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Sustainable Clothing Buying Behavior of Generations X and Y

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Abstract. This contribution addresses the sustainable clothing buying behaviour of Generations X and Y. The aim of the paper is to analyse the main features of sustainable clothing buying behaviour within Generations X and Y and to suggest some marketing activities for fashion companies. The theoretical background contains information from professional literature, scientific journals indexed in WOS and Scopus, and websites regarding the main trends in CSR, sustainable development, and sustainable buying behaviour, with a focus on the fashion industry. The analysis comprises multiple stages: the creation of a questionnaire through Google Forms, the selection of respondents from generations X and Y in the territory of the Slovak Republic, the analysis of respondents' answers through descriptive statistics, and the evaluation of research hypotheses via inductive statistics. Among the general research methods, historical-logical methods, analysis, synthesis, and comparison were used, whereas specialised research methods included methods of descriptive statistics and methods of inductive statistics implemented in the SPSS program. The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions based on previous research on the study topics and was completed by 139 respondents. The identification questions sought information from the participants about their identification as Generation X or Y, their gender, and their income. The next step was a comparison of shopping places, types of clothing, buying factors, and frequency and awareness of sustainable trends. The last 3 questions were framed according to previous research and were evaluated via descriptive statistics methods as well as inductive statistics. Research hypotheses are focused on relationships between the use of sustainable trends and belonging to a specific generation, the degree of influence of sustainable trends on buying behaviour and belonging to a specific generation, and the degree of rationality when purchasing clothes and belonging to a specific generation. On the basis of these tests, only the second hypothesis (influence of sustainable trends) was further analysed. Research results indicate that fashion brands can utilise slow fashion for different types of marketing communication to effectively target Generations X and Y, with a particular focus on influencer marketing on social networks. The limitations include various definitions of generations (birth years), possible cognitive distortions and the subjective answers of respondents. The fashion industry is an essential component of the creative industry and creative economy. Research could be extended by comparing sustainable clothing buying behaviour between inhabitants from the region with the above-average value of the regional NUTS3 creative index (Bratislava region) and inhabitants from other NUTS3 regions. Research could also be extended by comparing the effects of irrationality on generations in the context of behavioural economics. The end of the contribution expresses the benefits of this research for economics, the environment, and society.

Keywords: buying behaviour; clothing industry; fast fashion; generations; marketing; slow fashion; sustainability.

1. Introduction. The clothing industry today is very turbulent. The type of clothes, style, and fashion stores are not only a mirror of the evolving times but also a reflection of the prevalent situation in the world and a reflection of people. Both politics, society, and the environment affect the clothing industry to a large extent. The history presents several examples where the clothing industry had to adapt according to the times, e.g., during the war, when Coco Chanel presented men's fashion for women or Christian Dior and his curtains as new material. They knew how to use what was offered by time. However, it is important to note that while shopping for clothes was once a rare event, today, it is a routine for many people. The clothing industry is overflowing with mass production, ruled by countries producing fast fashion and supporting a consumer lifestyle. In today's time, when we strive for a better future, especially in regard to the environment, there is a struggle. The concept of "slow fashion" becomes a saving point for the fashion market. Its goal is to create awareness of responsibility for one's actions and bring change not only in the field of production but also in thinking and lifestyle. A time full of opportunities enables a smooth transition from a consumerist life to a more responsible and sustainable way of life. A wide range of opportunities are available, not only for designers and entrepreneurs but also for fashion consumers themselves.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the main features of sustainable clothing buying behavior within Generations X and Y and to suggest some marketing activities for fashion companies. In the contribution, the authors characterise the clothing industry, define what fast fashion is, explain how it works, and ascertain if it harms the environment and people living on this planet and working in the clothing industry. Next, the concepts of slow fashion, sustainability, and currently popular sustainable trends and why they are worth following are explained. The last section will characterise generations X and Y by identifying what is typical for them, how they behave, and what determines their buying behaviour. The authors chose Generations X and Y for this study because they are currently the most numerous generations and buy the most. In many interdisciplinary types of research, these generations are characterised by opposite behaviours, hierarchies of values, lifestyles and buying behaviours. The originality of the research lies in its comparison of irrationality and the degree to which sustainable trends influence the purchasing decisions of generations X and Y by shopping (Krahn & Galambos, 2014; Gunay & Korkmaz, 2024).

According to sociology and marketing experts Kotler & Keller (2007), Generation Y is courageous, focused on the urban style, and is identified as idealistic, independent, service-oriented, prioritising "work–life balance", less risk-averse and conservative than Generation X, which is more focused on material possessions and believes in the principle "firm ground under your feet". Generation Y is therefore closer to the Baby Boomers generation than to Generation X in terms of its character traits, attitude toward work, and consumer behavior. Richard A. Easterlin also described the paradox of the last century (1970s) that from a certain economic level, measured by the size of the pension, the feeling of the satisfied population stagnates. This is a deviation from material consumption towards other values, such as health, safety, justice, experiences, ecology, and social responsibility (Wheelan, 2012; Kloudova & Chwaszcz, 2014; Madzik et al., 2015; Dankova, 2018; Aybar & Cark, 2023). According to research by Krippes et al. (2024), the next generation Z is naturally focused on environmentally responsible behaviour (slow fashion). This research answers the following question: "What is the situation with the largest generations X and Y?" The actuality of research is also connected with the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set within the Agenda 2030 by the United Nations (e.g., No.12 Responsible consumption and production).

Research issues could be used in many areas of business economy and management, e.g., marketing strategies, human resources management (e.g., employee green behaviour), innovation management (eco- and retro-innovations, the innovative performance of businesses and countries), and environmental management. Differences between generations also affect overall socioeconomic development; e.g., with respect to the electoral behavior of Generation Y, political parties with a green electoral program achieve better results, whereas with respect to architecture and urban planning, this generation prefers minimalism, sustainable materials, and alternative energy sources (Srivastava & Banerjee, 2016, Mayangsari et al., 2021). More often, sustainable materials are also used in fashion, which is the main reason to conduct research in this area.

The contribution encompasses a literature review composed of current approaches to sustainability and CSR, a comparison of slow fashion and fast fashion, sustainable fashion trends, and research on the consumer behaviour of previous generations. As part of the analysis, a questionnaire was used to fill out by respondents from the largest generations: X and Y. The questionnaire was filled out online by 139 respondents living in the Slovak Republic. It contained 11 questions that were formulated according to the theoretical background and previous research. On the basis of some questions and previous research, 3 hypotheses are formulated. Their verification or rejection marks the starting point for the conclusion, followed by recommendations for

the marketing of slow fashion companies, research limitations, and further directions (e.g., connection with the creative potential of regions and behavioural economics). The discussion and conclusion sections follow. This issue garnered our attention because of its importance in the current era because sustainable behaviour while clothes are purchased will help us improve the state of the environment, even if only partially.

2. Literature Review. As part of the theoretical background, the authors take a closer look at sustainability in business, the comparison of fast and slow fashion, the individual trends in sustainable clothing shopping, and the main differences between generations X and Y. At the corporate level (micro level), sustainability includes the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The term social responsibility was created in 1953 and, according to H.R. Bowen, is the commitment of entrepreneurs to pursue strategies, decisions, or activities that are desirable from the point of view of the goals and values of our society (Bowen, 2013). Corporate social responsibility is based on 3 basic pillars—the so-called 3P (triple bottom line)—as "profit", "people" and "planet". These pillars express 3 components of social responsibility, namely:

• economic responsibility, e.g., investments in the development and prosperity of the company and innovations, contributing to the development of the industry;

• social responsibility, which can be expressed internally or externally and involves ethical and moral behaviour towards employees, managers, the local public, and support for nonprofit organisations and projects (e.g., manager competencies, career counselling, benefits for employees);

• environmental responsibility—perception of the impact on the environment and preventive measures (Bowen, 2013; Ivanicka et al., 2014; Ubreziova et al., 2015; Droppa et al., 2017; Goloshchapova et al., 2019).

Sustainable development strategies within innovation management are implemented by business entities through innovations for the sustainable use of environmental resources (Buckova et al., 2022). Sustainability, along with the increasing importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations, is collectively a booming phenomenon for good economic development and quality of life (Santoso, 2024; Vrablikova & Ubreziova, 2023). All SDGs are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Sustainable development goals
Sources: Developed by the authors based on (IUCN, 2024).

Innovation itself was found to be an essential aspect of a country's growing economy, as emphasised by Joseph Schumpeter in the 1930s. An innovation can be the launch of new products, methods, markets, sources of supply, or organisations (Hatammimi et al., 2024). Ecoinnovation (green innovation) has become a core engine for long-term stable economic development and a fundamental way to ease the tension between economic growth and environmental resource management (Chen et al., 2017). According to Madzik et al. (2024), the most significant topics in Scopus related to green innovation in manufacturing currently include smart technologies and Industry 4.0, green supply chains, carbon emission reduction, and digital transformation, with the last two having the most dynamic development. These topics were analysed via the latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) method.

Eco-innovations and elements of sustainability are also components of creative industries, which could also be included in the fashion industry. Fashion reflects the uniqueness of time, place, and culture. A special type of ecoinnovation is retroinnovation, which involves the purposeful revival of historic practices, ideas, and/or technologies and the application of this conceptualisation in the modern age (e.g., furniture, fashion, technology, farming, packaging). If we look at forms of dress throughout the world and from a historical perspective, we would see that "fashion" has been an expression of culture, geography, climate, and personal taste. The social and ecological impacts of the fashion industry have been the subject of much research and considerable documentation in recent years. It is recognised as one of the most polluting industries at all stages of its life cycle (Stefko & Steffek, 2018; Zagata et al., 2020; Domingos et al., 2022; Vrablikova & Ubreziova, 2023; Loucanova, et al., 2023).

The textile industry has a major impact on the environment in all stages of production. With increasing competition in the textile industry and increasing demands for sustainability, many fashion brands are using greenwashing. This greenwashing in the textile industry is a serious issue, and it can be challenging to navigate many marketing claims that companies use. Although deliberate greenwashing tactics are unacceptable from an environmental, social, economic, and ethical point of view, they can change customers' perceptions and direct them toward greener choices in the fashion industry (Bosak & Surgentova, 2023).

Fast fashion creates the opportunity to obtain clothes at a very low price, so it is available to almost everyone. It involves the mass production of clothing at very low costs. Fast fashion is easily recognizable by several signs, such as the following:
- offering many styles of the latest trends;
- The fashion cycle has approximately 52 micro collections per year, as there are new clothes in stock every week;
- does not use high-quality materials for production but rather uses low-quality and inexpensive materials that degrade clothes after several washes;
- the majority of production is in countries with the cheapest labour force;
- The supply chain is largely nontransparent, so it is difficult to determine who actually makes clothes (Stefko & Steffek, 2018; Fast Fashion, 2021).

Fast fashion spread to Europe from the United States, where the business of importing, manufacturing, and selling cheap clothing started. Even today, these are mostly low-quality clothes that cause considerable waste and force consumers to buy more clothes due to their low quality (Fast Fashion, 2021). Customers are only objects for manufacturers to make quick profits. In this industry, speed is used as a marketing tool (Wilson-Powell, 2021). Zara, one of the largest fast fashion brands, needs only 5 weeks to think up, make, and deliver a new product. It creates up to 20 collections per year, whereas once there are only two collections per year, including summer and winter collections. The Fashion Nova brand, on the other hand, states that it introduces 600--900 new models per week, which forces consumers to buy increasingly more. A British survey in 2019 revealed that Britons spend up to £2.7 billion in summer on clothes that they wear only once (Fast Fashion, 2021).

Fast fashion is also characterised by speed and low costs to be able to come up with new collections all the time. In addition to speed and low costs, this production is also very burdensome for the environment, as evidenced by the fact that up to 2,700 liters of water are consumed to produce one cotton T-shirt, whereas up to 20 tonnes of fresh water are used to dye one ton of textiles (e.g., jeans), and up to 1.2 billion textiles are created annually during production. Tonnes of carbon dioxide and up to 10% of microplastics in the ocean originate from textiles. Another factor against the environment is that production occurs mostly in countries such as India or China, where coal-fired power plants are used, which again increases the carbon footprint of clothes or clothes are dyed with heavy metals, which are dangerous not only for the environment but also for employees and end users (EcoHero, 2020).

The composition of individual pieces of clothing also has an impact on the environment, i.e., what fibre is it made of—cotton, polyester, cellulose, leather, wool, linen, hemp, etc. Cotton is also called a thirsty fibre because up to 2000 litres of irrigation water are used for 1 kg of cotton, which, among other things, causes the loss of the Aral Sea. The Aral Sea is salty, but the surrounding rivers are sweet, and this is used to grow cotton, which Uzbek residents collect involuntarily. According to Anti-Slavery International, activists managed to force up to 153 fashion brands not to source Uzbek cotton (Hoskins, 2014). The current value of the fast fashion market is estimated at approximately 2000 billion dollars, and despite this enormous amount, this market is expected to grow by approximately 1000 billion dollars (Thomasova, 2020).

The essence of the fast fashion market lies in one simple principle—copying world trends in the fashion industry—while approximately a million copies are produced, which, however, have nothing to do with the value, price, quality, and sustainability of the original piece. Fast fashion works as a fast cycle, fast production, and fast profit (Thomasova, 2020). However, global fast fashion brands produce fast products at the expense of people and the environment. They run factories that violate basic human rights, and thousands of people sacrifice their lives in fires or other disasters for a few cheap pieces for which they do not even obtain minimum wages. Employees work 16 hours a day without a break, and their safety and health are constantly threatened; however, they are forced to work because they need money to survive (Luptakova, 2020). One of the greatest scandals proving the inhumane and immoral practices of these giants could be mentioned by the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh in 2013. Just before the collapse of this factory, despite the large cracks, the employees were forced to work with threats and the threat of losing their monthly wages. One hour later, the factory collapsed, and as many as 1138 people died (Nguyen, 2020). Approximately 75 million workers from countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan work in factories for fashion giants, and only approximately 2% receive at least the minimum wage. According to Humanium, an international organisation that supports children's rights, the garment industry in these countries sees workers only as cost savings (Brewer, 2019; McDonald & Nicioli, 2023).

After several scandals of global clothing companies, these companies are trying to look more sustainable, commit to achieving sustainable plans by a certain year, etc. The latest case is the strategic 4E plan from Mango. The 4E acronym stands for Elevate, Expand, Earn and Empower. Elevating means that their clothes have a uniform design and are of high quality. Expand means expansion, specifically by opening 500 new branches. Earn implies ensuring growth from €3 billion to €4 billion, and Empower means cohesion and pride among employees. However, this new plan makes no mention of actually reducing the number of units produced, increasing quality by using materials other than cotton, which uses several litres of water to grow, improving working conditions in their factories, or taking responsibility for the waste in landfills that this company produces. The goal is again just to make money. The second global clothing company that could be quoted as an example is H&M, which created a sustainable-conscious collection, but it was only one of all their collections. Usually, they produce 60 million pieces of clothing annually and burn approximately 50% (12 tons) of that. In addition to incinerating excess clothing, they use materials that are not environmentally friendly for production; they faced accusations in 2018 for abusing female workers in the garment industry, and in 2023, violations of workers' rights and accusations of child labour in Myanmar came into light (Robertson, 2024).

Slow fashion and sustainability: The clothing industry makes a significant global contribution to increasing the environmental burden. Enormous production is seconded here by customer demand. Specifically, fast fashion represents a constant cycle of buying and disposing of clothes, leading to a significant amount of textile waste (Taborecka et al., 2023). The findings of Kurnaz (2023) show that the fear of COVID-19 has a significant positive effect on the desire to consume luxury goods, e.g., fast fashion goods, but it has a negative effect on sustainable development. Compared with fast fashion, slow fashion aims to minimise negative impacts on the environment and employees. The slow fashion approach is based on sustainability and responsibility. The materials used are friendly to the environment, have stylish timelessness, are easy to combine, and are of high quality. Emphasis is placed on quality and not quantity. It focuses not only on ecology but also on social responsibility (Solino et al., 2020; Glogaza, 2021). Slow fashion focuses on a complex production process. It involves careful selection of the materials used and prefers those that are more ecological, already recycled, or well recyclable for future generations. This is why natural fibres, such as silk, wool, hemp, bamboo, or cotton, which have almost no waste, are favoured (Wilson-Powell, 2021).

A comprehensive concept of sustainability, or the concept of slow fashion, is aimed at sustainable development, social responsibility, and ethics in business, which are connected with the environment. All aspects of sustainability, business, and social responsibility point to the environment and the preservation of resources, e.g., clean water (Hambalkova & Lusnakova, 2012). Sustainability in the clothing industry includes not only ecological materials or considerations of nature but also human factors. The interest lies in the provision of safe working spaces with suitable working conditions, lighting, breaks, and, last but not least, adequate financial evaluation of employees (Jorgenson, 2022). However, consumers often do not notice the uniqueness and quality of slow fashion clothes but only perceive the low prices and quick availability of fast fashion pieces, which is a consequence of society's consumer behavior (Martinez et al., 2024).

According to Karim et al. (2024), the slow fashion concept is important for providing authentic, local, and exclusive product attributes that are very important in developing customer value in slow fashion products,

and perceived value ultimately has a positive effect on purchase intentions. The results of this research provide a business strategy for slow fashion brand owners to focus on these attributes to create a sustainable business model that includes the triple bottom line (people, planet, profit) and contributes to the achievement of SDG no. 12: responsible consumption and production.

As part of sustainability, the clothing industry also uses a circular design, which is a new process of creating and using products. These are created without excess waste and can be used in several ways. The whole system works as a closed circle—a circular economy. All products are easy to maintain, repairable, and innovative (Micko, 2019). The traditional linear model, "buy, use and throw away," is replaced by a sustainable model of "buy, use, recover and reuse," which reduces the impact on the environment and society while maximising the value and benefits of products. Green marketing orientation, holistic marketing, and eco-innovations could increase business performance (Shaukat et al., 2023; Circular Economy, 2024). Stefko et al. (2024) define the circular economy as an innovative model that emphasises the regeneration, reuse, and restoration of resources and plays a central role in promoting global sustainability and efficient resource management. Unlike the traditional 'take, make, dispose of' approach of the linear economy, the circular economy seeks to create a closed-loop system that minimises waste and environmental impact while maximising resource value. Currently, many sustainable trends help the fashion industry in the context of a circular economy, e.g., secondhand (Vinted, ThredUp, etc.), swap (clothing exchange), upcycling, patchwork, capsule wardrobe, and clothing rental (Noisy). For this work, the authors discuss only two sustainable trends, namely, the capsule wardrobe and secondhand.

Capsule wardrobe: The first concept of a capsule wardrobe was created several decades ago when minimalist-looking clothes that were versatile, easy to combine, and of high quality were sold in London. This concept was later established in the USA in 1985, where the designer created the Seven Easy Pieces line. The capsule wardrobe phenomenon, defined by limited clothing pieces that focus on quality, longevity, and minimal or classic design, has gained exposure as a road map for consumers to remain fashionable while consuming less. A capsule wardrobe will make everyday life easier. It saves time and money, causes less stress, and is much more sustainable since customers have only a few basic pieces, mostly white, black, and beige. However, many outfits can be created from these basic pieces. Another advantage of the capsule wardrobe is the possibility of gradually changing individual pieces as needed, and its consumers do not spend much money at once (Bardey et al., 2022; Bang & DeLong, 2022; Astoul, 2024).

Secondhand fashion: According to the information available on the website Thred Up, up to 73% of clothes are sent to landfills or burned, while up to 95% of them can still be used or recycled. Secondhand stores help reduce CO2 emissions by up to 25% on average and save people up to 90% of the original price of a piece. Secondhand is a sustainable trend that implies buying already worn clothes, shoes, or accessories. The store works on the principle that people send clothes that they no longer wear and that they are resold at reduced prices. Secondhand consumption has evolved over three distinct periods: emergence and expansion during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; decline and stigmatisation in the twentieth century; and destigmatisation and renewed popularity since the 2000s because of increasing sustainability (Weinstein, 2014; Ferraro et al., 2016). Huang & Wong (2024) expressed the importance of the "reuse and resale cycle" in the second-hand market to develop healthily, eventually contributing to society's sustainability in the long run.

Previous research on the sustainable buying behaviour of generations: Generation X includes people born between 1965 and 1980. They are very loyal to their favourite particular brand that they have known for years and are characterised by the fact that they do not like to try new brands and their products. They can shop in brick-and-mortar stores as well as online. They are very fond of various loyalty programs, vouchers, coupons, and discounts. They will certainly not be interested in an exaggerated marketing campaign because they will consistently find information about the product and the brand from various sources. They prefer quality over quantity, and therefore, they are willing to pay more for products that they have been evaluated as better, healthier, higher quality, or more sustainable (Fan, 2018; Omelchenko, 2024)

Generation Y is the generation of people born between 1981 and 1996, and they are called millennials. They are very reasonable and thoughtful buyers. Much more than valuing traditional products, they give importance to the value of the brand. They are willing to pay much more for popular and original products. Marketing campaigns never truly appeal to them, but they prefer checking the reviews of people. As the first generation to grow up with the internet and phones, they always research prices and deals online first. Therefore, they largely prefer to shop online. Representatives of this generation need products and brands with added value, e.g., the sustainability, source, and production process of products (Burgiel & Sowa, 2017;

Weerasinghe, 2023). Gender differences in fashion buying behaviour within Generation Y pertain to issues of research from Arajuo et al. (2022) and Taborecka et al. (2023) – female and Deventer et al. (2022) – male.

The sustainable clothing buying behaviour of generations has been the topic of many previous types of research. The fashion apparel industry constitutes a significant global economic force. Generation Y consumers represent a target market in this industry, as they are forecasted to have disposable income, outrivalling that of previous generations. Generation Y individuals are acknowledged as being amenable to the opinions of social media influencers, particularly those expressed by celebrity influencers, who often act as aspirational referents. The findings indicate that informational value, entertainment value, and trustworthiness account for more than 50% of the variance in Generation Y consumers' perceptions of the utility of celebrity influencers' Instagram fashion content (Bevan-Dye & Motaung, 2023).

The next generation that is starting to work in the labour market is Generation Z. Some new studies compare Generation Y, and the aim of the study by Peiris & Herath (2023) is to identify the relationship between social media marketing activities (SMMA) and consumer response between Generation Y and Z. The findings of correlation analysis revealed a positive relationship between consumer response and SMMA aspects: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) among the generations. It was found that there is a stronger correlation between SMMA and consumer response for Generation Y than for Generation Z. Therefore, building a strong relationship with Generation Y to draw more customers from them via social media is suggested. CSR is composed of 3 pillars: economic, social and environmental. Sustainable products could also have these attributes, and their preferences could differ across generations. Krippes et al. (2024) reported that the impact of environmentally sustainable product attributes (e.g., reducing waste) is stronger than the impact of socially sustainable product attributes (e.g., healthy work conditions, fair competition). In this contribution, discussions are focused on the fashion industry. According to the results of the comparison (X and Y), new results (Y and Z) will be set for future research tasks.

3. Methodology and research methods. On the basis of the previous research outputs of Bevan-Dye & Motaung (2023), Peiris & Herath (2023), and Krippes et al. (2024) and the theoretical background of some sustainable fashion trends, the aims of this paper, questions in the questionnaire and research hypotheses, were formulated. The aim of the paper is to analyse sustainable buying behaviour within Generations X and Y. Partial objectives based on the main aim include the following:

- identify the main trends in sustainable buying behaviour from professional literature, scientific journals indexed in WOS and Scopus, and websites;
- creation of a questionnaire through Google Forms;
- selection of respondents from generations X and Y in the territory of the Slovak Republic;
- distribution of questionnaires via e-mails and social networks (Facebook and LinkedIn);
- analysis of respondents' answers through methods of descriptive statistics (number and percentage);
- evaluation of research hypotheses via methods of inductive statistics;
- conclusion, suggestions, limitations, and potential extensions of the research.

Among the general research methods, the historical-logical method (in the theoretical background, e.g., development of the CSR and generation theory), including analysis (answers of respondents), synthesis (conclusions and recommendations), and comparison (between generations), was used. Among the specialised research methods were methods of descriptive statistics (absolute and relative abundance) and methods of inductive statistics (χ^2 TEST with 2 independent variables - Generation X and Y) implemented in the SPSS program.

The questionnaire was distributed to 450 respondents (213 from Generation X and 237 from Generation Y). Data collection was performed from 10th April 2024 to 31st May 2024. It was completed by 139 respondents, with a total return rate of 55.60% (64 from Generation X – 30.05% and 75 from Generation Y – 31.65%). The questionnaire contained 11 questions. The identification questions were related to belonging to Generation X or Y, gender, and income. Furthermore, the research focused on the comparison of shopping places, types of clothes, buying factors, buying frequency, and awareness of sustainable trends.

The authors evaluated the last 3 questions not only via descriptive statistics methods but also via inductive statistics (hypothesis testing) and investigated the use of specific sustainable trends, the degree of influence of sustainable trends on purchasing behaviour, and the degree of rationality in purchasing clothing. Hypotheses were tested via the χ^2 test at a significance level of 0.05, with a focus on the interrelationships between the following:

- the correlation between the use of sustainable trends and belonging to a specific generation (H1.0, H1.1);
- the correlation between the degree of influence of sustainable trends on buying behaviour and belonging to a specific generation (H2.0, H2.1);
- the correlation between the degree of rationality when buying clothes and belonging to a specific generation (H2.0, H2.1).

An overview of the confirmed and rejected hypotheses can be found in the summary table with the corresponding p values, followed by a comparison of the hypotheses with those of previous research. This paper concludes with a summary of the most important findings, suggestions for raising awareness of sustainable fashion, research limitations, and potential extensions.

4. Results. In this part, the authors devoted themselves to analysing the results obtained through a questionnaire in the Google Forms application. A total of 139 respondents answered the questionnaire, of whom 64 were from Generation X (people born in the years 1965--1980) and 75 were from Generation Y (people born in the years 1981--1996). Most of the answers were filled in by women (96 respondents), but a sufficient number of men (43 respondents) also participated, which demonstrated the different buying habits of men and women. The third question was about the monthly income of individual respondents, which has a fundamental influence on the purchase of clothing and the options that respondents have in the context of the purchase. In our survey, in Generation X, the most common average income was between €1101 and €1500, and in Generation Y, the most common average income was € 801--1100, which means that the respondents have sufficient funds to buy better and thus more expensive clothes. Generation X workers are active in the labour market longer, and therefore, their monthly income is higher than that of Generation Y workers.

Table 1. Income of generations

Net income	Generation X	Percentage	Generation Y	Percentage
to 800	15	24.00%	16	23.00%
801 - 1100	18	29.00%	21	30.00%
1101 - 1500	20	32.00%	16	23.00%
over 1500	10	16.00%	18	25.00%

Sources: developed by the authors.

The fourth question aimed to determine in which types of stores the respondents shop most often. In both generations, the authors found from the questionnaire that most of the shopping is done in fashion chains, such as Sinsay, Reserved, or Mohito, up to 42%. The second most frequent answer was business chains, such as Tesco or Lidl, accounting for 23%, and the second-hand option was the third most frequent answer, contributing to 19%. Notably, there was a much greater number of responses from Generation Y, exactly 22, than from Generation X, where only 8 respondents shop second-hand. The difference between Generations X and Y was even in terms of local stores in a sustainable fashion, which is not preferred by Generation X at all (0 responses). This indicates that Generation X makes more use of commercial stores and fast fashion than Generation Y does. The higher income of Generation X is also related to more expensive stores (boutiques and tailoring workshops). A small difference can also be seen in purchases on the internet, where the younger Generation Y buys more (up to 6 respondents) than Generation X does (only 3 respondents).

Table 2. Preference of stores by generation

Type of store	Number	Percentage	Generation X	Generation Y
fashion chains	92	42.00%	36	56
fashion boutiques	13	6.00%	6	5
tailoring workshops	4	2.00%	2	1
business chains	50	23.00%	24	24
seconhand	41	19.00%	8	22
eshops	10	5.00%	3	6
local shops	3	1.00%	0	3
sports shops	4	2.00%	2	2

Source: developed by the authors.

In the next question, the authors focused on the products that are bought by the respondents of Generations X and Y. The most frequently purchased products include clothes and shoes in both generations. However,

sportswear is also bought quite often, which is a very specific category, because it is made of functional materials and cannot be easily replaced. In the responses between generations, it can be concluded that although Generation Y buys more, Generation X buys more formal wear than Generation Y does.

Table 3. Preference for clothes by generation

Type of clothes	Number	Percentage	Generation X	Generation Y
casual clothes	115	82,70%	31	66
sports clothes	35	25,20%	13	22
event (formal) clothes	12	8,60%	8	3
shoes	49	35,30%	19	29
work clothes	1	0,70%	1	0

Sources: developed by the authors.

The authors subsequently asked the respondents what factors influence their decision of whether to buy the product or not. Together, as well as separately in the individual categories, the most important factor driving the purchase decision is the material of the given garment (product) and the price. The brand was also an important factor for buying, and Generation Y reported it as more important than Generation X did, as was the case with sustainability. In terms of the sustainability factor, however, there is a more significant difference between Generations X and Y, where Generation Y's responses (17) are almost threefold different from those of Generation X (6). The table shows that factors such as sustainability, appearance, or purpose are not important for most respondents.

Table 4. Preference of choosing factors of clothes by generation

Factor	Number	Percentage	Generation X	GenerationY
mark	36	25.90%	14	23
material	101	72.70%	35	48
price	101	72.70%	42	49
sustainability	25	18.00%	6	17
purpose	1	0.70%	0	0
sympathy	1	0.70%	0	1
appearance	1	0.70%	1	1

Sources: developed by the authors.

In regard to sustainable shopping, only where and why consumers shop is not important, but how often they purchase also makes a difference. There is a difference between buying a cheap dress from AliExpress once a year and buying many different types of clothes every week or month. Therefore, to answer this question, the authors determined how often the respondents purchased. The most frequent answer was 2–3 times a month, but just behind it was the answer that they buy only when necessary when the clothes are ruined or worn out. The answer once a year also had a higher frequency, reflecting that almost 21.60% shop only once a half year. There was no significant difference between Generations X and Y; the only significant difference was that the respondents of Generation X bought once a week, and up to 4 respondents bought once a year. However, in Generation Y, these options were not indicated at all. Generation Y shops are generated only when they are necessary more than Generation X. This can be related to reducing consumption and sustainable behaviour.

Table 5. Frequency of clothing shopping by generation

Frequency	Number	Percentage	Generation X	GenerationY
once a week	1	0.70%	1	0
2-3 times a month	54	38.80%	21	23
once a half - year	30	21.60%	15	9
once a year	4	2.90%	4	0
only when it is necessary	50	36.00%	20	25

Sources: developed by the authors.

In the following 2 questions, the research focuses on sustainable trends. First, the authors asked respondents if they knew at least one of the sustainable trends (swap, upcycling, patchwork, second hand,

slow fashion). Forty-three percent of respondents from Generation X knew about them, whereas 58% of those from Generation Y knew about them. In the following question, the authors investigated the use of these trends. According to the answers, they reported that up to 36% do not use any sustainable trends, but using a second-hand product was indicated by most of them in both generations, accounting for up to 41% of respondents; swap was indicated by 18%, and slow fashion was indicated by 23.7%. In the comparison of individual generations, there are more respondents who do not use any trend in Generation X, and in Generation Y, almost twice the number of people (9) use secondhand in contrast to Generation X (4). However, the authors found that many of the respondents did not use sustainable trends.

Table 6. Preference of sustainable trends by generation

Sustainable trend	Number	Percentage	Generation X	Generation Y
swap	25	18.00%	3	2
upcykcling	11	7.90%	2	0
patchwork	4	2.90%	1	1
seconhand	57	41.00%	4	9
slow fashion	33	23.70%	1	6
none	51	36.70%	18	16

Sources: developed by the authors.

In the last 2 questions, the authors asked respondents whether they are influenced by sustainable trends and whether they behave rationally when buying clothes. With respect to the impact of sustainable trends from question 11, 21 respondents from Generation X said that it does not affect them, and 19 answered yes. It appears from the data that part of Generation X is influenced by these trends and that part is not. In Generation Y, it was the other way around; 35 respondents indicated that it rather affects them, and 21 said that it rather does not. However, the authors can also conclude that few of the respondents are influenced and that almost the same proportion are not impacted by these trends. In both cases, some respondents were completely influenced by these trends or not influenced at all. This is illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7. Influence of sustainable trends on generations

Influence of sustainable trends	Generation X	Generation Y
completely agree	5	12
rather agree	19	35
rather disagree	21	21
completely disagree	14	6

Sources: developed by the authors.

The degree of rationality of the respondents' behavior when buying clothes can be seen in Table 8. The majority of the respondents answered rather than agree in both generations. The option of completely agree was also a frequent answer, but there were also a few respondents who rather disagreed that they would behave rationally when shopping for clothes. However, in this answer, according to Table 8, Generation X chose this option in a larger proportion. This means that Generation X behaves less rationally when buying and thinks less about what they buy, where they buy it at what price, and whether they truly need it.

Table 8. Rational clothing shopping behaviour by generation

Rational behaviour	Generation X	Generation Y
completely agree	18	31
rather agree	31	39
rather disagree	11	5
completely disagree	0	1

Sources: developed by the authors.

From the above analysis of the questionnaire, it can be understood that both generations have some information about sustainability and sustainable behaviour when buying clothes. However, from the studied sample, Generation Y is visibly slightly better off, e.g., while responding to the question of whether they use sustainable trends, whether they are aware of them, whether they are influenced by them, and how often they shop, where Generation Y most often indicates the answer "only when necessary".

The next step of the research was to determine the relationships between generations and the use of sustainable trends, the influence of these trends, and the rationality of buying clothes. Thus, 3 hypotheses were established (null and alternative):

- *H1.0 The use of sustainable trends is not related to belonging to generations X and Y.*
- *H1.1 The use of sustainable trends is related to belonging to generations X and Y.*
- *H2.0 The degree of influence of sustainable trends on clothing shopping is not related to belonging to generations X and Y.*
- *H2.1 The degree of influence of sustainable trends on clothing shopping is related to belonging to generations X and Y.*
- *H3.0 The degree of rationality when buying clothes is not related to belonging to generations X and Y.*
- *H3.1 The degree of rationality when buying clothes is related to belonging to generations X and Y.*

These hypotheses were tested at a significance level of 0.05 via the χ 2 test in SPSS. If the p value was greater than 0.05, the hypothesis was rejected, and if the p value was less than 0.05, the hypothesis was confirmed. Among the established hypotheses, a connection was found only between the influence of sustainable trends and belonging to generations X and Y (H2.1), which may be due to higher environmental awareness and a greater influence of social networks and influencers on generation Y. A summary of confirmed and rejected hypotheses can be found in Table 9.

Table 9. Research hypotheses

Null and alternative hypothesis	Significance level	p value (χ 2 TEST)
H1.0 The use of sustainable trends is not related to belonging to generations X and Y. H1.1 The use of sustainable trends is related to belonging to generations X and Y.	0.05	0.188
H2.0 The degree of influence of sustainable trends on clothing shopping is not related to belonging to generations X and Y. H2.1 The degree of influence of sustainable trends on clothing shopping is related to belonging to generations X and Y.	0.05	0.026
H3.0 The degree of rationality when buying clothes is not related to belonging to generations X and Y. H3.1 The degree of rationality when buying clothes is not related to belonging to generations X and Y.	0.05	0.121

Sources: developed by the authors.

5. Discussion. Sustainable trends (second-hand, swap, and patchwork) are part of the circular economy, which has been discussed in the research of Micko (2019), Shaukat et al. (2023) and Stefko et al. (2024). Stefko & Steffek (2018) describe future perspectives of the slow fashion industry. They claim that the support of networks serves as an indispensable tool for slow fashion designers, keeping them abreast of the competition. Sustainable trends in the clothing industry have successfully reached the awareness of both generations. However, the difference is in the approach and motivation to use these trends. Other research endeavors of Araujo et al. (2022), Taborecka et al. (2023), and Deventer et al. (2022) focus on the gender aspect within Generation Y. The present research is focused on performing a comparative analysis between Generation X and Generation Y. According to descriptive analysis, Generation X prefers swapping and upcycling, and Generation Y prefers second-hand and slow fashion products. Both generations are still deficient in awareness of sustainable trends in comparison to populations abroad and more brands in fast fashion chains. The confirmed hypothesis that "The degree of influence of sustainable trends on clothing shopping is related to belonging to Generations X and Y" coincides with the results of previous research by Bevan-Dye & Motaung (2023) and Peiris and Herath (2023), which reveals that generation Y is impacted by influencer marketing on social networks. According to Krippes et al.'s (2024) research, for Generation Y, the most important marketing communication is based on social sustainability (e.g., good work conditions for fashion producers and the prohibition of child labour). Generation X prefers economic sustainability, safety, material, and practical use of clothes, whereas younger Generation Z prefers more environmental sustainability (e.g., alternative energy sources and zero waste). Nonetheless, this could be the subject of further

research. The next hypothesis was related to the degree of rationality in fashion shopping behaviour. Limited rationality in shopping is the subject of research in behavioural economics and neuromarketing (e.g., Lindstrom, 2010). Limited rationality could be connected with effects such as loss aversion, the framing effect, the decoy effect, and the anchoring effect. On the basis of these research results, different age categories and different markets are inferred.

6. Conclusions. The contribution was initially characterised by the clothing industry, which defined what fast fashion is, described how it works, and ascertained whether it harms the environment and people living on this planet and working in the clothing industry. Furthermore, it explained what slow fashion is, what sustainability is, what sustainable trends are currently popular, and why they are worth following. In the last part, the authors explained the concepts of Generations X and Y and described what is typical for them, how they behave, and what determines their purchasing behaviour. For the theoretical analysis of sustainable development, fast fashion, slow fashion, and generation differences in this study, professional books and research articles indexed in WOS or Scopus were included. The results from research articles about generation differences were used as the background for setting hypotheses.

In the analytical section, the responses of 139 participants from Generation X and Generation Y in the Slovak Republic were analysed. The shopping behaviour of individuals from these generations was subsequently compared and examined to determine whether their behaviour was rational. One of the most interesting findings was that while some members of Generations X and Y engage in sustainable shopping practices such as buying second-hand or swapping, the majority do not feel the impact of sustainable trends and do not participate in them. On the basis of our findings, it is essential to emphasise the importance of Generations X and Y being more conscious of sustainable trends and having access to more sustainable opportunities. Our hypothesis tests confirmed only Hypothesis H2.1, which indicates that the impact of sustainable trends on clothing shopping is linked to their categorisation as Generations X or Y. The research results can be utilised to shape marketing communication strategies for fashion brands targeting Generations X and Y. In light of our confirmed hypothesis, the authors suggested that slow fashion brands in Slovak utilise influencer marketing and eWOM marketing on social networks such as Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest, particularly because many slow fashion products are handmade.

Research results can have an impact on various stakeholders. The impact on slow fashion businesses, consumers, and society has already been mentioned. Sustainability can be supported by the government and the European Union with subsidies, grants, and reduced tax rates. Banks can support sustainability and eco-innovations with better credit terms. For companies implementing eco-innovations in a slow fashion, new possibilities for financing their projects, such as crowdfunding and venture capital, are available.

The most significant limitations of the research include the possible distortion of data because the years of birth of generations X and Y are not defined identically in the professional literature and articles. Another possible limitation is the subjective evaluation of the respondents' responses and the resulting cognitive distortion, as these respondents consider their shopping behavior more moral and sustainable than reality does.

Shopping behaviour in the field of fashion (fast and slow) and the fashion industry is related to creative industries. This is one way to expand further research on the concept of the creative economy. The creative indices of individual nations are usually evaluated via the 3T index (technology, talent, tolerance) in the EU through the modified Euro-Creativity Index. In addition, there are national modifications (e.g., SCI – Slovak Creativity Index) and regional modifications for regional levels NUTS2 and NUTS3. There are 8 regions at the NUTS3 level in Slovakia. According to previous research by Vrablikova (2024), only the Bratislava region (capital city) achieves an above-average value of the creative index. It would be interesting to compare the sustainable clothing buying behaviour between inhabitants of the Bratislava region and inhabitants of other NUTS3 level regions that achieve lower values of the creative index. The authors found that both generations approach clothing shopping with a certain amount of irrationality, which is considered a normal human feature and the subject of behavioural economics research. In the future, investigating the differences in the irrationality of these generations, e.g., in terms of loss aversion, the framing effect, etc., would be interesting.

Importantly, the current state of the environment is strongly influenced by the clothing industry. A large amount of clothing is produced every day, almost half of which is not even sold. People buy cheap, low-quality clothes that last only a few uses and then buy increasingly more in fashion and chain stores. The original purpose of clothing was to protect the body; however, the purpose of clothing today is not only body protection but also social status. Human civilisation wants to acquire a certain status of excellence in society. Having many nice clothes, an expensive car, a new phone, luxury vacations, a large house, and a perfect body

contributes to a perfectly consumerist society, which has suffered immensely from moral decay. Sustainable shopping behaviour helps us eliminate this situation even if it does so partially.

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Вибір одягу поколіннями X та Y з огляду на принципи сталого розвитку

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У статті досліджується споживча поведінка поколінь X та Y при купівлі одягу з урахуванням принципів сталого розвитку. Метою дослідження є аналіз ключових особливостей цієї поведінки та надання рекомендацій щодо маркетингових заходів для компаній у сфері моди. Теоретична база дослідження спирається на наукові публікації, індексовані у WOS та Scopus, а також джерела, що висвітлюють основні тенденції у корпоративній соціальній відповідальності, сталому розвитку та споживчих уподобаннях в індустрії моди. Методологія дослідження охоплювала кілька етапів: створення анкети, вибір респондентів покоління X та Y у Словацькій Республіці, обробку відповідей за допомогою описової статистики та перевірку гіпотез методами індуктивної статистики. Анкета складалася з 11 питань і була заповнена 139 респондентами. Анкети включала питання щодо ідентифікації покоління, статі, доходу респондентів, а також місць покупок, типів одягу, факторів вибору, частоти покупок та рівня обізнаності про принципи сталого розвитку. Гіпотези дослідження були спрямовані на вивчення взаємозв'язку між прихильністю до принципів сталого розвитку та приналежністю до певного покоління, впливу цих принципів на споживчу поведінку, а також рівня раціональності під час вибору одягу. Результати показали, що бренди можуть ефективно використовувати концепцію slow fashion та залучати покоління X та Y через інфлюенсер-маркетинг у соціальних мережах. Обмеження дослідження пов'язані з різними підходами до визначення меж поколінь (років народження) та можливими когнітивними упередженнями респондентів при заповненні анкет. Подальші дослідження можуть бути зосереджені на порівнянні споживчої поведінки в регіонах із різним рівнем розвитку креативних індустрій, а також на дослідженні ірраціональних чинників, що впливають на споживчі рішення, в контексті поведінкової економіки. Дослідження робить вагомий внесок у розвиток економіки, збереження довкілля та покращення суспільного благополуччя.

Ключові слова: споживча поведінка; індустрія одягу; швидка мода; покоління; маркетинг; повільна мода; сталий розвиток.