice and suits me properly.

There is a small group of consumers now getting more conscious, women that do substantial research before and after sales, about materials, how was it produced? Does it fit my criteria of sustainability? And only if it meets those criteria then they buy it. But this is still a very small group of people.

5. Do you believe that women will engage more in sustainable fashion if the prices were the same?

Yes. Because it is understandable. To have quality clothes, good stitches and with good stitches I mean the correct textile that is being used for the garments. The textile should be good, the design should be good, the fit should be good so all that takes a lot of effort. That is why the price can be a little higher.

I think that that those small group of women that are researching about their clothes will defiantly not maintain small it will grow. Furthermore, I would say the importance of sustainability lies not entirely in the fast fashion industry but mainly in the production. So all the choices that are being made regarding production, materials, transportation, packaging, and maybe the information on how to maintain the garments towards these women.

It can be that more FF brands will engage more in sustainability, the practices. The consumers that have bought from these brands before will remain on buying, so when the brand decides to engage in sustainable production

The more FF brands will start in producing in a more sustainable way the more consumers will be triggered to start buying it.

6. Will the occurring as the Rhana plaza accident truly influence these women's buying behavior? Meaning a shops image

Not really. But if you offer those women an alternative, a sustainable alternative for the same price than they are willing to switch to the sustainable solution. Not so much because of the sustainable factor at first but because they get the same level of value.

The thing is with these negative occurring in the news and in social media is that they all are a hype in the beginning but people forget about them quite quickly. They simply do not know what to do about it.

Negative hype news will not influence these women's shopping behavior. But when you offer them a better alternative that will change their shopping behavior.

7. What elements are considered important to know for these women before they go shopping in a fashion store?

Me → For example I see in my part-time job (in the ready-to wear segment) which is higher than the fast fashion segment, I see women that enjoy shopping and take their time while doing this. Think hard about buying certain garments and can spend 2 to 3 hours in my job just for 3 dresses. Whereas women in Zara or Primark can spend half an hour in a crowd full of angry and rushed women.

I see a big difference in shopping experience between the two and find it interesting to see. What do you think of this?

Hasmik → It is but I think it has to do with age and life phases. The women who go to the ready-to wear shops are usually women who are slightly older (between the ages of late 20s till 60). These women are not teenagers, they know what they want, they know what quality they need, what fits their body, something that will last for a long time. This is why the largest target group of fast fashion is teenagers. Because these teenagers are still trying to find their identity, how they want to communicate this about themselves. First of all the budget is limited for teenagers and when you are experimenting with different styles, you do not want to spend a lot of money on it, you simply want to know how it looks and try it for one time. And because the prices are so cheap, it does not matter to them that it lasts for so long. Even when the stitches get loose after a couple of washings it does not matter to these girls because that is just their mentality. Of course you also have a group of older women who return and go back to Zara, H&M or whatever with pleasure but the majority remains the young generation, the teenagers.

8. Have you heard of the term "slow fashion"? Do you think this hype should be more promoted to the young generation of women?

Hasmik → Yes I have. However, I did not create this term though but I do not think this should be promoted. The term slow fashion was not there in the 1990s when sustainability came up with fast fashion first.

It is quite new still. No I think that promoting sustainability will never work, I do not think that this will attract people. I do believe that more FF brands should switch to slower fashion, than what they have now because of the amount of collections that are being produced right now. It is only copy paste no creativity but when you work like that you make a lot of mistakes, that is one of the biggest reasons why we have this tremendous amount of overproduction. Clothes are being designed and ordered for production of which is unknown if they are desired or whether somebody wants them at all. I would suggest for FF brands to do a little bit more research on their target audiences. Adding that it will bring the better focused designs which will become more successful because in the long run it will bring them more money and it will be better for the environment as well. But not so much in the promoting kind of way more internally.

9. What can a fast fashion brand like Primark still learn when it comes to sustainability
Case study G-star vs Primark example

First of all that it's not all about money and achieving targets. Because it comes at a cost, production and the workers are completely exhausted, the environment has become completely polluted because of this model that Primark lives by. You really have to take care of your workers and environment to ensure a long-term health in your company and long-term success. That is the one thing that they can learn, only because their the clothes that Primark sells are such bad quality. You could say that their competitive advantage within their business model is that there is a reason why these clothes have bad quality because this makes the people come back and buy more. In regards of Primark, I did see Primark at different conferences about fair wages however I do not think that they are going to be able to integrate sustainability in their business model on a large scale. It is not possible, it is contradicting with their business model.

10.H&M started with the conscious collection, do you think that other brands like Zara, Primark and the rest will follow to start offering the choice of sustainable fashion towards their consumers?

I do not think that the other brands will follow this example of H & M at least not very soon.

11. What are the strongest motivations for these women to keep buying from the fast fashion brands?

Well, I have been interviewing a lot of women over the years about what makes them buy a garment and what is their relationship with clothes. I have seen that Price is very important, design, that it looks interesting and attractive and the image, so what will the garment communicate about them to the outside world. (the 3 needs that we spoke about)

Me→ So this continuous circle of buying has to do with these motivations. I also found something very interesting. A brain research on women while they were shopping and they saw a pleasure activity in the brain when the women were exposed to discount deals. It literally lit up compared to seeing clothes for normal prices, so no discounts. I found this very interesting and I saw online that many women are almost hooked to going back to these stores, like an addiction. You just have to go and see what's new and buy more.

Hasmik→ That is when people are proud, they cannot wait to share it. They feel like it's a reward, a gift, an accomplishment being able to find it cheaper. However, it mainly has to do with ignorance. They do not know how the prices can be so low.

12. Forecast: Will the market of fast fashion keep growing (more brands) or will the need of these women decline over the years

Hasmik→ I think it is going to decline. One of the reasons is that the information is out there and you can find out things about the brands. Documentaries on TV and on the internet. It can make them aware, about hey it is not possible to buy a shirt of 5 euros. The awareness is growing and therefore the number of people as well. Sustainability is going to grow simply out of necessity. We do not have the raw materials any more to sustain the production cycle as it is. All FF eventually have to change because the prices are going to rise for raw materials. Plus a lot of brands have signed an agreement that by the time of 2020 they will have cut carbon oxide, water and energy use so they have to make it true.

In the future defiantly sustainable fashion will grow, it is more profitable. It is just new for example I started with my model only 1 year and a half ago. I am talking to G-star now as well, they are excited about the concept.

It only takes so much time to get something through. For example at Gstar the sustainability manager and the head of design were very excited and they were like how can we create a sample collection. First of all, before the decision is made if we do the sample collection or not it has been a year already. It means once we start the collaboration, it means we are going to start with the next collection and that would be spring/summer 2018 so even if we started working right now you will only get to see the beginning of it in 2018.

Me→ But don't you think that Gstar is promoting sustainability in fashion statements and marketing in a positive way?

Hasmik→ Yes that is very true.

Me→ What are you going to do for Gstar now?

Hasmik→ We will start with designing the collection with my design system. A small part of the collection will be tested as a case study. Because even Gstar has still a lot of overproduction because they also do not know whether or not collections will be successful or not.

13. In your opinion you believe that the industry can become more sustainable, how is this possible? (is it step-programme business model?, how does it work?)

Yes I believe the industry can become sustainable. With the help of my guidance and the incorporation of my design system.

Interview transcript



**milieu
centraal**

(twitter, 2011)

Dutch expert on sustainable fashion (Milieucentraal, Kirsten Palland)

Daily environmental consultant for different organizations profit and non- profit. With the aim to increase sustainability in the social, financial and environmental dimensions within the Netherlands. As she runs the slow fashion communications blog, providing women with tips and advising them to buy less and invest more time in quality rather than quantity.

1.What is sustainability in fast fashion according to you?

Follow-up → most important topics / elements / challenges

Me→ Meaning of sustainability in fast fashion.

Kirsten→ Good question! Now it does not really go together but it might go together well in the future. At least we are already trying to bring these two things together with our website slowfashion.nl. It could go together if the fast fashion industry approaches their consumers in a different manner. At this moment it is all about mass production and throwing away clothes as they quality decreases. And next to this the clothing industry itself remains a large polluting industry. However, there are more things that also need improvement such as labor laws and rights, there is enough to say about that when it comes to improving it in order for the industry to become truly sustainable.

When we talk about sustainability it is a broad term, is about employees and labor rights or is it about air pollution, is it about toxic materials in clothing, production methods in factories or is it about mass production? For example in the shops, what is the industry offering, are they offering too much choices?. It is because these fast fashion brands are constantly changing the collections, the question might arise does the consumer really want this? Is it necessary? Is there a real demand for this wide range of choice? However, these questions could all be yes according to the fast fashion industry. Because who does not want to look fashionable and spend less money on it.

So the real question becomes who is responsible for making the industry this way and who is responsible for changing it to a sustainable one. Is the consumers (these women) that want to look fashionable for less and therefore keep buying, remaining in this kind of circle

or is it the fast fashion brands that are providing this seduction and need to keep coming to the stores to check out the new collection and up in the end buying more clothes.

Me→ But the fast fashion industry wants to keep making more profits. These brands have high targets of sales that need to be met. As I have worked in a lot of retail stores and close worked with managers I saw that the need for getting these targets are on a desperate kind of level! So it not only them then?

Kirsten→ I believe it is really a responsibility of both parties. As consumer you can make different choices and as a fast fashion brand you can differentiate yourself even more by making different choices to become sustainable and profitable at the same time.

So I think that the most important element and challenge for both parties is awareness, making certain choices and decisions and realizing what can be done to have a high level of sustainability within the fast fashion industry.

Kirsten→ I do not know if you know Hasmik.. by any chance?

Me→ Yes, I think I have! I read her name a lot when I looked up the term slow fashion. She is Dutch isn't she?

Kirsten→ Yes! She is a Dutch 28 year old young women that I interviewed for our blog and site not so long ago, on slow fashion and the true meaning of this opposite opponent of fast fashion. However, she is not only an expert on slow fashion but has created a whole concept and business model for making the fast fashion industry a more sustainable one. She is even talking to FF brands at this moment to collaborate her plans with them.

2. Is there a distinguished difference between **Sustainability** and **Corporate Social Responsibility** according to you?

Kirsten→ Yes, defiantly. Well, again sustainability is such a broad term and can be interpreted in a 100 different ways in views. It can be economic sustainability for example or social or environmental sustainability.

Me→ That is funny that you explain it in this manner. Because have you ever heard of the triple bottom line theory?

Kirsten→ What theory?

Me→ Triple bottom line theory by John Elkington. He explains that sustainability is in the heart of three dimensions. Mainly three p's that define a company's triple bottom line on sustainability. Looking and measuring the performance of the people dimension (social) planet (environment) and profit side (financial or economic) dimension of a company or brand.

It was exactly actually as you said..

Kirsten→ Oh yes! I know that one. People, Planet, Profit exactly.

But yes, I think they are different however they are interlinked with each other. And both mean something significant to each other.

Me→ Do you agree with some of the definitions online such as this one: That CSR only focusses on a 12 month reflection report on sustainability and sustainability itself is a long-term project or aim of a company. It focuses more on the future instead of a year report.

What do you think about that?

Kirsten → I still believe they are linked. On the other hand, I do think that every company has a different view on sustainability and how they want to approach it. It depends on how much the company is willing to put in when looking at the performance of these three p's. I know a few Dutch brands that do focus on all three elements and try to do their best in all three aspects. However, like I said every company has a different view on what they think is more important. For example one company might find equal gender salary an important strive or another one might find energy use in the offices an important factor to tackle. Every brand or company can have a different goal and vision. And this is not a bad thing, only if they all contribute something that shows positive effects for one or all p's.

A new Swedish FF brand for example is planning to launch a new promotion campaign that allows Facebook (Tupperware) parties where women meet to have fun and exchange clothes. And another aspect where woman can put up a jean or other item for rent on Facebook. Allowing, the life cycle of the item to go on a long time, each woman passes on her item to the next. These are new concepts that are occurring at this moment but are defiantly a part of the road to a sustainable fashion industry. Because the main problem among these women is mispurchases. Buying a lot of unnecessary unwearable items that remain in the closet because they just do not want to wear them more than once or it was on sale and they needed to have it.

3. Is there a need for " *sustainable fashion* " or not?

I do not know if there is a huge demand for it right now. It might grow though because at this moment only 5% of the Dutch women residing in the Netherlands are interested and buying sustainable fashion.

If you ask this question for example in a survey I believe all will answer. Yes I think this is important and I am doing this too. Even though they are actually not. However, in practice they will be shopping at FF brands because of the good bargain deals that persuade them to come in and shop.

In this concept I do think the fast fashion brands play a huge responsibility in promoting sustainable fashion.

As they hold a lot of power and only they can make the consumers choose something else or at least offer them a different, sustainable choice.

I do believe the demand for sustainable fashion is growing. Even the green biological market is growing and this was an industry that was suffering a lot when it came to competing with other supermarkets. People want to be healthy they want to engage in things that are good for them, it has become a trend of its one. My expectation is that the need in the future for sustainable fashion will only keep on showing growth for the upcoming years.

4. Do you believe that women will engage more in “*sustainable fashion*” if the prices are the same?

5. Will the occurring as the Rhana plaza accident influence these women’s buying behavior?
Meaning a shops image

In the beginning yes when we are asked about this or are told about it, the first reaction will always be: shocked, awed, sympathy for the matter. In spite of this quilt feeling, it only lasts a moment but while these women are shopping the chance of them thinking about this will be very small to nothing. It is difficult though for these women, like you and me. You are constantly reminded of sales and bargain deals for fashionable clothing which in the end seduces you to buy it.

6. What elements are considered important aspects when shopping in a store for these women?

7. Have you heard of the term “*slow fashion*”? Do you think this hype should be more promoted to this young generation of women?

Yes!

We also are trying to promote this concept via our communication tools and providing tips for women on our blogs. Tips that support the concept of slow fashion: fashion that makes you think a little slower about your next fashion purchase. It makes you think about your purchase as you were to think about buying a new television or new telephone. You go through the whole buying process instead of skipping all the steps and just buying it.

I do believe it will become a trend and hype very soon.

Me→ I agree, I also see myself struggling with finances as I am a student and do not make a lot of money clearly I still want to look nice and fashionable and if I can cut back on costs that is only a plus. I'm starting to rethink this way of thinking though not just because of this research but because of my surroundings and experience. The FF brand clothing do not uphold a good or strong quality, it is seasonal clothing meaning the probability you will only wear it these three weeks and then no more is more than a 100 percent. I am sick of returning items or forgetting to return items that I really bought to fast or did not wanted in the end.

Kirsten→ Exactly, the thinking pattern that causes mispurchases. That is why we are trying to educate women on slow fashion.

Me→ I totally agree. I think that is much better and offers more benefits to these women. To invest more time in their purchase decisions when it comes to clothing, style and quality. The clothes last longer, remain wearable, uphold higher quality which is better for me, my wallet in the end, the environment and the people that produce my clothing.

8. Do you think that pricing strategy is important when it comes to promoting sustainable fashion? As these women are very price orientated and are always looking for a bargain deal or as they say in Dutch " een koopje!"

Kirsten→ Yes I do think so! Oh it was only 2 euros! Yes I think this remains important.

Me→ There was this brain research on women, set while they were buying clothes. And they found that when these women say sale discounts their pleasure aspect in the brain turned on. They were literally derived with pleasure when these women were confronted with bargain deals on clothing.

Me→ Do you think that sustainable fashion should have these bargain deals as well? Do you think these women will choose sustainable fashion over fast fashion if the prices were the same.

Kirsten→ It depends, actually a lot because even sustainable fashion engages in discounts as well as other brands that are not FF brands.

For example you can have expensive brands like Tommy Hilfiger with a lot of quality however you can argue whether or not they are sustainable in their production or other aspects.

Kirsten→ You have one FF brand that is promoting sustainable fashion at this moment: H&M with its conscious collection. It still does not mean that they are completely sustainable or have fulfilled their obligations. They are on their way to setting an example for these other brands to join the sustainable fashion concept. There are the only ones right now offering this choice to the consumers, fast fashion or sustainable (conscious collection) that you can buy at their store.

Kirsten→ The idea of sustainable fashion being more expensive than fast fashion is not always the case. There are a lot of price differences even between fast fashion brands with Zara being the most expensive. It is not like that all sustainable fashion is more expensive than fast fashion, that is not the case.

Kirsten→ It is of course a challenge if you want your budget to be five euros to spend on five t-shirts (for the summer or something like that) and you need to choose between Primark and a sustainable brand, then it becomes tricky. Do you go for quality or quantity? But depends on the person because it is a fact that you cannot get five sustainable made t-shirts and only spending five euros.

Then again it is difficult for the sustainable fashion, because they cannot compete with prices like that. They simply can't, on the other hand this is also something that makes it special and levels the quality value of money.

9. What can a fast fashion brand like Primark still learn when it comes to sustainability?

Case study g-star vs Primark

Providing less choice. But I think they will not do this because their whole business model runs on mass production so I do not see this changing any time soon.

Me→ What can Primark really learn from a brand like G-star. A Dutch brand that is promoting its sustainability approach in their marketing, brand, image and collections. Can a Primark even go into this direction or not?

Kirsten→ I do not think they will go into promoting any kind of sustainable direction. I think they are scared to take that big of a risk, because of course being involved in the Rhana Plaza affair. They are still coming back from that and promoting on their website that they are doing all they can to help rebuild those lives. So I do not think they will engage in adding a sustainable fashion line, it would not match I think.

Even H&M is really sticking their neck out when it comes to offering the Conscious collection because it is inviting the whole world to look into your brands way of producing which is scary for these brands. The thought of being completely transparent. I do still believe that consumers are going to ask more about sustainable fashion and that demand will grow among them.

10.What are the best practices for a sustainability strategy within FF? (triple bottom line theory that can measure the performance per p)

Education: Education the consumers, providing them with tips to become more sustainable in their day to day fashion choices. For example: not washing items a lot of times, some materials do not even need washing or less than others. This saves money, and a lot of energy. These kind of tips are also the ones we give on slowfashion.nl.

Me→ I was really surprised that there was an existing opposite component to fast fashion. Namely, slow fashion

Kirsten→ This is something that we are trying to promote, the positive sides of fashion and trying to help women make this decisions that will benefit them on all levels. Allowing them to keep wearing the items they love and let them hold on to the items longer.

11.Forecast: Will the market of fast fashion keep growing (more brands) or will the need of these women decline over the years

Kirsten→To be honest I have no idea...

I might grow even more and it might not grow. It all depends on the economy and the shift of needs of these women. Also the generation is changing and therefore also what they want and need. Anything can happen.

I also think age is an important factor, young girls like to shop in FF stores because it is fun and cheap and something they can afford easily. Women launching their careers and passing the age of 25 might want something completely different, quality over bargain deals for example. Life phases and thinking patterns within generations is important, what a young woman of 18 values in fashion might completely be different from a 30 year old woman wants and values.

12. In your opinion, do you think fast fashion can become sustainable? And if so how and if not why

Yes, I do think that Fast fashion can become sustainable. It all depends on motivation, vision, and goals of these FF brands and it depends on the needs and wants of consumers. Both parties are responsible so both need to change approaches for the entire industry to shift to a more sustainable one.