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**SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE  
FASHION CONSUMPTION FROM 2015 TO 2019**

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***Abstract***

This systematic review was designed to assess the previous studies related to consumers' behaviours towards sustainability in a fashion that covers various fashion items including clothing, jewellery, general products, luxury items, and cosmetics. By following the PRISMA table, the reviewers had initiated this systematic review using the two databases which include Scopus and WOS. All the available articles were selected based on publications from the year 2015 to 2019. After reviewing the keywords, abstracts for the inclusion, exclusion process, and careful reading, a number of 45 papers were selected for reviewing. Further, the reviewer identifies and categories the selected articles based on four main themes of sustainable fashion namely, collaboration, eco-conscious, ethical or slow fashion and recycled and upcycled. The results from this review indicate that there is still a lack of research on sustainable fashion that covers clothing, jewellery and luxury items, as compared to cosmetics and general products such as food and cars. This review provides fruitful directions for future research on sustainable fashion.

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**Keywords:** Collaborative fashion, eco-conscious fashion, ethical/slow fashion, recycle/upcycle fashion, sustainable fashion.



## **1. Introduction**

In the present century, fashion plays a pivotal role in most places around the world. According to Wiedmann et al. (2009), people have spent their entire lives by excessively focussing on others' perceptions about fashion that they wear. The emergence of mass markets and the fluidity of demand have continuously changed this industry to a growing pace. In keeping up with the race in the fashion industry, designers never stop competing to create the next hit as consumers eagerly await the items. Despite providing consumers with the latest styles at low prices, this industry leaves behind a huge negative impact on the planet. The pollution contributed by various chemicals and pesticides used to grow cotton and toxic dyes are accumulating. Apart from the environmental footprints, this industry is also inextricably to gender inequality, labour injustice and poverty issues. The continuity of excessive pollution has in turn ranked this industry as the second biggest contributor of pollution came after oil and gas industry (Qutab, 2017). Currently things seem to be changing. The seriousness of this issue has led fashion to be included in the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals on the agenda to transform the fashion industry by accelerating sustainability with a common framework of the global textile value and exploring many different efforts. Moreover, there is a rise in the number of scholars who claimed that there is a connection between fashion and sustainability (Amatulli et al., 2018). The development of these trends has built a substantial buyer segment, colloquially known as 'LOHAS', which can be described as an inclination to practise a healthy and sustainable life (Emerich, 2012). Leveraging on the customer's interest, more companies are implementing sustainable fashion as the foundation for their businesses.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Therefore, the motivation to consume sustainable product such as organic food and cosmetic is slightly different with sustainable apparel as the chosen of apparel involved with the development of appearance, self-confidence, style, and image (Athwal et al., 2019). All the product categories should not be treated equally as it will lead them to just claiming their concern about the environment but do not translate this into action (Scherer et al., 2018). Due to that, it is necessary to review the previous studies which had explored the motivational drivers of each sustainable fashion product differently.

## **3. Research Questions**

The list of research questions derived for this review are:

1. What is the motivational drivers which triggered the customers to purchase sustainable fashion (based on specific country)?
2. What are the types of sustainable fashion?
3. Which sustainable fashion product are still lack of study?

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

Therefore, this study aims for the first time to shed light on the consumers' behaviours towards sustainability in fashion by systematically reviewing the literature covering various fashion items including

clothing, jewellery, general products, luxury items, and cosmetics. Further, the reviewers had identified and categorised sustainable fashion into four specific main themes. Through the process, this review provides a beneficial in identifying the specific product that is still lacking in research based on different types of sustainable fashion.

After the introduction, the remaining of the paper is constructed as follows: Section 2 is obliged to explain the research methodological in analysing the present state of literature. Section 3 explains the findings matching to the various analysed sub theme of sustainable fashion. Meanwhile, Section 4 discusses the recent consumers' behaviours towards this trend obtained from different countries. Finally, Section 5 presents the conclusion and future research direction.

## 5. Research Methods

This systematic literature review was constructed by the following specific relevant criteria from PRISMA table (Moher et al., 2009) (see Figure 01). This method consists of four steps which include identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion process. The reviewers started gathering the data from January 2019 using two databases, namely WOS and Scopus. In the first step, all keywords and search terms were identified to search related titles and full contents of the journal articles. The three electronic database searches have identified 3113 articles. The next step is the screening process whereby the eligibility and exclusion criteria are determined. The reviewers conducted a record screening and had limited the record search to research published in the last five years, business categories, and articles published in English. Meanwhile, the exclusion process was carried out by excluding journals (systematic review), book series and conference proceedings that are Non-English. The results from the process revealed that 766 articles are considered eligible for a comprehensive review, while a total number of 2339 of the articles have been removed. The third stage is attempting to determine the eligibility process wherein the full articles were retrieved. In sum, a total of 719 articles were eliminated since they were not related to consumer behaviours, decision-making process and the topic of sustainable fashion. A final total number of 45 articles were selected for the review, which consists of 11 qualitative studies, 26 quantitative studies and 8 mixed-method studies.

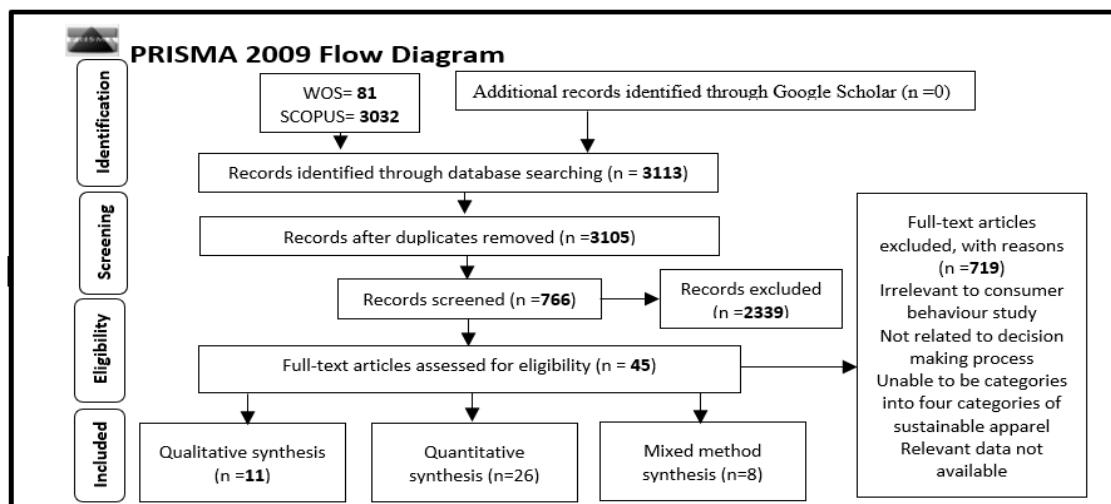


Figure 01. PRISMA flowchart adopted for this study (Moher et al., 2009)

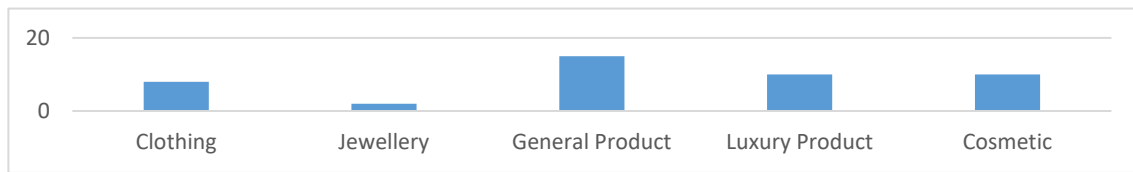
## 6. Findings

The findings of the review are presented in a comprehensive four themes form on the different categories of sustainable fashion, including eco-fashion, ethical fashion, collaboration, and recycled/upcycled fashion. These categories of sustainable fashion are also supported by (Brismar, 2019), who had classified sustainable fashion into seven forms (green and clean, custom made and on demand, timeliness design, ethical, upcycle, rent, lease, and second-hand fashion). Shen et al. (2013) strongly agreed with the statement and stated that from the fashion aspect, all terms labelled with organic, recycled, locally made, fair-trade certified, vegan, custom made and fair-trade certified are categorised as sustainable fashion. In answering all the research questions and knowledge gap, the reviewers had identified previous sustainable fashion studies which not only covered clothing but also include other categories of fashion (jewellery, general products, luxury items and cosmetics).

Further, the analysis results of the review show that the 45 research articles from 24 countries are summarised in Table 01. This table is organised by including the authors' names, category of fashion products and sustainable fashion concepts applied.

**Table 01.** Summary of previous sustainable fashion research

No.	Fashion product	Collaboration Fashion	Eco-friendly Fashion	Slow Fashion	Recycled/upcycled Fashion
1	Clothing	Norum and Norton (2017); Liang and Xu (2018); Iran et al. (2019)	Khare and Varshneya (2017); Matthews and Rothenberg (2017)	Bly, Gwozdz, and Reisch (2015); Brandão et al. (2018)	Vehmas et al. (2018)
2	Jewellery			Nash et al. (2016); Moraes et al. (2017)	
3	General Product	Gaur et al. (2018); McNeill and Venter (2019)	Kim et al. (2016); Shin et al. (2018); Saleem et al. (2018); Paparoidamis and Tran (2019)	Ritch (2015); Gaur et al. (2015); Jung and Jin (2016); Lee and Cheon (2018)	Paul et al. (2016); Weber et al. (2017); Atlason et al. (2017); Bai et al. (2018); Magnier et al. (2019)
4	Luxury Item	Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015); Onel et al. (2018); Kessous and Valette-Florence (2019)	Fiore et al. (2017); Ali et al. (2019); Han et al. (2019)	Jung et al. (2016); Dong et al. (2018); de Klerk et al. (2019)	
5	Cosmetic		Pudaruth et al. (2015); Baden and Prasad (2016); Ghazali et al. (2017); Hsu et al. (2017); Chin et al. (2018); Ahmad and Omar (2018); Kahraman and Kazaçoğlu (2019); Ndichu and Upadhyaya (2019); Amos et al. (2019)	Chun (2016)	Rolling and Sadachar (2018)



**Figure 02.** Overview of previous research on sustainable fashion items

Figure 02 shows the total number of previous researches related to sustainable fashion products which cover clothing, jewellery and luxury items. The findings demonstrate the lack of research on sustainable fashion which covers clothing, jewellery, and luxury items compared to cosmetics and general products, such as food and cars.

The next section will explain in depth about each fashion item according to the category of sustainable concepts covered in a different country. Finally, the reviewers will provide directions for future research in the perspective of sustainable fashion.

### **6.1. Collaborative fashion**

Collaborative fashion can be defined as providing the consumers an option for the alternative of fashion instead of purchasing new fashion products (Iran et al., 2019). There are various alternatives to the classic form of collaboration including swapping, renting and purchasing second-hand fashion. In regards to this systematic review, several scholars had specifically touched on collaboration in terms of clothing and discovered the level of acceptance in China, United States, Iran, and German (Iran et al., 2019; Liang & Xu, 2018; Norum & Norton, 2017). Based on the research by Iran et al. (2019), Germany students were more engaged in collaborative fashion compared to the students in Iran. Germany students were more engaged in collaborative fashion compared to the students in Iran. This is due to the cultural differences between German and Iran, whereby German students are found to be shaping more on their feminine culture with power distance and lower uncertainty avoidance rates compared to the Iranian students. Meanwhile, the research conducted in the United States by Norum and Norton (2017) showed that consumers from Generation Y are labelled as a group who fully practise sustainability in fashion. This is due to the fact that this generation is willing to be entirely involved in second-hand, renting and swapping alternatives compared to Generation X, who are only attracted in consuming second-hand clothing which proves that collaborative is more prevalent and is becoming a new huge business opportunity there (Liang & Xu, 2018).

On top of that, previous studies by Gaur et al. (2018); McNeill and Venter (2019) had looked into collaborative fashion as part of the general products in India, the United States and New Zealand. The cross-cultural study between United States and India revealed that the customers in United States have more eco-conscious value as compared to the Indian customers (Gaur et al., 2018). The strong argument of difference is that customers from the United States were found to have more harmony orientation towards nature and follow the regulations more strictly. Meanwhile, the involvement of social norms, personal enhancement, and emotion play important roles in influencing the collaborative fashion consumption among the female consumers in New Zealand (McNeill and Venter, 2019). Another research initiative regarding this topic covering the luxury item was conducted by (Kessous & Valette-Florence, 2019; Onel et al. 2018; Turunen

& Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015). Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015) postulated that the consumption of second-hand product in Finland were driven by five main factors which include sustainable selections, real deals, pre-loved treasures, unique finds and future investment. It can be said that the consumption of luxury second-hand brands is allied to green consciousness, product heritage and symbol of status compared to the first-hand luxury purchase which is more entailed to power-building, social ranking and quality (Kessous & Valette-Florence, 2019). Throughout this systematic review, the reviewers realised that there is an absence of collaborative fashion-related research on jewellery and cosmetics. It may be difficult for both product categories to practice collaboration concepts (swapping, renting and buying second-hand), but it is possible with the availability of social media and online platforms such as Carousell, as it is able to connect the consumers in a wide network while enabling transactions of pre-loved and second-hand products.

## **6.2. Ethical and slow fashion**

Ethical aspect has become a prominent concern since the occurrence of excessive consumption, labour abuse and ignorance of animal welfare (Carrigan et al., 2004). On the one hand, the introduction of the slow fashion approach by Godart and Seong (2015) is synchronised with the movement of sustainability in fashion. Just like slow food, currently, slow fashion is quickly becoming the new black. Based on this systematic literature review, two studies covered the topic of ethics in apparel (Bly et al., 2015; Brandão et al., 2018); two studies for jewellery (Moraes et al., 2017; Nash et al., 2016); four studies for general products (Cho et al., 2015; Jung & Jin, 2016; Lee & Cheon, 2018; Ritch, 2015); three studies for luxury items (de Klerk et al., 2019; Dong et al., 2018; Jung et al., 2016) and one study for cosmetics (Chun, 2016). The study conducted by Brandão et al. (2018) in South Western European countries had exposed that transparency of information does not subsequent a positive significant result. It is shown that retailers need to reduce the creations of the ephemeral fashion and start to implement the concepts of timeliness of style which gives more meaning to customers (Bly et al., 2015). At the same time, de Klerk et al. (2019), discovered that most customers in South Africa expressed strong ethical concern about luxury products, but never transform it into real action. This is probably due to the excessive material possession and the love of owning luxury products (Dong et al., 2018). Past studies related to cosmetics and personal body care also revealed that the ethical aspect, including honesty, trustworthiness, had left a minimal impact on the consumers' emotional attachment in the United Kingdom (Chun, 2016). This is due to the customers' limited consideration which is only to empathy and citizenship image.

In a different perspective, Nash et al. (2016) uncovered that over half of the respondents in the United States revealed that ethics-concerned messages are extremely or somewhat important to their jewellery-purchasing decisions. The inclusion of jewellery products with ethical concerns may result in the enhancements in terms of quality, value and uniqueness. Moraes et al. (2017) stated that to influence customers through ethical practice, there must be a strong linkage between ethical activities and the consumption practices of fine jewellery. Up to this point, the new practices of ethical luxury consumption are likely to succeed with the presence of innovation process involving the convergence of ethical materials and competencies. In terms of general products, customers in the United States were found to purchase ethical brand when they consider the elements of pragmatic benefit and sensory pleasure (Cho et al., 2015; Jung & Jin, 2016; Lee & Cheon, 2018). The literature on ethical fashion also covers general products specified to food retailing. According to Ritch (2015), participants in the United Kingdom started to

consider ethical production practice as part of their decision-making and supporting market preferences. Overall, previous studies show that ethical and slow fashion provide less and not significant impact on apparel, luxury items and cosmetic products. However, the fashion product categories such as jewellery and general products have a significant impact on the ethical and slow fashion concepts.

### **6.3. Eco-fashion**

Environmentally fashion can be described as a fashion involving with an overall process that can maximise the benefits to all wherein minimise the carbon footprint impacts (Joergens, 2006). Based on this systematic review, two studies were focussing on clothing (Khare & Varshneya, 2017; Matthews & Rothenberg, 2017); four studies of general product (Kim et al., 2016; Paparoidamis & Tran, 2019; Saleem et al., 2018; Shin et al., 2018); three studies of luxury items (Ali et al., 2019; Fiore et al., 2017; Han et al., 2019), while nine studies were focussing on cosmetics (Ahmad & Omar, 2018; Amos et al., 2019; Baden & Prasad, 2016; Chin et al., 2018; Ghazali et al., 2017; Hsu et al., 2017; Kahraman & Kazançoğlu, 2019; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019; Pudaruth et al., 2015;). Past research by Khare and Varshneya (2017) show that relatives and friends are not important drivers in influencing the organic clothing purchase decisions of youths in India. It can be signifies that a decision to purchase this product is bonded based on personal pro environmental values and previous experience. Besides that, Matthews and Rothenberg (2017) found that customers in the United States were more concerned about sustainable materials, price and production, rather than the technology adopted. They prefer the eco-friendly labelling over organic labelling for apparels. In addition to that, four studies have discovered the eco-friendly general products. A past study carried out by Saleem et al. (2018) which explored the relationship between eco-conscious value and social interaction related to the choice and use of eco-personal cars in Pakistan showed a positive significant result. The findings of his study proved that there is a growing of preference towards environmentally friendly product selection in developing countries. Kim et al. (2016) and Paparoidamis and Tran (2019) share the same findings which revealed that promoting and marketing a new, eco-friendly faux leather product is a worthwhile prospect for the United States and the United Kingdom.

However, another research initiative by Shin et al. (2018) showed a negative relationship of eco-consciousness among customers in dealing to purchase the detergent-free washing machines. Moving to green luxury products, several previous studies showed that consumers are started to put their attention on the concept of environmentally friendly and sustainable luxury involving wine, automobile and airplane services (Ali et al., 2019; Fiore et al., 2017; Han et al., 2019). Most of them are the highly-educated customers and have vast information about environment-related issues. Moving on to organic cosmetics and personal care, a series of past studies exploring this topic, covering several countries, revealed that lifestyles practise, personal image, health and economic conditions are the factors that contribute to these purchasing patterns (Ahmad & Omar, 2018; Amos et al., 2019; Chin et al., 2018; Ghazali et al., 2017; Pudaruth et al., 2015). Hsu et al. (2017) mentioned that the importance of exposing the country of origin, technology in production, and price to influence the eco conscious purchase intention. This review of the current literature reveals that previous scholars have examined numerous studies focussing on the organic cosmetics and environmentally friendly personal care that cover several countries, including the emerging and developing countries. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of studies, especially on the eco-conscious clothing and luxury products in the context of developing countries.

#### **6.4. Recycled and upcycled fashion**

The raw materials used in producing recycled garments can be attained through the accumulation of supply chain and post-consumer collection methods. It can be manifested that the adoption of recycled materials in a production is synchronised with the global effort to practice the movement to acquire a closed-loop production cycle. Meanwhile, the term “upcycling” was first coined by Kay (1994) which significantly elucidated the concept of adding value to used and old product, which slightly differs from the concept of recycling that cuts the value of the products. Notably, upcycling is synonymous to the creation of something new and upgrade the function better from old, used, or disposed items. In sum, the objective of upcycling is to focus on putting a value in a development process that are truly sustainable, creative, and innovative (Muthu, 2016). Previous research has revealed the fact that customers evaluate the products made from recycled plastic positively (Grönman et al., 2013; Magnier et al., 2019). Atlason et al. (2017) found that consumers support the effort to reuse the recycling textile waste to produce new garments and people older than 50 years old with higher education are seen to favour the integration of this sustainable product design. Yet, at the same time, the Finnish and Canadian consumers also oftenly separate the basic recycled material (metal, paper, glass) and they practise it in the same ways for their garments collection (Vehmas et al., 2018; Weber et al., 2017). As circular clothing is built based on new processes material so customers who avoid to wear second-hand fashion can optionally choose to purchase this circular garments. In part of commercialisation value, circular clothing should be more available on the market while at the same time be branded as luxury items and special editions. However, Rolling and Sadachar (2018) still argued the effectiveness of using recycled material on luxury items. Their research exposes that despite of putting recycled material as a brand description, it is more effective to use sustainable message element in luxury marketing communication. From the systematic literature review, there are no previous research related to recycle and upcycle fashion implemented in jewellery and cosmetics. It happened due to the irrelevancy of those products to be practiced with this dimension of fashion.

### **7. Conclusion**

The systematic review provides an insightful information about the consumers’ behaviours towards sustainability in fashion from different countries. At the same frequency, the results of the review were presented in four comprehensive themes based on the category of sustainable fashion which includes collaborative fashion, eco-conscious fashion, ethical fashion, and recycled/upcycled fashion. Taken together, all four dimensions of sustainable fashion are one way to respect the planet and to value what we already have. Despite a wider coverage of sustainable fashion, not everyone is able to practice all the various alternatives mentioned. Consumers have various options to acquire a fashion choice with pro-environmental attributes, so there is no excuse for not practising this clean fashion. It can be seen that sustainable fashion has the big potential to transform the entire fashion industry to positive movement, nevertheless the impact still depends on the prospect customers willingness to pay more for ethically produced clothing –and the readiness of brands to sacrifice profits and shift to sustainable. It was found that there is a lack of research in fashion products like clothing, jewellery and luxury products, compared to cosmetics and general products like food and cars. For further exploration, it would be noteworthy to study this specific category of product. In addition, the future study can be conducted in an experimental



study by considering how consumers react to a certain stimulus and all the ways that are able to influence their sustainable fashion consumption.

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