

Chapter 9

Constraints and Drivers of Growth in the Ethical Fashion Sector: The Case of France

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Abstract This chapter explores the extent to which ethical issue is valuable in the case of fashion sector. In particular, it examines the main barriers to ethical fashion consumption. The industry context of fashion items is of particular interest due to its significant global supply chain complexity and the variety of impacts and challenges across the supply chain from raw materials to design, manufacture, packaging, logistics, consumer use, and postuse disposal. Findings from an empirical study involving 1086 French consumers indicate that despite the increasing concerns of individuals about the ethical issue, French consumers have little interest in ethical fashion. The main barriers to the purchase of ethical fashion items are related to the consumers' lack of knowledge and disinterest, and the style attribute. In effect, consumers perceive ethical fashion products as old fashioned and with lower quality or not in line with their style of dress.

Furthermore, our study indicates that three sociodemographic variables—gender, age, and income—have a considerable effect on consumers' purchasing behavior towards ethical fashion products.

9.1 Introduction

In recent years, the marketing literature has underscored the growing awareness of western consumers to the need for ethical principles in their purchasing decisions (Jägel et al. 2012; Bernues et al. 2003). This new concern involves seeking out less toxic and more sustainable products (Lamb et al. 1994), referred to by some authors as ethical consumerism (Smith et al. 2010).

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However, some studies (Devinney et al. 2011) relativize this trend and point to the wide gap between what consumers claim to believe and their actual behavior. Thus, in France, the *Centre d'Analyse Stratégique* (2011) indicated that while 80 % of French people say they are willing to adopt more responsible consumer behavior, less than a quarter actually put this into practice. The Ethnicity (2013) report indicates that nowadays French consumers are more interested in the origin of raw materials and where the products are made than on their impact on the environment or the social guarantees embedded in the production process. The report concludes that the economic and financial crisis has forced consumers to make choices, with environmental issues taking second place. According to Adomaviciute (2013), the ethical attribute is considered more as an extra advantage. Against this background, we may question whether environmental and social excellence guarantees real differentiation for a company within its market. In this study, we look at the ethical fashion¹ sector in France, which has found it very hard to develop despite the considerable effort made in terms of the offer. Several ethical brands have recently shut down (Ideo, les Fées de Bengale), while the Ethical Fashion Show, created to promote ethical fashion, has now been moved to Germany. It is, therefore, of interest to explore the reasons for the sector's relative failure: Is it because consumers find it difficult to get hold of products or because French consumers are simply not interested in ethical issues in the case of fashion items? It is also important to determine which growth drivers could help the sector to develop.

9.2 Literature Review

9.2.1 *Responsible Consumption: Obstacles and Incentives*

Consumers in the developed world are increasingly aware of the issues linked to sustainable development (Urien and Kilbourne 2011). This awareness has led to the emergence of new buying behavior and responsible consumption. For Hansla et al. (2008), consumers decide to adopt responsible behavior because they worry about the negative impact of environmental issues on themselves (selfish motives), others (altruistic motives), and nature (biosphere motives). Consumers driven by selfish motives are ready to pay a premium if the “green” products offer personal benefits (health, symbolism, or status) (Ottman et al. 2006; Snelgar 2006).

Consumers driven by altruistic motives are concerned with social justice and the wellbeing of others (Stern et al. 1993) as well as a desire to contribute to solving environmental problems (Huang and Rust 2011).

¹ Ethical fashion involves a form of production that takes working conditions into account and uses specific raw materials (e.g., organic cotton) avoid harming the environment (Joergens 2006). It is also described as “fashion with a conscious” as it concerns labor conditions and the environment (Shen et al. 2012).

Apart from the motives that drive consumers to opt for sustainable products, the management literature mentions several barriers that may inhibit consumers' appreciation of this category of products. These are chiefly of a demographic, religious, or cultural nature (Doran 2009), or involve barriers pertaining to price, quality, perceived product value, and market availability (Hira and Ferrie 2006). For Rodhain (2013), being a responsible consumer requires effort in terms of price (more expensive products), image (some products offer no added social value), hedonism (some alternative products are less practical and/or give less pleasure), and time (finding the products and the information about their features, understanding the meaning of the labels, etc.). Auger et al. (2008) argue that consumers are not willing to sacrifice the functional attributes of a product for their ethical attributes.

Moreover, consumer behavior may differ depending on the product categories. In effect, consumers are often willing to make an effort for generic products such as fair-trade food items (Auger et al. 2008). Recent research has shown that the growth in consumers' ethical concerns has less impact on certain product categories. For instance, Achabou and Dekhili (2013) found that in the luxury clothing sector, consumers view products made from recycled materials in a negative light. Consequently, we remain far from the "all green" postulated by the literature and the media (The Co-operative Bank 2009).

9.2.2 *Ethical Issues in the Fashion Sector*

Fashion is often considered as at the opposite end of the spectrum to fair and ethical, and has been described as follows: "Fashion—a symbol of futility in a society of consumer paroxysm—maintains values that in principle are not fair (everyone does not have access) and not ethical... fashion is synonymous with short term and versatility and dedicated to brief seasonal cycles)" (DIESES 2007, p. 5).

Fashion is also linked to a number of environmental issues. According to Nagurney and Yu (2012), the textile industry pollutes around 200 t of water per tonne of production. In addition, the trend has been towards increasingly short fashion cycles and poor-quality products that considerably reduce product length of use and subsequently increase the quantity of textile waste (Pookulangara and Shephard 2013; Bianchi and Birtwistle 2012). In the UK, for example, textile waste grew by around 2 million t a year between 2005 and 2010 (Kirsi and Lotta 2011). In addition, cotton crops alone account for over 25 % of global pesticide use (Nagurney and Yu 2012).

The fashion industry is also associated with major social issues. While delocalization strategies adopted by leading brands have helped improve profitability, they have also led to deterioration in working conditions for subcontractors in both the South and the North (Vercher 2010). Despite the existence of monitoring methods, such as codes of conduct, several ethical scandals have been reported in the supply chains of many global fashion retailers (e.g., Zara, Gap, and Nike) in recent years (Perry and Towers 2013). Choi et al. (2012) mention that, in terms of labor rights,

a lot of garment factory employees in developing countries are working in highly polluted environment, during over 16–18 h every day for low salary.

This has prompted several international NGOs (e.g., Clean Clothes Campaign) and national associations (e.g., Éthique sur l'étiquette) to run campaigns denouncing such practices. Under pressure, leading brands (e.g., Reebok, Nike, H&M, and MUJI) and retailers (e.g., Carrefour and Tesco) have begun to introduce social responsibility measures in their supply chains (Shen et al. 2012; Vercher 2010). Perry and Towers (2013) state that there is a real business argument which can encourage fashion companies to implement CSR practices: a high profile consumer industry, a bad publicity, consumer boycotts, and loss of brand value.

Growing awareness of environmental and social issues linked to the fashion industry has also resulted in the emergence of firms specializing in ethical fashion. In fact, different ecopractices have been used. According to Caniato et al. (2012), the most important methods are as follows: (i) use of organic fibers; (ii) reuse and recycling of materials such as old clothes, manufacturing scraps, bottles, and tyres; (iii) vintage practices and second hand; (iv) clean technologies, both old and new, and even information technologies; (v) green certifications (e.g., Global Organic Textile Standards); and (vi) green product and process design, considering the product characteristics, the materials used, and the production technologies.

Certain examples of implementing ecopractices in the fashion sector have been highly successful. The most striking success story is that of Patagonia, especially in the USA, thanks to its efficient and innovative products and its management strategy based on sustainable development (Teulon 2006). Other firms, however, find it far more difficult to grow or even to keep their business going. This is the case for many ethical fashion firms in France. Despite the efforts of various entities (e.g., the Agrobiotex programme²) and designers (product diversification), the ethical fashion market has found it hard to develop (RSE news 2013). In fact, many businesses have even closed down in the last few years. Reports and press articles have attributed the situation to various barriers that reduce consumers' appreciation of ethical fashion products. Cotelle et al. (2011), for example, blamed a lack of information and the absence of visibility and understanding of labels. Eder-Hansen et al. (2012) pointed to poor consumer awareness of the environmental issues surrounding the textile industry. For instance, despite the many environmental issues linked to cotton production, it has always maintained the image of a natural and "green" fiber (DIISES 2007). The price barrier is also important, as consumers often believe that ethical garments are too expensive. Finally, Hansen et al. (2012) speak about the "style" barrier, in other words, the widespread belief that sustainable garments are neither elegant nor fashionable, and that the design and appearance of an ecogarment is outdated or even frumpy.

Studying the behavior of young British and German consumers with respect to fashion items, Joergens (2006) noted that the main criteria when choosing a fashion

² Launched in 2005 by the competitiveness cluster, Up-Tex (High Performance Textiles), in order to develop textiles from agrosources using ecoefficient processes.

item are brand, originality, and price. The author observed that the ethical dimension remains secondary. This confirms the conclusions by Butler and Francis (1997), who argue that the environmental factor may be important for consumers, but that other factors such as price and style are likely to be the main criteria. Kim and Damhorst (1998) suggested that while there is increased awareness of environmental issues in the fashion industry, this may well clash with the philosophy of rapid change of style that characterizes industrialized societies.

9.3 Method

To answer our research questions, we performed a quantitative online survey in March–April 2013, with a sample of 1086 French consumers. A convenience sampling method was used. Our sample population was made up of very different age groups and socioprofessional categories. The details of their characteristics are presented in Table 9.1.

We gave the respondents a questionnaire made up of closed questions.³ They were asked about their consumption practices with respect to fashion items (frequency, main criteria when choosing an article, favorite sales outlets, what happens to old, unwanted items) and the main barriers to the appreciation of ethical fashion items. A 5-point Likert scale was used to this end. The respondents could also justify their answers if they so wished. Thus, some verbatim has been included to enrich the discussion of our findings.

Most respondents (73.1 %) said they buy their fashion items from specialized shops. The other distribution channels mentioned were: big-box stores (25.2 %), catalogues (10.4 %), Internet (36.5 %), and second-hand clothes shops (25 %). Regarding what they do with old clothes, 55.6 % of the respondents said they give them to relatives, 83.8 % to charities, 30.3 % recycle⁴ them, 18.3 % resell them, and 14.9 % throw them away. Of the 1089 respondents, 493 had bought an ethical fashion item at least once, in other words 45.3 % of the sample.

9.4 Results

In an introductory question, the respondents were asked to explain what ethical fashion meant for them. The concept was associated with a number of ideas. Consumers considered it as a fashion category that does not exploit animals: “products with no animal content,” “no animal exploitation (no leather, silk, fur),” “no animal suffering,” and one that does not exploit humans: “a decent wage for the person who makes

³ The Toluna QuickSurveys website was used as a support to design and deliver the questionnaire.

⁴ Old clothes re used by consumers to make some new products (e.g., fashion accessories, hand bags, gloves, and cushions).

Table 9.1 Characteristics of respondents who participated to the study

Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	714	65.6
Male	375	34.4
<i>Age</i>		
Less than 20 years	36	3.3
20–35 years	609	55.9
36–50 years	256	23.5
51–65 years	172	15.8
65 or more years	16	1.5
<i>Occupation</i>		
Employee	410	37.6
Executive	281	25.8
Independent contractor	169	15.5
Student	84	7.7
Without occupation	116	10.7
Retired	29	2.7
<i>Monthly income</i>		
<1000€	302	27.7
1000–3000 €	591	54.3
3000–6000 €	144	13.2
6000 € and more	52	4.8
Total number of respondents	1089	100

it,” “clothes made by people who are not exploited for that,” “a garment that respects human beings,” “like fair-trade coffee, a fair minimum wage, ethical working conditions and respect for people, with no child labor.” Very few respondents, however, linked ethical fashion with environmental issues: “a garment that respects the planet, its production has the least impact possible on our planet.” Some respondents also linked ethical fashion with the notion of sustainability: “a garment that lasts,” and local production: “a garment made in France,” “local trade, promoting local culture and know-how.”

In addition, several consumers appeared relatively skeptical about ethical fashion and were suspicious of the real motives of firms engaged in this area: “a marketing gimmick,” “more manipulation,” “a sales strategy,” “a new way to make money,” “above all, it’s very vague,” “it’s often just greenwashing.”

Table 9.2 Main barriers to ethical fashion consumption

Source	Type III sum of squares	Degree of freedom d.f	Mean square	F	Sig
Corrected model	8.301 ^a	5	1.660	16.105	0.000
Y-intercept	332.380	1	332.380	3224.319	0.000
Price	0.020	1	0.020	0.190	0.663
Disponibility	0.021	1	0.021	0.200	0.655
Desinterest	1.132	1	1.132	10.984	0.001
Style	0.289	1	0.289	2.803	0.095
Lack of knowledge	2.782	1	2.782	26.988	0.000
Error	68.964	669	1.103		
Total	2433.000	675			
Corrected total	77.265	674			

^aR-square = 0.107 (adjusted R-square = 0.101)

9.4.1 Main Barriers to Ethical Fashion Consumption

In order to identify the main reasons why people do not purchase ethical fashion products,⁵ we performed a regression analysis in SPSS. The results obtained are set out in Table 9.2.

The primary barriers to the purchase of ethical fashion items appear to be, respectively, lack of knowledge, disinterest, and style. Many consumers said they knew little or nothing about this type of fashion: “I’ve never seen it,” “I don’t know what it is,” “I’ve only known about ethical fashion for 2 months,” “I don’t really know what you mean by that, I don’t know enough about the subject,” “I didn’t know until about a year ago, these products have little visibility,” or else showed no interest in such products: “I’ve never really thought about it,” “I haven’t looked into it,” “I have to admit it’s the last of my worries,” “I think about it, but that’s all.”

Few respondents (19.3 %) said they knew even one ethical brand name. The most frequently cited brands were Veja (35 times), Ekyog (31 times), Misericordia (14 times), El Naturalista (13 times), Patagonia (7 times), and Ethic et Chic (7 times). Some retail names, such as Monoprix, were also mentioned. Their limited knowledge of ethical fashion brands may be explained by a lack of communication. Indeed, most respondents (95.9 %) consider that ethical fashion brands do not communicate enough about their responsible practices.

Finally, many respondents stated that ethical fashion products were not trendy enough or did not correspond to their dress style: “no ethical look in my dress style,” “it doesn’t always match my dress style,” “it’s not a brilliant look,” “not to my taste,”

⁵ Clothes, shoes, and accessories.

Table 9.3 The effects of sociodemographic variables

Source	Type III sum of squares	Degree of freedom d.f	Mean square	F	Sig
Corrected model	17.254 ^a	16	1.078	4.577	0.000
Y-intercept	289.677	1	289.677	1229.544	0.000
Gender	5.074	1	5.074	21.538	0.000
Age	2.963	4	0.741	3.144	0.014
Occupation	1.866	6	0.311	1.320	0.245
Monthly income	2.367	3	0.789	3.350	0.019
Education	0.097	2	0.048	0.206	0.814
Error	252.561	1072	0.236		
Total	2877.000	1089			
Corrected total	269.815	1088			

^aR-square = 0.164 (adjusted R-square = 0.150)

“I haven’t seen any ethical clothes of the type I need for my work,” “ethical fashion often means original and second hand, and I can’t wear that in my job.”

9.4.2 *Impact of Sociodemographic Variables on Ethical Fashion Consumption*

In recent years, the literature on sustainable consumption has highlighted the impact of sociodemographic variables on responsible consumer behavior. To test the influence of these variables with respect to our study, we ran a regression analysis. The findings are set out in Table 9.3.

The findings indicate that gender, age, and income are the most influential variables in terms of consumer purchasing behavior in the case of ethical fashion products. We, thus, performed an analysis based on these variables. The main results are presented in Table 9.4.

Women appear to consume more ethical fashion products than men. Consumption also varies according to the age of the respondents: the 36 to 50 age group is the foremost consumer. With regard to the income variable, we noted that respondents with a medium income (between 1000 and 3000 €) consume the largest number of ethical fashion products. The socioprofessional categories with the highest income are those that consume the least.

Table 9.4 Consumers’ purchase behavior of ethical fashion products regarding their gender, age, and income

Variables		Individuals who consume ethical fashion products		Individuals who do not consume ethical fashion products	
		Number of respondents	Percentage (%)	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	370	51.8	344	48.2
	Male	123	32.8	252	67.2
Age	Less than 20-years	8	22.2	28	77.8
	20–35-years	288	47.3	321	52.7
	36–50-years	133	51.6	125	48.4
	51–65-years	65	36.7	112	63.3
	65 or more years	6	37.5	10	62.5
Monthly income	<1000 €	141	46.7	161	53.3
	1000–3000 €	290	49.1	301	50.9
	3000–6000 €	51	35.7	92	64.3
	6000 € and more	11	21.2	41	78.8

9.5 Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to understand why French consumers appear to be less drawn to ethical fashion products, and to identify measures that could promote the development of this sector.

Our findings indicate that French consumers have relatively little interest in ethical fashion. This is consistent with the conclusions of prior research (Shen et al. 2012; Kim and Damhorst 1998; Butler and Francis 1997) which suggests that consumer knowledge and environmental awareness has little impact on decision-making when buying clothes. Chan and Wong (2012) consider that although fashion consumers have a positive attitude toward the protection of the planet, they rarely transform such attitude into ecofashion consumption. Also, Pookulangara and Shephard (2013) argue that even when individuals say they are aware of the ethics issue in the fashion industry, they continue to look for cheap and fast fashion. These results highlight an attitude–behavior gap between fashion consumers’ environmental protection interest and ethical consumption. Consumers of fashion products seem to have a specific behavior when making consumption decision in comparison with consumers of other category of items (Niinimaki 2010).

In France, Cotelle et al. (2011) suggest that French consumers are now aware of the ethical issues in the world of fashion, but they have less impact compared to other sectors like food or cars. We believe that this is due to the cultural barrier mentioned in the literature (Doran 2009). France is renowned as the country of fashion and elegance, so consumers have very refined tastes and are extremely mindful of style. As Czarnowski (2009) pointed out, different countries may display a preference

for certain environmental products. Japanese consumers, for instance, demonstrate their environmental awareness through the purchase of cars, while Italians are more sensitive to green issues related to health and beauty products.

The keen awareness of French consumers with respect to the style attribute results in a rejection of ethical fashion items, considered as old fashioned. In effect, the respondents viewed ethical fashion products as frumpy or not in keeping with their style of dress. The context of contemporary society has led to a perpetual preoccupation with image (Pitombo Cidreira 2009). Fashion provides a means to satisfy the desire for difference and originality in terms of appearance (Örmen 2008; Pitombo Cidreira 2009). In the fashion industry, consumers endorse very short fashion cycles and focus on self-expression, aesthetic gratification, and group conformity (Kim and Damhorst 1998). Our findings are consistent with the conclusions of Chan and Wong (2012) who found that fashion consumers in Hong Kong do not compromise their needs of fashion clothing to be environmentally friendly. They have a preference for fashion clothing that appears esthetically attractive.

Furthermore, ethical fashion items are at times associated with lower quality. This finding raises the broader issue of perceived value, which appears to be another major barrier to the appreciation of ethical fashion items. For Ottman (2006), poor understanding of the conventional attributes of products pushes consumers to reject green products as they are considered to be of lower quality. In the Indian context, Gupta and Hodges (2012) showed that price and quality are the most important criteria that influence the consumer decision when choosing ethical fashion products.

Meyer (2001) argues that responsible products can only be successful if consumers perceive their attributes as better than those of conventional products. Environmental differentiation that does not take the multidimensional character of perceived quality into account has little chance of success (Caswell and Grolleau 2007) as consumers are unwilling to sacrifice a product's functionality for ethics (Devinney et al. 2011).

Our study indicates that three sociodemographic variables—gender, age, and income—have the biggest impact on consumers' purchasing behavior in the case of ethical fashion products. The analysis based on these three variables showed that women are the main consumers of these products. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies on responsible product consumption (Achabou and Dekhili 2013; Snelgar 2006). Snelgar (2006) suggested that women are generally more active in environmental matters, and that they are more open to social issues and to other people. In the specific case of the clothing industry, Niinimäki and Hassi (2011) also observed that women are more sensitive to environmental and ethical issues.

With regard to the age variable, our findings show that individuals aged between 36 and 50-years-old are the biggest consumers of ethical fashion products. The literature offers mixed findings with regard to the impact of the age variable on responsible

consumer behavior. The age variable has been extensively explored in studies on generativity in particular.⁶ While Ryff and Heincke (1983) found that younger consumers show greater generativity than others, the findings by McAdams et al. (1993) suggest that middle-aged consumers have the highest level of generativity, while older consumers have the lowest. For McAdams and Logan (2004), the relationship between generativity and age is not very robust, and while generativity may be present at each stage of the lifecycle, it can vary in intensity. Finally, segmentation made on the basis of the income variable shows that the consumption of ethical fashion items decreases in line with higher levels of income. This is consistent with the conclusions by Achabou and Dekhili (2013) specific to the luxury clothing industry, and can be explained by the greater importance wealthier consumers give to the intrinsic quality of products, to the detriment of environmental and/or social quality.

9.6 Conclusion

The main finding drawn from this study is that the ethical attribute is not an important differentiation factor in the fashion market. When choosing products, consumers give priority to other criteria, notably the product's style and its intrinsic quality. Ethical Fashion in France currently finds it hard to develop because it does not fit in with the aforementioned expectations. It is viewed as unfashionable, or even frumpy, and therefore suffers from an acute image problem. Our results highlight the tendency of consumers to perceive ethical fashion as production that respects humans and animals (social dimension), and the environment to a lesser degree. This can be explained by the fact that social scandals in the textile industry are more likely to make the headlines (e.g., the collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh) than environmental issues. On the other hand, ethical fashion is not associated with hand-crafted or cottage-industry production.

In view of these results, we believe that ethical fashion firms should focus their communication strategies on the design aspect of their creations (style), the quality of the products and raw materials used, and the cottage-industry aspect of production. Ethics should no longer be used as a sales argument, but rather as added value. Furthermore, the "made in France" label should also be used more widely. It not only indicates the origin of the product, but is also a helpful tool for consumers to make a judgment about a firm's ethical position and social responsibility (Koromyslov 2011).

The effort made by ethical fashion brands in terms of style and product quality should be emphasized in advertising campaigns. Given the small size of the firms, Internet appears to offer the least expensive means of communicating. As suggested

⁶ The concern of adults with respect to the wellbeing of future generations is positively linked to more responsible consumer behavior (purchase of organic products, reduction of waste, purchase of "green" products, etc.) (Urien and Kilbourne 2011).

by Chan and Wong (2012), it is in the best interests of fashion brands to develop e-tailing in addition to their physical stores in order to improve the accessing ecofashion and the information about ecofashion, such as the price and the style. Today, many consumers use the Internet to share knowledge and increase their understanding of the world (Cervellon and Wernerfelt 2012).

To facilitate the access to ecofashion items, enterprises should develop the use of signage; the idea is to indicate where the ecofashion is placed in the store (Chan and Wong 2012).

Cobranding may also be envisaged as a solution to update the image of ethical fashion brands. This would involve working with leading brand names, many of which are currently trying to project a more responsible image. Such collaboration would be beneficial for both the ethical fashion firms and the leading brand names. It could also influence consumer behavior since, as Teulon (2006) argued, the impact of actions undertaken by leading brands is considerable given the extent of their global output.

The government should also play a role in promoting ethical fashion by raising French consumers' awareness of fashion-related environmental and social issues. Our study shows that even though some respondents say they are aware of ethical issues, the latter appear to have little impact on their purchasing decisions. Educating consumers is, thus, essential for increasing the awareness level about ethical fashion (Shen et al. 2012; Gupta and Hodges 2012). As discussed by Eckhardt et al. (2010), we believe that public awareness should be raised through the emotions rather than through rational and moral arguments (consumer lassitude with environment-related discourse). Thus, TV documentaries on child exploitation in carpet sweatshops in developing countries appear to have increased the ethical awareness of Swiss and German consumers (Eckhardt et al. 2010).

It is also important to improve consumer confidence in the information displayed on ethical fashion products, and we believe that the best way is through labeling. We should note that several labels have now been developed for the textile industry. In addition to official certifications, such as the European ecolabel, claims have also been produced by certification organizations, associations, and by companies themselves. Thus, consumers are confronted with information overload (Harbaugh et al. 2011) and are frequently suspicious of the opportunistic behavior of some firms (Dekhili and Achabou 2011). We believe that in the current context, greater harmonization of the information available is needed. Other avenues to be explored include ranking labels according to the extent of their demands (Van Amstel et al. 2008), and focusing on promoting a single label for consumers and companies (Harbaugh et al. 2011).

Although this research makes an important contribution, further studies should provide a better understanding of the ethical issue in the case of fashion goods. A future study needs to be conducted to examine the relationship between consumers' preference for ethical fashion products and the nature of the ethical practice mentioned (social, environmental).

Furthermore, an examination of the barriers to the purchase of ethical fashion items shows that consumers associate ethical fashion products to lower quality. In

order to gain a better understanding of the effect of ethical attribute on the perceived quality, we believe it would be fruitful for future research to perform a study to determine how the ethical attribute could decrease the perceived quality of an ethical fashion item.

Finally, our research reveals that gender, age, and income have a significant effect on the preference for ethical fashion products. This result is interesting but should be considered with caution because of the sample mobilized (convenience sample). Replicating this study with additional consumer samples in different countries or regions of France is necessary to test the effect of these variables.

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