

Trend Analysis: How Consumer Demand is Changing Marketing Practices

Denisa-Roxana BOTEAN-MUNTEAN

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies
munteandenisa21@stud.ase.ro

Daniela MARINICĂ

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies
daniela.marinica@mk.ase.ro

Adrian Ionuț MOȘESCU

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies
ionutbz@yahoo.com

Brîndușa BÎRSAN

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies
brindusabirsan@gmail.com

Daniela Maria STANCIU (FRĂȚILĂ)

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies
danielastannciu@gmail.com

Paul COSMOVICI

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies
paul.cosmovici@cosmovici-ip.com

Ștefan-Claudiu CĂESCU

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies
stefan.caescu@mk.ase.ro

Article history

Received 21 May 2024 | Accepted 10 July 2024 | Published online 26 July 2024.

Abstract

While the contemporary period is increasingly marked by innovation and we see this especially in the market, the consumer-company relationship is forced to constantly adapt to these changes. But what does this innovation bring, how does consumer demand change marketing practices and what are the implications of the circular economy? Analyzing the concept of trend and its influence over time from a circular and cyclical perspective, this paper examines how market demand transforms long-term marketing strategies to meet current and future market expectations, bringing to the forefront the importance of ethical, green and future-oriented marketing practices. Basically, from a cyclical, ethical and sustainable perspective, we can say that market demand constantly returns in another, innovative form. The present study focuses primarily on analyzing marketing trends through exploratory research, with a focus on transparency and ethics, fast fashion and consumerism, and how these changes influence consumer behavior and perceptions. The key findings suggest that by understanding and responding to market trends, brands can develop more effective, sustainable and innovative marketing strategies that keep pace with the ever-changing expectations of consumers, but also with the evolution of the modern world.

Keywords: Circular Economy, Marketing Strategy, Consumer Behavior, Sustainability, Ethical practices.

JEL classification: Q01, M31, D16, Q56, O33.

Introduction

In today's modern world, we frequently hear discussions about trends, we naturally observe them, and we are increasingly inclined to purchase new products, especially in terms of fashion, even if we do not immediately realize it. In this way, in addition to the concept of

trend, the concept of consumer behavior in response to market changes appears, both from a psychological point of view and cyclical, repetitive. Regarding repetitive behavior, it is said that trends are cyclical, and they return to the market at a certain interval of time, in an innovative form, which is proven by remarkable periods of time, trends in fashion, design or music, or even marketing. But is this innovative form also ethical and sustainable?

To understand how consumer demand changes marketing practices in a circular economy, some authors have reported in most of the statistical literature that a trend is conceived as that part of a series that changes relatively slowly over time (Harvey, Andrew, 2014), an aspect that is highlighted in the paper through the key notions: consumer behavior and market adaptation. In the context of marketing, trends are more than patterns over time; they reflect the evolving behaviors, preferences, and societal values of consumers that shape the strategies and operations of businesses (Rathore, 2018). Starting from this premise, this paper aims to reflect how the current landscape of consumer influence shapes the marketing practices of brands. In this sense, the marketing practices used must not only respond to the demands and needs of the current market, but also adapt to a circular economy, have an ethical component, and be on trend.

We speak of such trends as a concept in their own right, which stands out in all industries, but especially in fashion. First, between 1946 and 1975, trends gained an understanding similar to their current meaning (Campos & Wolf, 2018), and since then, trend has been mostly associated with the idea of fashion and novelty, in relation to uncertainty and anticipation (Bacrie, 2012). Also, the trend is considered to be a social process in which style and tastes change (Gomes, de Mendonça Cohen & Flores, 2018), and this is reinforced by the statements according to which trends are also defined as directions and have an effect and impact on culture (Vejlgaard & Henrik, 2008).

Starting from the main question of the paper: how consumer demand is changing marketing practices? - a series of studies were considered which show that, as marketing moves towards greater personalization and ethical considerations, understanding and capitalizing on these trends is essential for the success of brands in the future. Thus, by prioritizing the highlighted ones, the present study intends to answer to the main question and aims to achieve 4 general objectives, such as highlighting consumer-centric marketing, exploring strategic adaptation, encouraging sustainable practices, and guiding future marketing innovations.

Objective 1: highlighting consumer-centric marketing – this objective highlights the shift from a product-centric to a consumer-centric marketing approach (Niininen, Buhalis, & March, 2007), where major fashion brands, in our case, are increasingly responding to consumers' values, preferences, and demands for transparency, ethics, and sustainability.

Objective 2: exploring strategic adaptations – this objective provides insights into how brands are adapting their marketing practices to keep up with trends such as fast fashion, ethical consumerism, and sustainability, presenting the strategic changes needed to remain relevant in a dynamic, ever-changing marketplace (Andersen, 2015).

Objective 3: encouraging sustainable practices – through this objective, the paper also aims to adopt a direction of encouraging brands to adopt sustainable and responsible practices that resonate with consumers aware of climate and economic changes (Goetz, 2010), and also to present the relevance of the brand concept in the market, through the notion of consumerism and the ethical approach from a sustainable perspective.

Objective 4: guiding future marketing innovations – through this objective, the theme aims to provide a research framework for brands, related to anticipating future trends, while encouraging innovation in marketing approaches that align with both present and future expectations and also facilitating a framework for consumer education (Rust, 2020).

Based on the premises marked above, this paper presents the research contributions structured in an academic way, as follows: in the Introduction the main and key elements of the theme are presented, in the Literature review section the studies that formed the basis of the research are highlighted, in the State of the art the case study is framed, in the Research methodology section the methodology for carrying out this article is practically framed, in the Findings and discussions section the main directions noted based on the case study in relation to the specialized literature are found, in the Conclusions we find the answer to the basic question, the objections and the references obtained, and the References section encompasses the sources that formed the basis of the research.

On this structure, the paper seeks to support the idea that marketing trends can be understood as dynamic signals that not only indicate changes in consumer preferences but also provide a roadmap for businesses to align their strategies with societal, environmental and economic imperatives. In this sense, it can be seen that these trends emerge from complex interactions between technological advances, cultural shifts and global challenges, such as climate change and economic uncertainty.

In the context of a circular economy of the future, these trends thus become increasingly evident in any marketing strategy, because as brands seek to maintain relevance and foster meaningful connections with consumers, the ability to identify, interpret and respond to these trends becomes a competitive advantage (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). In other words, today's effective marketing practices are not just reactive, but proactive (Baah, Opoku-Agyeman, Acquah, Issau, & Moro Abdoulaye, 2021), positioning brands as leaders in innovation, ethics, and sustainability, while addressing the evolving needs and expectations of an increasingly conscious global consumer base. In this case, we notice a direction through which consumer demand influences marketing practices in an organic way.

1. Literature review

Recent studies indicate that consumer awareness around environmental issues have grown substantially, leading to a shift in purchasing behaviors toward brands that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. The specialized literature shows us that consumer backlash against unsustainable practices in the fast fashion industry has catalyzed demand for more ethical and environmentally friendly alternatives (Holt, 2012). Similarly, some specialists (McNeill & Moore, 2015) argue that this shift reflects a broader societal trend in which consumers seek to align their purchasing decisions with their personal values, particularly in areas related to sustainability and corporate responsibility.

Research further suggests that consumers are increasingly supportive of brands that actively engage in sustainable practices and demonstrate social responsibility (Mandarić, Hunjet, & Vuković, 2022). Nielsen's global survey (SO-CORE, 2015) on corporate social responsibility revealed that 66% of respondents were willing to pay more for sustainable goods, indicating a clear consumer preference for brands that prioritize environmental and social well-being. Some authors expand on this, saying that noting that such preferences not only influence purchasing decisions but also enhance long-term brand loyalty by fostering trust and a sense of shared values between consumers and companies (Fournier & Yao, 1997).

As consumer values continue to evolve, fast fashion companies that prioritize sustainability and ethical practices are poised to experience enhanced brand appeal and loyalty. Some specialists (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007) highlight that this paradigm shift is a direct response to growing consumer discontent with the environmental and social consequences of fast fashion. In this sense, consumer education on sustainability plays an extremely important role in choosing environmentally friendly products or services, an aspect that marketing

practices and strategies must increasingly highlight in relation to brands' strategies to adapt to a circular economy and, of course, avoiding greenwashing.

Moreover, McKinsey & Company's (2020) report on the fashion industry's transformation underscores that integrating sustainability into business models is no longer optional but essential for staying competitive in the market. This evolution marks a significant departure from traditional marketing approaches, establishing a new framework where ethical and sustainable practices are integral to brand identity and consumer engagement. This mention confirms to us that consumer behavior will migrate more and more in a direction supporting the evolution of green marketing, influencing market demand.

The main concepts and theories underlying the research are highlighted by the keywords: Circular Economy, Marketing Strategy, Consumer Behavior, Sustainability, Ethical practices. This approach is structured around a theoretical approach combined with an empirical research through a case study analysis, which denotes a better understanding of consumer-centered marketing, consumer behavior in relation to ethical practices, as well as marketing strategy for adapting brands to a market with cyclical trends, constantly evolving and a circular economy. Regarding research gaps or limitations, these are highlighted by the relatively new topic addressed in the paper, as well as by key elements, such as: green marketing, cyclical trend or innovation and consumer education. In this sense, subtle nuances of inconsistency can be noticed in the literature at this time, these topics being still under research.

Summarizing the above aspects regarding the literature review, we argue that this research is closely related to specialized theories of consumer behavior, marketing strategy and circular economy, all of which contribute academically to the perspective of the paper: Trend Analysis: How Consumer Demand Is Changing Marketing Practices.

2. State of the art

The dynamic interplay between consumer expectations and brand strategies has become a defining feature of modern marketing. As businesses adapt to shifting societal values, environmental challenges, and evolving consumer behaviors, the need to align brand initiatives with these emerging demands is more critical than ever. This section explores key developments in sustainability, design, and consumer behavior, highlighting their impact on marketing practices and strategies. Through case studies and theoretical insights, the analysis emphasizes the importance of innovation, collaboration, and a multidisciplinary approach in addressing the challenges and opportunities of the contemporary marketplace.

By examining the fast fashion industry's sustainability initiatives, the role of design in fostering a circular economy, and the interdisciplinary study of consumer behavior, this section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of the art. These insights not only showcase the strategies employed by leading brands but also underscore the broader implications for marketing as a driver of ethical, sustainable, and consumer-focused business practices.

Starting from the question: how consumer demand changes marketing practices, and considering the concept of trend analysis, the paper is based on a case study from the fashion textile industry, to be able to follow the key aspects of the mentioned approach. With a focus on the Inditex group, a group that includes the brands Zara, Zara Home, Bershka, Massimo Dutti, Oysho, Pull&Bear, Stradivarius, Uterqüe and Lefties, we suggest the sustainable and responsible approach towards the environment and society of the group: *"Inditex began with an ambition to make fashionable, quality and life-enhancing clothes for people, at the right price. Many of the social, economic and environmental challenges we all face are now more urgent than ever."* (Inditex, 2024)

In the following subsections, we will explore the relationship between sustainable fashion-trend-consumer behavior, identifying how a marketing strategy responds to market demand through ethical and future-oriented practices. As a theoretical framework, we emphasize that the Inditex group is a Spanish multinational clothing company, the largest fast fashion group in the world, operating over 7,200 stores in 93 markets worldwide. The main brand in the group is Zara, a brand whose notoriety has grown in recent years, especially based on display marketing. With its modern strategy aimed especially at the millennial generation, this brand stands out for its rapid response to market trends, being seen as a trendsetter, which translates into a huge flow of items in stores.

In terms of marketing strategy, the 4Ps (price, product, promotion and placement) that define the Zara brand play an essential role in shaping the company's reputation in the market (Zara's Marketing Strategy: A Deep Dive into Fast Fashion Dominance, 2023). While from a product point of view, Zara is known as an instant and fast fashion brand, from a customer point of view, it is also a fashion promoter, constantly adapting to market demands and trends given by large companies or institutions of color. In terms of receiving emerging trends, this brand is a leader in this regard, this being reflected in the dynamics of nature that it represents. With a balanced quality-price ratio, the brand is taking steps towards a type of sustainable products, made from eco, recycled or recyclable materials, promoting the circular economy and its principles increasingly visible through the measures it takes at international level.

In terms of location, Zara's global footprint includes nearly 3,000 stores, which are usually located in large cities and tourist attractions. The principles on which the brand bases its location arguments are based on accessibility, visibility and attraction. Thus, the brand identity is carefully combined with the experience it offers and how it is positioned in the minds and preferences of consumers. In terms of green marketing, Zara has started to promote in more and more stores the concept of clothing collection centers, self-purchase and re-wearing of clothes in various outfits or the reintroduction of products from past collections.

While the image strategy keeps up with the trends, the price strategy focuses on the concept of brand loyalty, so that regardless of growth, customers will remain loyal along the way. Justified from both an economic and environmental point of view, the brand strives to remain accessible and offer superior product quality. In order to delimit products by price category, the brand has gradually introduced superior quality products that have a considerably higher price. Likewise, the brand's commitment to a sustainable environment is also reflected in the mention of the quality of the items.

The brand's promotion strategy is easily visible in society, as it is a clothing brand that emphasizes the customer experience more than classic and visible promotion methods, such as out of home solutions. Aspects like organic growth through word of mouth advertising, aesthetic promotion of the physical space and online image serve as a powerful promotional tool in the current period. Cultivating a community of loyal customers, offering remarkable in-store experiences and promoting an increasingly sustainability-oriented approach, the brand clearly emphasizes consumer-centric marketing, adopting an innovative, transparent and forward-thinking strategy.

This holistic marketing approach reflects a fast fashion business model, which, although in contrast to the concept of sustainability, demonstrates an attitude inclined towards ethical, sustainable and adapted marketing techniques and practices to the current and future needs of the market based on a circular trend. The sustainable model of Zara described as a very specific business model, it is practically based of the ability of the brand to act in a flexible way to the market demand and its changes (Sitara & Destiny, 2020). The brand's appeal to consumers most often derives from novelty, fashion, topicality, quality, price and innovation, aspects that are part of the company's list of key values. Also on the brand's list of values is sustainability,

the measures that Zara takes in this regard being increasingly visible and even announced by the brand, as follows: in 2022, Zara promised to use 100% renewable energy in their own operations; in 2023 they promise to eliminate single-use plastics for customers; by 2025 they plan to introduce more sustainable 100% linen and sustainable or recycled polyester; by 2040 they promise to have zero net emissions (How sustainable is Zara and can I shop there with a clean conscience?, 2024).

In other words, the development of marketing practices by the Inditex group and especially the Zara brand, to meet constant, dynamic and detailed demand, as well as to maintain trends, quality standards and sustainability norms, involves a broad and continuously evolving process, highlighted by 3 main aspects, extracted from the specialized literature reported in this case study:

- aligning brand values with consumer expectations for a sustainable and innovative future;
- the strategic role of design in the new textile economy;
- a multidisciplinary perspective on consumer behavior and marketing strategies.

With a focus on people, environment and profit, the Inditex group must not only align itself with economic, social and environmental impact, but also constantly analyze production and consumption factors, in order to make the transition from a fast-fashion company to a green-fashion one. And in this case, as in the case of small brands, the need for education regarding sustainable consumer behavior makes its presence felt, so this is a factor that dictates production and market supply (Esbeih, Molina-Moreno, Núñez-Cacho, & Silva-Santos, 2021). At the same time, through selective waste recycling measures and by offering customers the option to donate clothing items in take back containers installed in many of its stores, Zara actively contributes to promoting a circular economy in the textile industry. We note in this case an association between concepts from the specialized literature, such as: ethical practices, consumer behavior, circular economy, sustainability and marketing strategy, and those present in the case study, such as: trend, fast fashion and circularity.

2.1. Aligning brand values with consumer expectations for a sustainable and innovative future

The fast fashion industry's response to consumer demand for sustainability is reshaping marketing strategies, demonstrating the critical role that environmental responsibility plays in enhancing brand reputation and fostering long-term consumer relationships (Koszewska, 2018). For instance, brands like Zara are investing in innovative marketing campaigns that highlight their commitments to sustainability. Zara's Closing the Loop initiative emphasizes the importance of garment recycling and waste reduction. Such initiatives resonate with environmentally conscious consumers, reinforcing also brand loyalty, trust and adaptability to the market.

In terms of the marketing mix related to the promotion side, Zara's method of promoting itself is holistic, largely choosing to focus on the customer experience, whether online or in-store. Also, in any medium, the brand emphasizes aesthetics, which is proven by the affinity that younger generations have for the trends displayed by Zara, either through the way the decor is presented in stores or through the way the brand's image is displayed on social media.

The brand's orientation towards innovation, design and environmental protection represents a realignment of the brand's values with the current and future expectations of the market, especially when we talk about the context of a circular economy. Aligning the brand with the strategy, culture and trends of a market ultimately involves a business remodeling and

a flexibility towards the new, practically adopting a strategic vision for the company's future (Hatch & Schultz, 2008).

In the case of Zara, but also of the other brands in the group, aligning brand values with consumer expectations is a key aspect that practically dictates the policy of the Inditex group. In this way, the brands claim a top position in the market, reflected in the sales they have achieved. At the same time, Zara's perspective on the concept of trend can be observed in digital marketing. The leading global fashion retailer, even if it prioritizes organic marketing, uses a balanced range of digital marketing techniques to place the brand in the eyes of consumers according to the current market trend. Thus, strategies such as social media management, email marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Pay per Click campaigns or content marketing are on the list of practices regularly used by the brand (Purawat, 2024).

Therefore, based on the above, we can say that aligning brand values with consumer expectations for a sustainable and innovative future is based on a marketing strategy adapted to the market, in accordance with the supply-demand relationship. To support this with concrete examples, we highlight the fact that the fashion store Zara, which is known as a fast-fashion giant, has included sustainability and green fashion in its marketing and sales strategy, so that, through various techniques, it encourages both sustainable consumption behavior and an environmentally friendly image. Innovation and sustainability, although they are 2 terms that define something new and future-oriented, they are essential to be integrated into current marketing strategies, with perspectives on the circular economy and the adaptation of brands to market requirements, as it is also about an alignment and reconfiguration of brand values. Therefore, we note that in marketing terms, we are talking about aligning brand values with consumer expectations as a basic strategy, which needs to be re-adapted to the market according to the cyclicity and circularity of trends. In the case of the fashion industry, because trends are much more visible and require constant readjustment in relation to consumer behavior, brands are forced to become increasingly dynamic, sustainable and innovative.

2.2. The strategic role of design and technological influence in the new textile economy

The concept of the new textile economy (Snoek, 2017), namely the concept that refers to the fashion industry, emphasizes the strategic role of design in the transition to a circular textile industry, i.e. adapted to the green economy. In this case, the creation of high-quality clothing products in relation to the development of new business models of brands, can significantly contribute to changing the perception of clothes, by making these products sustainable products, not simple disposable items, as in the case of fast fashion. For this reason, sustainable design, as well as access to sustainable products, can encourage consumers to see clothing as a long-term investment and a reusable resource, thus supporting the objectives of the circular economy in the fashion sector: recycling, reuse, reduction (Purawat, 2024).

Regarding the challenges, the production of sustainable fashion, on the one hand, and the consumption of sustainable fashion, on the other hand, is a systemic problem, because in this case we are talking about the demand-supply relationship and the concept of overproduction. The Zara case is an example of overproduction, especially since this brand makes considerable efforts to align itself with fashion design trends that are constantly changing. From this perspective, sustainability also has an educational component, and it represents a future direction. The technological influence on design also has a contribution in terms of innovation. Although trends change according to certain circular tendencies, there is still an influence that differentiates them, namely: technology. In the case of the Zara brand, it has adopted strategic technological measures to reduce waste, such as: online orders that save on carbon footprint, recycling of used clothes in stores to reduce waste or self-checkout counters through which the purchase process is intended to be innovated. In this way, we are talking about a readjustment

of consumer behavior in accordance with new technologies, but also an adaptation of fashion design to market trends, developing vegan fashion concepts, selling eco-friendly items and using recycled materials.

A unique approach to fast fashion by the large brand Zara was debated in the specialized literature by authors Mishra and Dodke in their work: *Technological Influence on Becoming the Fashion Industry's Market Leader*, which presents an overview of the concepts of technological influence on vertically integrated supply chain, rapid design-to-sale cycles, and customer-centric retail approach. In the research, the authors state that, in today's rapidly evolving fashion retail landscape, large companies face the challenge of meeting consumer demands adapted to increasingly rapidly changing trends, while maintaining operational efficiency and customer satisfaction (Mishra & Dodke, 2024), aspects that are ultimately revolutionizing the fashion market and business models in this industry.

We thus highlight 3 major aspects that constitute key issues that could jeopardize the leading position of the Zara brand, as highlighted by the authors Misha and Dodke in their research paper:

Increased competition: it is well known that the fast fashion industry is competitive and constantly changing, with major brands trying to constantly maintain a trendy image. In the case of Zara, this, combined with market demand and the circularity of trends, can be seen as a strategy to adapt to the market in accordance with design and consumption trends.

Leveraging technology for competitive advantage: in today's landscape, technology is increasingly making its presence felt in every industry and activity, so in the case of Zara, the brand must remain a leader, adopting an innovation-based strategy to maintain its competitive advantage, incorporating solutions such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things and Augmented Reality.

Sustainability concerns: over time, and especially as more and more companies strive to meet the goals of a circular economy, Zara has been heavily criticized for its fast fashion practices, because, by trying to constantly adapt to trends and the volume of market demand, it produces industrial quantities of clothes that often end up unused, polluting the environment. In order to gradually become sustainable, the brand has begun to adopt sustainability practices that are positive for both the environment and society.

2.3. An overview of consumer behavior and marketing strategies

In recent decades, a main problem for manufacturing companies has been how consumers respond to various factors used to achieve their main goal: obtaining the highest possible profit. Starting from this target, many brands still aim to obtain profit while respecting sustainability norms and the concept of quality. In this context, it becomes essential to notice the consumer behavior, which is essential for brands, because the way a person chooses a product to satisfy a certain need can represent a sales strategy adapted to the market.

As research in the field of consumer behavior has evolved, it has become increasingly evident that approaching this field requires a multidisciplinary perspective, in which behavioral sciences, especially psychology and sociology, have an essential role, which have provided fundamental concepts and ideas. In this sense, brands can much more easily observe the transition and influence of trends in relation to consumer news and expectations, as well as anticipate future directions. The concepts of green marketing practices and green consumer purchasing behavior are key elements for trend analysis and, respectively, how consumer demand influences the change in marketing practices.

Over time, consumer behavior has changed radically, and this is since the global market has undergone changes in terms of economy, society and environment. Increasingly consumer-oriented, this behavior has given rise to the concept of overproduction, as a response of

companies to the growing market demand. In the case of the textile industry, here too we have as an example the Inditex group, with a focus on the fashion store Zara, which has become a market leader precisely by adapting very quickly to market trends, offering a wide range of products and a volume to match. A study in the textile sector analyzed consumer behavior towards green products in relation to education on environmental protection, reporting that in general consumers show an increasing intention to purchase green products (Saeed et al., 2013). Thus, we can say that this does not only involve the correct promotion of sustainable products through green marketing, but also the implementation of a business strategy that involves a radical change in the vision of the concept of consumption, so green marketing is becoming increasingly important for brands (Peattie & Crane, 2005).

Green marketing is a concept that has gained increasing momentum in the present, generally in the context of brands that work on developing a sustainability strategy, although basically, this is a concept that emerged in the late 1980s as a competitive trend for companies and brands that wanted to differentiate themselves by going green (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Over time, companies have adopted green marketing as a solution to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the United Nations (United Nations), while realizing a trend of customer loyalty towards sustainable brands. Thus, green marketing began to encompass aspects such as green labeling, sustainability certifications, recyclable packaging or packaging made from recycled materials, ecological management and sustainable logistics, eco-advertising, resource efficiency, innovation and technology to reduce the carbon footprint (Kang & Hur, 2012). In response to these practices, purchasing behavior has constantly readjusted from a sustainability perspective, highlighting on the one hand, consumers' preference for green products, meaning that the product must respect a production, distribution, consumption and recycling process (Chan, 2013), and on the other hand, highlighting the ethics of purchasing, because of an awareness of social, environmental and economic responsibility (Lai & Cheng, 2016).

3. Research methodology

This research analytically combines the analysis of the specialized literature with the presentation of a case study, in order to carry out an analysis on the concept of trend and how consumer demand changes marketing practices.

Specialized literature: an analytical and exploratory review of the specialized literature on keywords such as circular economy, marketing strategy, consumer behavior, sustainability, ethical practices, established a theoretical basis for this work. This review included academic journals, industry reports and case studies focused on brands from the Inditex group, such as Zara.

Case study: an analysis was carried out on the Inditex group, specifically for the Zara brand. This case study examined specific sustainability and marketing initiatives for a clothing brand, evaluating their impact on brand perception, consumer loyalty and overall business strategy.

Therefore, this approach provides valuable results on consumer preferences and expectations, especially regarding sustainable choices amid changing trends, by analyzing ethical marketing practices within a circular economy framework.

4. Findings & discussion

The analysis of the state of the art highlights the evolving nature of marketing strategies in response to sustainability, design innovation, and consumer behavior. These findings underscore the transformative impact of aligning brand values with consumer expectations,

integrating sustainable design principles (Vallero, 2008), and adopting multidisciplinary approaches to understanding the present and the future consumer behavior.

a) The impact of education on the concept of sustainability for shaping consumer behavior: education regarding consumer behavior is a key factor in today's economy. This approach is particularly marked by the awareness of choosing sustainable products over less sustainable ones, especially when it comes to clothes and their recycling. In other words, an educated customer is a customer who chooses for a cleaner, greener and more civilized future, and in response to this type of behavior, brands will increasingly have to respond to the market by adapting their sales and marketing strategies in an ethical, green and innovative way. Thus, the present research based on the Inditex Group clearly highlights that educating consumers about sustainable fashion can be a green marketing strategy to align and match brand values with consumer expectations in relation to market trends. Zara's sustainability initiatives are an example of how strategic, environmentally responsible, and educational marketing efforts resonate with modern consumers who have increasingly high expectations for sustainable and ethical products and services (Shove & Spurling, 2013).

b) The role of green marketing in supporting the circular economy: by promoting a high-quality product design, combined with innovative business models, can reshape consumer perceptions of clothing, transforming them from disposable items into durable, reusable investments. In this sense, we are talking about the implications of the circular economy in the fashion industry through green marketing. The research highlights that sustainable fashion design not only supports environmental goals but also educates consumers on the value of sustainable consumption. As consumers are now becoming more aware of environmental issues, as a result of education on sustainability, they are increasingly receptive to the messages they receive from brands and more selective in their choice. Therefore, we see the impact that green marketing has on the purchase decision, being also a strategy that involves a long-term competitive advantage (Dabija & Pop, 2013). Practically, green marketing thus becomes a promoter of the circular economy and a tool for strategic brand development.

Conclusions

The analysis of how consumer demand is transforming marketing practices reveals a shift towards innovation, the adoption of circular economy principles, and a strong emphasis on market adaptation. By integrating these elements, brands can create effective marketing strategies that resonate with consumers, foster loyalty, and contribute to a more sustainable future. Summarizing these concepts, opinions, and premises, we can conclude based on the results derived from our research methodology, which includes an analysis of specialized literature and a case study, that indeed, consumer demand is changing marketing practices.

Beginning with foundational concepts like marketing strategy (Fifield, 2012) and circular economy (Kirchherr, Reike, & Hekkert, 2017) and connecting to the modern notion of trends, this research offers a perspective on consumer demand grounded in key pillars such as cyclicity, ethics, and sustainability. In this context, all future marketing strategies should be aligned with these concepts in some way. The essential objective of the circular economy must remain a priority for organizations, not only as a strategy for their own success but also for its profound positive impact on the environment (Geissdoerfer, Savaget, Bocken, & Hultink, 2017). Transitioning to a circular model brings significant benefits, including the protection of natural resources, the reduction of pollution, and enhanced organizational, societal, and economic well-being.

Furthermore, the strategic incorporation of sustainable practices (Shove, Elizabeth, & Nicola Spurling, 2013) aligns with the evolving expectations of consumers, creating a framework for ethical responsibility and fostering a sustainable market ecosystem. By exceeding the expectations of environmentally conscious consumers of the textile industry, brands can foster a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement and innovation in the industry. This alignment not only enhances brand reputation and consumer trust but also establishes a foundation for long-term success that benefits all stakeholders, from organizations to the broader global community.

However, this paper acknowledges certain limitations in previous published studies. While the concepts of green marketing, cyclical trend or innovation and consumer education are widely discussed in the existing literature, they are often treated in isolation, rather than as interconnected components of a holistic framework. Also, the approach of consumer behavior in relation to the fashion industry and the circular economy represents a research direction open to discussions and case studies. Thus, we argue that this fragmented approach limits the ability to fully understand the interaction between these elements in shaping modern marketing strategies. By addressing this gap, the paper aims to contribute to a more integrated perspective on these critical issues.

The analysis of the specialized literature showed that the concept of trend is a circular one and it is reflected mainly in the evolution of consumer preferences and societal values, being in direct relation with market dynamics and consumer-centered marketing. From the previous discussions resulting from the study, we identified the important aspects of the fast fashion industry in relation to consumer behavior and the measures that brands such as Zara take in response to market demand and need. In this sense, a tendency of large brands in the textile industry to constantly adapt their marketing strategy to align with market trends, consumer preferences and the circular economy is noticed.

In conclusion, the integration of circular economy principles (Velenturf & Purnell, 2021), ethical marketing strategies, and sustainability-driven innovations represents a transformative opportunity for businesses to meet contemporary challenges and contribute to a more sustainable future. By prioritizing these principles, brands can achieve meaningful growth, strengthen consumer relationships, and play a pivotal role in shaping an environmentally and socially responsible marketplace.

Acknowledgments

This paper was co-financed by The Bucharest University of Economic Studies during the PhD program.

References

- Andersen, T. J. 2015. *Strategic adaptation. International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences*, 501-507.
- Baah, C., Opoku-Agyeman, D., Acquah, I. S. K., Issau, K., & Moro Abdoulaye, F. A. 2021. *Understanding the influence of environmental production practices on firm performance: a proactive versus reactive approach. Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management*, 32(2), 266-289.
- Bacrie, L. 2012. *Qu'est-ce qu'une tendance de mode. Paris: Fédération Française du Prêt à Porter Féminin*.
- Birtwistle, G., & Moore, C. M. 2007. *Fashion clothing—where does it all end up? International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 35(3), 210-216.
- Birtwistle, G., & Moore, C. M. 2007. *Fashion clothing—where does it all end up? International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 35(3), 210-216.

- Campos, A. Q., & Wolf, B. 2018. *The Concept of Fashion Trend: meaning, history, connotation. ModaPalavra e-periódico*, 11(22), 31-48.
- Dabija, D.C. and Pop, C.M., 2013. *Green marketing-factor of competitiveness in retailing. Environmental Engineering & Management Journal (EEMJ)*, 12(2).
- Esbeih, K.N., Molina-Moreno, V., Núñez-Cacho, P. and Silva-Santos, B., 2021. *Transition to the circular economy in the fashion industry: The case of the Inditex family business. Sustainability*, 13(18), p.10202.
- Fifield, P. 2012. *Marketing strategy. Routledge*.
- Fournier, S., & Yao, J. L. 1997. *Reviving brand loyalty: A reconceptualization within the framework of consumer-brand relationships. International Journal of research in Marketing*, 14(5), 451-172.
- García-Salirrosas, E.E. and Rondon-Eusebio, R.F., 2022. *Green marketing practices related to key variables of consumer purchasing behavior. Sustainability*, 14(14), p.8499.
- Geissdoerfer, M., Savaget, P., Bocken, N. M., & Hultink, E. J. 2017. *The Circular Economy—A new sustainability paradigm? Journal of cleaner production*, 143, 757-768.
- Geissdoerfer, M., Savaget, P., Bocken, N. M., & Hultink, E. J. 2017. *The Circular Economy—A new sustainability paradigm? Journal of cleaner production*, 143, 757-768.
- Goetz, K. S. 2010. *Encouraging sustainable business practices using incentives: a practitioner's view. Management Research Review*, 33(11), 1042-1053.
- Gomes, N. P., de Mendonça Cohen, S. A., & Flores, A. M. M. 2018. *Trend Studies: an approach for analyzing and managing culture. ModaPalavra e-periódico*, 11(22), 82-112.
- Harvey, Andrew. 2014. *Trend analysis. Wiley StatsRef: Statistics Reference Online*.
- Hatch, M.J. and Schultz, M., 2008. *Taking brand initiative: How companies can align strategy, culture, and identity through corporate branding. John Wiley & Sons*.
- Holt, D.B. 2012. *Constructing sustainable consumption: From ethical values to the cultural transformation of unsustainable markets. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 644(1), 236-255.
- Jia, F., Yin, S., Chen, L., & Chen, X. 2020. *The circular economy in the textile and apparel industry: A systematic literature review. Journal of Cleaner Production*, 259, 120728.
- Kardes, F. R., Cronley, M. L., & Cline, T. W. 2011. *Consumer behavior. South-Western, Cengage Learning*.
- Kirchherr, J., Reike, D., & Hekkert, M. 2017. *Conceptualizing the circular economy: An analysis of 114 definitions. Resources, conservation and recycling*, 127, 221-232.
- Koszewska, M. 2018. *Circular economy—Challenges for the textile and clothing industry. Autex Research Journal*, 18(4), 337-347.
- Kumar, V., & Pansari, A. 2016. *Competitive advantage through engagement. Journal of marketing research*, 53(4), 497-514.
- Lai, C.K. and Cheng, E.W., 2016. *Green purchase behavior of undergraduate students in Hong Kong. The Social Science Journal*, 53(1), 67-76.
- Mandarić, D., Hunjet, A., & Vuković, D. 2022. *The impact of fashion brand sustainability on consumer purchasing decisions. Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 15(4), 176.
- McNeill, L., & Moore, R. 2015. *Sustainable fashion consumption and the fast fashion conundrum: fashionable consumers and attitudes to sustainability in clothing choice. International journal of consumer studies*, 39(3), 212-222.
- Mishra, A.B. and Dodke, S.D., 2024. *ZARA: Technological Influence on Becoming the Fashion Industry's Market Leader. In Cases on AI Ethics in Business* (pp. 204-215). IGI Global.
- Muthu, S.S. ed., 2017. *Sustainability in the textile industry* (pp. 1-8). Singapore: Springer.

- Niininen, O., Buhalis, D., & March, R. 2007. *Customer empowerment in tourism through consumer centric marketing (CCM). Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 10(3), 265-281.
- Peattie, K. and Crane, A., 2005. *Green marketing: legend, myth, farce or prophesy? Qualitative market research: an international journal*, 8(4), 357-370.
- Purawat, S., 2024. *Digital Marketing in ZARA. Designing Tomorrow: AI, Ethics, and Society's Next Steps*, p.144.
- Rathore, B. 2018. *The fashion paradox: deciphering the relationship between consumer behaviour and evolving marketing trends. Eduzone: International Peer Reviewed/Refereed Multidisciplinary Journal*, 7(2), 61-71.
- Rust, R. T. 2020. *The future of marketing. International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 37(1), 15-26.
- Saeed, R., Lodhi, R.N., Khan, A.K., Khurshid, N., Dustgeer, F., Sami, A. and Ahmad, M., 2013. *Measuring impact of factors influencing purchase intention towards green products: Sahiwal clothing industry perspective. World Applied Sciences Journal*, 26(10), 1371-1379.
- Shove, E., & Spurling, N. 2013. *Sustainable practices: Social theory and climate change. Sustainable Practices*, Routledge, 1-13.
- Sitaro, T.D., 2020. *Fast Fashion and Sustainability-The Case of Inditex-Zara*, 20.
- Snoek, S. 2017. *Circular economy in the textile industry. Wageningen UR*, 1-3.
- SO-CORE. 2015. *Retrieved from The Sphere of Corporate Responsibility: <https://so-core.com/s-o-c-r/>*
- Suomala, J. 2018. *Benefits of neuromarketing in the product/service innovation process and creative marketing campaign. Innovative Research Methodologies in Management: Volume II: Futures, Biometrics and Neuroscience Research*, 159-177.
- Trudel, R. 2019. *Sustainable consumer behavior. Consumer psychology review: Consumer psychology review*, 2(1), 85-96.
- Vallero, D. 2008. *Sustainable design: The science of sustainability and green engineering. John Wiley & Sons*, 1-14.
- Vejlgaard, Henrik. 2008. *Anatomy of a Trend. New York: McGraw-Hill*.
- Velenturf, A. P., & Purnell, P. 2021. *Principles for a sustainable circular economy. Sustainable production and consumption*, 27, 1437-1457.